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The Reunion of Christendom

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The Reunion of Christendom

(Concluded)

Luther was ready to give up his life in the blessed cause of the reunion of Christendom. "I want you [M. Bucer] to believe me that I wish this dissension of ours settled, even though my life had to be sacrificed three times over on account of it, because I saw how necessary your fellowship is to us, how much harm the dissension has done and still does to the Gospel. . . . May the Lord Jesus enlighten us and perfectly unite us—this is the burden of my prayer, the burden of my supplication, the burden of my sighs." (XVII:1975.)⁷⁴ That is the Lutheran spirit. The Apology declares: "We most earnestly desire to establish harmony." (*Triglot*, p. 379.) And the Formula of Concord: "We entertain heartfelt pleasure and love for, and are on our part sincerely inclined and anxious to advance, that unity according to our utmost power by which His glory remains to God uninjured, etc." (P. 1095.) Dr. Walther: "Surely all who love our Lutheran Zion deplore with deep grief the sad divided state from which our Church suffers here in the United States of North America, and all earnestly desire to see the growth of this evil checked and all sincere Lutherans united on the basis of the truth." (See *CONC. THEOL. MTHLY.*, 1940, p. 4.) Dr. Pieper: "If we could have

74) "There shall be nothing lacking on my part, whether of act or of suffering, which can contribute to a genuine, thorough, steadfast unity, for what the results of the dissensions of the Churches are, experience, alas, has taught us." (XVII:2119.) "Your Princely Grace [Duke Ernest of Lueneburg] shall believe that next to Christ, my Lord, I desire nothing more earnestly than that these people were thoroughly united with us; no death could be too bitter for me which I should not be willing to suffer to bring this about." (XVII:2003.) "It cannot be denied that we always sought peace and, as the Psalm [34:14] says, pursued it, that we offered it and begged for it." (XVI:928.)

our wish, we would be in church fellowship with all who are called Lutherans and with all who are called Christians. Men do not know us 'Missourians' if they have the idea that we take pleasure in our isolated position. God knows that that is not true." "All Christians should be desirous of a reunion and earnestly labor for the same." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1898, p. 4. *Distinctive Doctrines and Usages*, p. 154.) That is the Christian spirit. Bishop Manning truly says: Opposition to a fraudulent union "does not in the least imply lack of interest in Christian unity. All rightminded Christians hope and pray for this." (See *The Living Church*, May 23, 1943.) And *Our Sunday Visitor* (Catholic) is absolutely right when it says: "Church unity is the question of the day. It is agitating the minds of sincere Christians of all denominations." There is in all sincere Christians a burning desire for the reunion of Christendom. When they view the sad state of the Church, "by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed," they cry out: "We poor sinners do beseech Thee to put an end to all schisms and causes of offense." They pray with the Apology: "We beseech Him to look upon the afflicted and scattered churches and to bring men back to godly and perpetual concord." (*Triglot.*, p. 103.) There is in Christendom the will to unity.

The Christians desire the reunion of Christendom because God desires it; they work for it because God has laid that obligation upon them. God would have the inner unity of the One Holy Christian Church, the communion of the saints, express itself outwardly. God wants only one visible Church. He wants "no divisions" in it, 1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 16:17. He bids His children "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," Eph. 4:31, and where it has been disrupted by evil men, to restore it. Every Christian, furthermore, longs for this communion with his brethren. He craves the solace and help that would result from the common confession of the faith. We rejoice and are greatly strengthened when men who are separated from us give Christian testimony to important truths of our Christian religion. When Southern Baptists and other groups in Christendom speak out for the deity of Jesus and the Vicarious Atonement and Verbal Inspiration, our hearts go out to them; we are greatly comforted through them; and the comfort would be immeasurably greater if those things that stand in the way of brotherly intercourse were removed, if we all spoke the same thing and were fully united in our holy Christian faith. And there is further gain and blessing. Such a reunion of Christendom would remove "the scandal of Christianity." And if all Christians proclaimed the Gospel truths with a united voice and the combined resources of the Church backed this proclamation, the influence of the Church on the world would be heightened

a hundredfold.⁷⁵) — The Christian Church cannot but have the will to unity. "True union is the glorious goal which God has set before His Church for all times." (Dr. Walther in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1871, p. 11.) It is a glorious goal: "The whole Gospel, For the whole world, By the whole Church." (See P. H. Buehring, *The Spirit of the American Lutheran Church*, p. 107.) Should the Christian not be ready to sacrifice his life three times over for the reunion of Christendom?

Which method should we employ for healing the divisions in Christendom, the method advocated by the unionizers or the method prescribed by God? The unionizers have devised a short and easy way. They would have the Churches ignore the doctrinal differences. "We can never reach unity by discussing doctrinal differences. Unity takes precedence over doctrine" (P. Ainslie. See page 397 above.) And whatever differences there are must be tolerated, since these differences touch only non-fundamentals. And in non-fundamentals there must be liberty! "In the framework of a reunited Church room is made, through mutual self-denial and forbearance, for our divergencies in reasonable proportion." (Bishop F. T. Woods. See page 396 above.) The unionists want to solve the problem of the union of Christendom in the way described and condemned by *The Living Church*, June 29, 1929: "Protestant leaders perceive that with our modern sects teaching all kinds of varying faiths, from Arianism to prohibition, the short and easy way would be for them all to subordinate faith to unity, all accepting the latter and all agreeing to disagree as to the former." And there are those who want to solve the problem of Lutheran union in the same easy way. Dr. J. L. Neve writes in his *History of the Lutheran Church in America*, p. 369: "Such differences as exist between Lutheran groups arise over the

75) See pages 622 and 624 above. Also: "Wer gibt nicht zu, dass voellige Einigkeit unter allen lutherischen Synoden im Lande, ein Geist und Sinn nach Schrift und Bekenntnis, ein Segen von Gott waere, fuer den wir Gott nicht genug danken koennten! Welch ein liebliches Bild wuerde dann die lutherische Kirche im Lande bieten, wie wuerde das den Mund der Spoetter stopfen, wie koennte durch vereinte Kraefte viel gespart und viel ausgefuehrt werden! Dazu waere das fuer alle etwas ungemein Staerkendes, in Not und Anfechtung Festigendes, dass alle mit einem Munde dasselbe lehren, glauben und bekennen. . . ." (*Ev.-Luth. Gemeinde-Blatt*, 17. Jan. 1943.) Luther's statement, "Ah, dear Lord, this offense is a hindrance to many. They do not know what to make of it when the teachers of the Church do not teach the same doctrine; it fills men with doubt and confusion, and they do not know whom to believe," is preceded by the statement: "I would gladly give my life to win the Church in Switzerland and Southern Germany, so that we would be in accord; that would fill Pope and Emperor with dismay." (XXII:1024.) "Und ich glaube, unser Evangelium sollte in diesen kurzen Jahren durch die ganze Welt gegangen sein, wenn nicht die Rotten und Sekten, die Wiedertaeufer und Sakramentier gewesen waeren und den Baum in Weg geworfen haetten." (VII:2404.)

question of the extent of the authority admitted to the Confessions. The protagonists for an authoritative theology, rendering an undisputed decision on every point of doctrine, are to be found in the Synodical Conference. The other Lutheran bodies in America, equally vigorous in their adherence to the Augsburg Confession, maintain that certain doctrines, not essential to salvation, must be considered 'open questions.' It appears that the progress toward organic Lutheran union in America must delay until this problem finds some solution." There are those who would unite the Lutherans on the basis of "liberty in non-fundamentals," just as Dr. Ainslie and Bishop Woods would unite Christendom by making "room for our divergencies in reasonable proportion." *The Lutheran Church Quarterly* is for the short and easy way: "There is no warrant in Scripture or in life for the belief that unity can be obtained by uniformity. Only when that basis is rejected for the New Testament basis of unity—unity of spirit in which differences are recognized *and allowed*—will any Lutheran unity be achieved in America or in the world." (July, 1942, p. 235.)

There are those who refuse to go the short and easy way. Our CONC. THEOL. MTHLY. refuses. "The two church bodies should thresh out this question, and union should not be sought in the easy method of simply ignoring this difference." (1943, p. 224.) *The Living Church* condemns this method. "Protestant Church union is showing itself in some quarters to be easily obtainable through such cancellation of existing loyalties, and a refusal to take theological differences seriously." (Aug. 17, 1929.) Walther would have none of it: "The modern theory that among the doctrines clearly revealed in the Word of God there are open questions is the most dangerous unionistic principle of our times, which will necessarily lead to skepticism and finally to naturalism." (See *Toward Lutheran Union*, p. 22.) And Luther would rather die three times over than lend his hand to the unionistic scheme for the reunion of Christendom. He hated all unionizing from the bottom of his heart. "Cursed be such charity and unity to the very bottom of hell, since such unity not only miserably disrupts Christianity, but makes sport and foolishness of it in a devilish manner." (XX:773.)

It is a wicked scheme. It goes directly against God's command. God curses all false doctrine and the tolerance of any false doctrine, Gal. 1:8, 9; Jer. 23:28; Rom. 16:17. It does not benefit the Church, but works toward her undoing. It robs her of her strength, which is the pure Word of God, and subjects her to the ravages of false doctrine.⁷⁶⁾ It does not unite the Church, but "only

76) A writer in *The Lutheran Herald*, April 13, 1943, says: "This Church union, without full loyalty to the Word and on the basis of

miserably disrupts Christianity." Instead of removing the divisions and offenses which originally disrupted Christianity, it upholds, sanctions, and legalizes them. And a union patched up without regard to doctrine does not produce the unity of the Spirit. The disunity remains. "Such peace and unity, since it is devised against the truth and for its suppression," cannot "have any permanency." (Formula of Concord, *Triglot*, p. 1095.) Besides, history shows that the usual result of unionistic unification is not the lessening, but only the increase of the number of existing churches.⁷⁷ — No, we will have no part or lot in the work of the unionizers. The unity they are working for is not of God. M. Loy: "The Ev. Lutheran Church now, as in the times of her severe trial and of her heroic faith, still confesses her confidence

a 'common denominator,' which Rev. Carlson calls for, will surely mean the easiest path and not at all the way of the cross, which, thank God, has hitherto been our way. What he proposes involves nothing less than that we amputate from the body of Scriptural truth whatever would not fit in with the 'common denominator' of 'the need of God and Christ.' That would leave a truly sick body of truth." "The unionistic principle leads to skepticism" (Walther), and "it only furnishes an opportunity of disseminating and fostering in safety the seeds of every heresy." (Luther, XVIII:1996.)

77) The Prussian ruler "tried so valiantly to unite the Reformed and Lutheran Churches of his nation, thus forming a united State Church. The Prussian Union it was called. But you will remember his dismay when he saw that now instead of the two bodies there were three — the Reformed, the Lutheran, and the Prussian Union Evangelical." (See *Christian Century*, Dec. 16, 1942.) The fathers of the United Church of Canada had the same experience. The fathers of the great Methodist merger are having the same experience. (See *Lutheraner*, 1939, p. 362, *Christian Century*, Jan. 31, 1940.) Bishop Spencer is warning against the Episcopalian-Presbyterian merger, "thus splitting two Churches four ways and making worse disunity than ever before" (*The Living Church*, March 7, 1943). "There are those," said Krauth, "who would revive the Church to death and unite it to pieces." (See *Luth. Church Quarterly*, 1937, p. 217.) These unionistic interims can produce nothing but strife and disorder. The Leipzig Interim, which created just that (see Walther, *Der Konkordienformel Kern u. Stern*, p. 22 ff.) is no exceptional case. And within "the United Church" itself disunity and dissension reign. Read again Sasse's description of the disunity characterizing the church of the Prussian Union, page 331 above. In a synthetic church there can be nothing but discord; there is no spiritual cohesion there. "The Christian Leader says: 'Unless unity comes from believing together something infinitely precious, it is a weak and fragile thing. Artificial unities go overboard. A real faith unites.'" (*Watchman-Examiner*, Nov. 20, 1941.) In a sermon preached July 27, 1943, Bishop Manning declared: "We cannot achieve Christian unity by ignoring or disregarding the convictions of earnest Christians or by the abandonment of principles which faithful members of the Church hold to be essential. However well intended, premature attempts to create unity by artificial and external measures or by majority votes of conventions, will create disunity instead of unity, and will make new wounds in the Body of Christ instead of healing old ones." Luther: "The Word and the doctrine must effect the Christian fellowship and unity; where there is unity of doctrine, the rest will follow; if that be lacking, no real unity can obtain." (IX:831.) — See further p. 625 ff. above.

in the promise of God and renounces all human fancies and speculations about a unity that is not of God, and insists on a unity of faith which God works by His Holy Word and which manifests itself in speaking the same thing in the confession of that truth." (*The Augsburg Confession*, p. 95.) Do not ask us to espouse the cause of a "unity that is not of God," of the dishonest union described in the preceding five articles.

The union which God asks us to work for is one that springs from the "unity of faith which manifests itself in speaking the same thing." God describes the unity of the Church as consisting in "the unity of the Spirit" springing from, and expressing itself in, "one faith," by which "all speak the same thing." (Eph. 4:3 ff.; 1 Cor. 1:10.) And God wants his people to speak the same thing on every single doctrine: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. 28:20.) The unity of faith is disrupted when men speak differently on any doctrine, be it a more important or less important one, an essential or a non-essential, a fundamental or non-fundamental doctrine. God does not permit His Church to tolerate these disrupters of the Christian unity in her midst. In order to preserve the Christian unity, the Church must avoid these men, Rom. 16:17; 2 John 10; 1 Tim. 6:3 ff.: "If any man teach otherwise . . . from such withdraw thyself." And the way to restore the Christian fellowship with those who have departed from the truth of Scripture is not to make a compromise with them, but to win them back to the truth, Tit. 1:9. When those who have caused divisions contrary to the apostolic doctrine forsake the contrary teaching, the divided Church is reunited. That is God's program for the reunion of Christendom.

And many are ready to carry out God's program. It may be that those who are for the short and easy way form a great majority. But there is a great host which employs the long and hard way. There is the Lutheran Church. It subscribes wholeheartedly to the program laid down by God. The Formula of Concord declares: "We have no intention of yielding aught of the eternal, immutable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquillity, and unity (which, moreover, is not in our power to do). Nor would such peace and unity, since it is devised against the truth and for its suppression, have any permanency. Still less are we inclined to adorn and conceal a corruption of the pure doctrine and manifest, condemned errors. But we entertain heartfelt pleasure and love, and are on our part sincerely inclined and anxious to advance that unity according to our utmost power, by which His glory remains to God uninjured, nothing of the divine truth of the Holy Gospel is surrendered, nor room is given to the least error. . . ." (*Triglot*, p. 1095.) That is the Lutheran

program: "Agreement among them," the churches, "in doctrine and all its articles." (*Triglot*, p. 831.) That was Luther's program: unity in doctrine, agreement in all doctrines. "Darum heisst und ist diese Einigkeit der Kirche nicht einerlei aeußerlich Regiment . . . sondern wo diese Einträchtigkeit des einigen Glaubens, Taufe u. s. w. ist. Daher heisst es eine einige heilige, *catholica* oder christliche Kirche, dass da ist einerlei reine und lautere Lehre des Evangelii und aeußerlich Bekenntnis derselben an allen Orten der Welt und zu jeder Zeit. . . ." (XII:898.) And: "The doctrine is not ours, but God's. . . . We protest that we desire nothing more than to be at unity with all men: so that they leave unto us the doctrine of faith entire and incorrupt. We are bound to keep all the articles of the Christian doctrine pure and certain." (IX:644—649.) That is the voice of confessional Lutheranism. The Synodical Conference declares: "We cannot conceive of the unity of the Church as consisting of anything else than agreement in all articles of the Christian doctrine. That is the Scriptural conception, Eph. 4:3. Among us any other conception is ruled out." (*Proc.*, 1888, p. 32.) Dr. Pieper repeats this statement in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1888, p. 294, and adds: "If we became indifferent towards false doctrine, if we, under the pretext that charity must rule, tolerated errors in our midst, there would be beneath all external association and co-operation only a mock unity, not the Christian unity that God demands." The Toledo Theses (1909; accepted by the Ohio Synod and the Iowa Synod): "Thesis IV. Open questions. . . . (b) There is within the Church of God no authority whatever of departing from any truths clearly revealed by the Scriptures, be their contents considered fundamental or non-fundamental, important or apparently unimportant. (c) Full agreement in all articles of faith constitutes the irremissible condition of church fellowship. Persistent error in an article of faith must under all circumstances lead to separation. (d) Those who knowingly, obdurately, and persistently contradict the divine Word in any of its utterances whatsoever thereby overthrow the organic foundation (of the faith) and are therefore to be excluded from church fellowship." (See Neve, *A Brief History*, p. 448.) C. P. Krauth: "What is the unity of the Church? That question was answered three centuries ago by the Reformers and fifteen centuries before that in the New Testament. True unity is oneness in faith, as taught in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . The one token of this unity, that by which this internal thing is made visible, is one expression of faith, one 'form of sound words,' used in simple earnestness, and meaning the same to all who employ it. . . ." (See Bente, *American Lutheranism*, II, p. 184.) Over in Germany H. Sasse is upholding the Scriptural policy thus:

"It is the plain teaching of the New Testament that the true unity of the Church is unity in the truth. And it is the painful experience of church history, particularly during the last century, that whenever attempts have been made to unite churches without inquiring about pure doctrine, unity has not been achieved; and, what is worse, the divisions have always been magnified." (*Here We Stand*, p. 178.) And Werner Elert: "Here [in Art. VI of the Augsburg Confession] the Lutheran Church declares itself ready to have church fellowship with all Christians — under one condition: that we are one in doctrine." (See *Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung*, Nov. 18, 1927.) Among the non-Lutherans, too, there are many who will have church union on no other basis than full and honest agreement in doctrine. Rev. M. Alexander, for instance, writing in *The Presbyterian*, declared: "Then I think we should remember that no true unity can be brought about except on the basis of the whole truth. Any unity produced by the sacrifice of great principles or surrender of convictions is impossible. How much can we let go to secure unity? How much of our doctrinal position ought we to surrender in order that we may unite with those who cannot accept it?" If we do that, "we will pay too big a price for a unity which is no true unity." (See *THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, 1921, p. 372.) *The Presbyterian Guardian*, May, 1939 (representing the Machen group): "Church union as it is being fostered today, with distressing doctrinal indifference, seeking to herd together all Christians into one large organization, with but a sly wink at profound doctrinal differences, is to dull the keen edge of the Christian consciousness. . . . To regard the doctrine and creed of the Christians as of minor importance is to take the very vitals out of this faith which must look to God alone as sovereign. . . ." The Southern Baptist Convention: "Since the present divided condition of Christendom is unquestionably the result of departures from the simple teaching of the Scriptures, the only possible road to organic union is back to the Scriptures. . . . We are unalterably bound to the Scriptures as our law and guide." (See *CONC. THEOL. MTHLY.*, 1939, p. 147.) Dr. J. T. Hoogstra (Christian Reformed): "We are soldiers of the truth, obligated to serve the risen Lord, challenged to fight Satan in the name of our sovereign Lord, blessed with the hope that all the children of the Father will listen to what we say and teach in order that we may unite against the world, not in efficiency nor in compromise, but in conviction and in truth." (See *The Sovereignty of God*, p. 22.) And these are not isolated voices. They are speaking in the name of a great host.⁷⁸⁾

78) See statement by Walther, page 621 above, Pieper ("nothing but the revealed truth and the whole revealed truth"), Loy, Lenski,

Offermann, pp. 327 and 328, *Lutheran Herald* ("the full teaching of God's Word"), p. 470. We have space for a few more similar pronouncements. *Toward Lutheran Union*: "Our Church holds—on the basis of Scripture and the Confessions—that every teaching of Scripture must be accepted and can never be made an open question. Scripture demands that. See, for instance, Matt. 28:20; 2 Tim. 1:13, etc." Walther: "Alles, was Gott klar geoffenbaret hat, ist keine offene Frage." (Pp. 72, 77.) *The Lutheran School Journal*, Jan., 1943: "Let us call to mind right here that no one desires a united Lutheran Church more than our Synod. We certainly pray and work for it today. In doing so, we emphasize, of course, that such a union must be based upon doctrinal unity. Unless it be built on this solid foundation, it will crumble and fall." *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 1939, p. 250: "Four simple demands of Scripture may be registered. 1. Members of the Church must all speak the same thing. 1 Cor. 1:10; Rom. 15:6. 2. The speaking of the Church is restricted to the Word of God, 1 Pet. 4:11; Deut. 4:2. 3. Even a slight deviation from this norm is extremely dangerous, Gal. 5:9; 2 Tim. 2:17. 4. Anyone who deviates in his teaching from the Word of God is a false prophet and must be avoided, Tit. 3:10; Rom. 16:17; Matt. 7:15." *Proceedings of the Norwegian Synod*, 1936: "Thesis II. We acknowledge one, and only one, truly unifying influence and power in matters both of doctrine and of practise, namely the Word of God; and only one God-pleasing procedure in striving for unity: That 'the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, and we as the children of God also lead holy lives according to it.'" President H. A. Preuss (Norwegian Synod) "expressed the true Lutheran principle in this regard when he said (Syv Foredray, pp. 57, 58): ' . . . We do not want to promote a union without unity in the faith, a union after the Prussian model, where truth and error, the Word of God and human theses, are abolated side by side and are to have equal rights; for that is an abomination to God and more dangerous than open disunity and division.' . . ." (See *Grace for Grace*, p. 141 f.) Report of Ohio Synod for 1918: "We declare we can never enter into union with any Lutheran synod unless we agree in doctrine and practice, especially at this time when the unionistic spirit is threatening to creep into our Lutheran Church." (P. 121.) W. N. Emch, in the *Lutheran Standard*, Jan. 16, 1943: "These union services ignore and belittle doctrinal differences. They encourage error and compromise truth. If the Lutheran Church has anything distinctive to which it is in duty bound to cling and if the neighboring churches teach error which we cannot conscientiously endorse or encourage, then fidelity to the truth as we understand it compels us to remain separate. Why pretend that we are united in our faith when it is not true?" President H. L. Yochum: "More and more insistent grow the voices that wonder why all Lutherans cannot live in one house. We have been trying to pierce the synodical walls and build doors through which we may enter into Lutheran unity. Please note that I say 'unity' and not 'union'; there has been much confusion of this distinction, unfortunately." (See *The Lutheran Outlook*, May, 1943.) Professor C. H. Little (U. L. C.): "The Word has been entrusted to the Church to keep it and preserve it, not to alter, compromise, or change it. The Church has no right to withhold confession of any revealed truth. It is nothing short of spiritual adultery to reject any known truth of God's Word. It is not in vain that our Augsburg Confession says that for the true unity of the Church there must be agreement on the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. . . . Faithfulness to the one and only standard, the Holy Word of God, should be the determinative factor in all fellowship." (*Disputed Doctrine*, p. 82.) Professor E. H. Klotzsche: "This *consensus de doctrina evangelii* means not merely agreement in general or agreement in so-called fundamentals only, but agreement in all articles of revealed truth. Wherever a clear teaching of the Holy Scriptures is denied or repudiated, there can be no true union, because there is not unity of faith. 'We are anxious to

And these men are working for the reunion of Christendom on the only plan which has God's sanction and blessing. Dr. Pieper wrote in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1929, p. 205: "At the time of the colloquy of Regensburg (1541) Elector John Frederick of Saxony pointed out what the true basis for union is. He wrote on May 28: 'With the help of Almighty God we shall, as long as we live, listen to no man who, in the matter of religious agreement, talks about making agreements with men. We say, once for all: if a man is looking for agreement, let him come to agreement *with God and His Word*; let him accept God's Word and this doctrine, as we and the rest of us have done. If he wants to do patchwork, we can have no further dealings with him! (Seckendorf, *Comm. de Lutheranism*, III, p. 361.) In these words the pious Elector, a faithful Lutheran, has set before the Church of all times the true basis for union. Harmony in the Church can be brought about only in this way that those who have *departed* from the Word of God, *return to it* and thus 'come to agreement with God and His Word.'" (See also *Proceedings Eastern District*, 1930, p. 47.)

Are we ready to adopt God's plan of union? We realize that it is not an easy matter to carry it out. It is not the short and easy way. It is a long and hard way. It is, as the writer in the *Lutheran Herald* says, "the way of the cross." It entails great suffering. It calls for a struggle unto death. But Luther was ready to bring the sacrifices it called for. "To bring about such union, he was willing to do everything, to suffer everything, yea, to die." (*Theological Quarterly*, 1906, p. 211.) He would, on the one hand, rather die than give up one jot or tittle of God's truth. He declared: "Wherefore, let me tell you this: I am, in this discussion, seeking an object solemn and essential; nay, such, and so great, that it ought to be maintained and defended through death itself; and that, although the whole world should not only be thrown into tumult and set in arms thereby, but even if it should be hurled into chaos and reduced to nothing." (XVIII: 1703.) Luther

advance that unity by which nothing of the divine truth of the Holy Gospel is surrendered' and 'no room is given to the least error.' (*Triglot*, p. 1095.) There can be no compromising with error. Church fellowship with errorists is sinful unionism and can never be pleasing to God, for treating errorists as though they were brethren in the faith is a denial of, or at least indifference to, the revealed truth of God. Let each man choose for himself this day between the errorists and Jesus Christ, who says: . . . "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled." (*Christian Symbolics*, p. 399.) — "Men like Walther, Loehe, Wyneken, Grabau, Loy developed a confessional wing which not only accepts all the symbols of the Lutheran Church, but insists on absolute doctrinal unity . . . and in its practice takes a bold position against the American spirit (church fellowship and secret societies)." (Neve, *Brief History*, p. 434.)

had the apostolic spirit.⁷⁹⁾ The same apostolic spirit inspired Walther: "We consider God's Word as worth more than heaven and earth and would rather lose the friendship of all than lose this." (See page 403 above.) And as Luther and Walther and the rest would rather lose everything than submit to a false union, they were also, on the other hand, ready to sacrifice themselves in the interest of the true union. Sacrifice themselves? Suffer and die? Are such things required in the cause of the reunion of Christendom? There have been times when men had to suffer the loss of their earthly goods, of their liberty, and even of their lives in this cause. In the days of the Interim men suffered bodily persecution, ministers were deposed from their office and exiled, some had to flee for their lives. We know what happened to Paul Gerhardt when he refused to be a party to the unionistic schemes of the ruler of his country. And under the Prussian Union ministers of the Gospel were deposed and even imprisoned, their congregations harassed by the police, and many left their home and country. Must we, too, make sacrifices of this kind? Hardly. But a sacrifice of another kind is required of all who apply God's plan of union, a sacrifice which equals, yes, surpasses, the suffering of imprisonment, exile, and physical death. We must crucify our flesh; we must kill our Old Adam; we must die. Our flesh will not accept God's plan. It has many objections to it. First and foremost, our flesh does not stand in holy awe of God's Word. It refuses to submit to the demand that God's Word must be kept inviolate to the last letter. It rebels against the idea that agreement in doctrine, honest acceptance of all teachings of Scripture is the only basis of union, it stands out for a union by compromise. And if we would apply God's plan of union, we must subdue our flesh, silence its objection, crucify it. But this denying of ourselves, this fighting against the inclination and demand of our own evil self is suffering the agonies of death.

When unionists say that our refusal to join their union move-

79) Professor August Pieper's phrase: "Das sind die Gedanken des Unionismus, von denen unsere junge Generation von Lehrern und Hoerern taeglich bedroht wird. Gegen sie gibt es nur ein einziges Mittel: den apostolischen Geist Luthers, dem jedes Stueck des Wortes Gottes heilig, unverletzlich, unantastbar gilt und 'die Welt zu enge macht,' der des Evangeliums so gewiss ist, dass er sich lieber tausend Haelse dafuer abschlagen als auch nur das geringste Stueck desselben verleugnen will, dem das Heil der Seelen mehr gilt als die Freundschaft der ganzen Welt, dem das Herz bricht ueber den beklagenswerten Untergang Zwinglis und Oekolampads, der ihnen aber die kirchliche Gemeinschaft ihres andern Geistes wegen unbeweglich versagt. Nur solange dieser Geist die Fuehrer unserer Kirche beherrscht, wird sie wahrhaft lutherisch bleiben; und er kann nur gewonnen werden und erhalten bleiben, wenn wir an Gottes Wort und Luthers Schriften 'alle Stunden warten.'" (*Theologische Quartalschrift*, 1931, p. 6.)

ment is due to our "unwillingness to go through intellectual, moral, and spiritual struggle" (see footnote 54), they do not know whereof they speak. Luther and Walther and the rest insisted on full agreement in all doctrines not because that would be the shortest and easiest way to end an unpleasant discussion. No, their attitude was the result of a most severe spiritual struggle. They had to engage in a life and death combat with their compromising flesh in order to come to the decision to stand out for the full truth of God's Word. Every honest effort to bring peace between the churches is accompanied by incessant and bitter striving and wrestling—striving and wrestling with our wicked flesh, which wants peace at any price.

Oh, for the apostolic spirit of Luther! In that spirit we shall prize the reunion of Christendom so highly that we are ready to suffer death in its cause, let it be physical death, if that be necessary, or let it be the death of the Old Adam, which is always necessary.

Now let us view some particular cases. 1. To stand out for a true union, for agreement in all doctrines, always entails persecution of some kind. You may lose the friendship of many. You may have to give up earthly advantages. You will be reviled and slandered. The fathers suffered that, and "we are not better than the fathers." "The reformers," says Loy, "never ceased to reprove error and sin, and never presumed to alter the Lord's law for the sake of winning men's favor." And "let us not try to conceal the fact that this—standing up for the Augsburg Confession and helping to build up the Christian Church by insisting on its acceptance as a condition of membership—will subject to virtual persecution. No one can follow the Lord faithfully if he is resolved to shun the cross. . . . Our Lutheran claim and contention are not popular." (*Op. cit.*, p. 93, 118 f.) Are we willing to sacrifice popularity, friendship, influential position, etc., in this cause? We will not do it if we listen to our selfish flesh. But we shall do it if we crucify our flesh; and we shall willingly crucify our flesh if we realize that only the confession of the whole truth can further the glorious cause of the reunion of Christendom. Walther: "We cannot abate one single letter of the pure doctrine and confession, for it is not ours but God's. . . . As to the cross, which in the nature of the case is the inevitable concomitant of our standing apart, the abuse heaped upon us by our enemies and the unjust charges raised against us by our erring fellow Christian, we will suffer all that gladly and willingly as long as we keep in view, by faith, the high and holy object for which God would have His New Testament Church be separate from the world, as we learn that from the Word of God. And verily, on this staunch and untiring

testimony and preaching of the Church God's pleasure and God's blessing rests, not on all these unscriptural projects and unionistic contrivances of the church politicians." (*Proc. Western District*, 1870, p. 54 f.)⁸⁰)

In no case can the champions of the true union escape persecution in the form of verbal abuse. "Union is the idol of our age; and all who refuse to worship this idol are cast into the fiery furnace of slander." (*Theological Quarterly*, 1906, p. 212.) They are accused of pharisaic pride, unchristian conduct, and various other kinds of wrongdoing. (See preceding article.) We are no better than our fathers. Why, these charges are being raised even against the Apostles. David Smith comments on 2 John 10 in the *Expositor's Greek Testament*: "This counsel was cited by Irenaeus as inculcating intolerance of heretics. If so, it is certainly an unchristian counsel, contrary to the spirit and teaching of our Lord." Now, these reproaches are hard to bear. It does not matter so much when the children of the world vilify us. But it is hard to bear when our fellow Christians charge us with unchristian conduct. We do not like to be misjudged by men whose fine judgments on other points of our Christian doctrine have won our respect and our love. We would do a lot to regain and retain their good opinion of us. But one thing we cannot do. We cannot lower our demand for agreement in doctrine. And we must bear

80) Pieper: "Dies war unserer Vaeter Kraft, dass sie sich, ohne Kompromisse zu schliessen, unbedingt auf Gottes Wort stellten. . . . Sie haben sich nie auf Kompromisse zwischen Wahrheit und Unwahrheit eingelassen. Und so sind sie geblieben im Angesichte aller Widersacher. So werden auch wir vor allen Widersachern bleiben, wenn wir beim Wort bleiben. Freilich duerfen wir uns hierbei keine irdische Herrlichkeit versprechen. Wir sind nicht besser als unsere Vaeter und die Kinder Gottes aller Zeiten. Wir werden durch viel Truebsal in das Reich Gottes eingehen. . . ." (*Proc. Delegate Synod*, 1899, p. 39.) A Lutheran leader of the Church in Germany, of the past generation, declared: "If through a single abatement of God's Word I could win honor and glory for myself and I made the abatement, I would have put personal gain above faithfulness. If I could gain a life of ease for myself through one little concession and I did it, I would no longer be Christ's servant." (See *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1943, p. 82.) Urbanus Rhegius, of the first generation of Lutherans, speaking of the same matter, penned the solemn words: "Cursed be the honor, cursed be the gain obtained through departing from the truth! Blessed is the shame and blessed is the loss suffered for the sake of truth and justice." (From a letter written Dec. 18, 1525. See *Luther's Works*, XVII:1570.) *Kirchenblatt*, April 24, 1943: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.' . . . In our striving for union there are bounds which we must observe if we would reach our real object. A servant of Jesus who officiates together with preachers that do not stand on the foundation of the doctrine of Jesus may gain distinction and honor with the world, but he is not building up the kingdom of God nor the godly unity; he is undermining it. Truth is more important than union. Truth must never be set aside for the sake of union." (See footnote 35.)

the cross of being misunderstood by good friends and fellow Christians.

2. Another point on which we must engage in a struggle unto death with the Old Adam is the disposition to rush the union. Our flesh likes the short and easy road: getting rid of the differences by ignoring them, practicing intercommunion while the disunion still exists, etc. God's way is the long and hard way. For one thing, the differences must be defined, not disguised, and when they have been clearly stated, they must be discussed in the light of God's Word, and union must not be declared until the errors have been recognized and rejected. That takes longer than a day or a month or a year. It may take many, many years. But those who want a real union are willing to expend the time and labor required and go through the intellectual and spiritual struggles called for. "When the difference is clearly understood," says Rudelbach, "and when controversy goes to every necessary length, we may conclude that there is a true love of union. The more careless we are in stating the differences and the more anxious to hide the sores, the farther removed we are from that unity of the Spirit which is the innermost essence of all true union." (See *Concordia Cyclopedia*, p. 775.) Those who want to hasten matters by curtailing, or barring entirely, the necessary doctrinal discussions, are working for a sham union. We want a real union and cannot permit our flesh to dictate haste. Would the Formula of Concord ever have been written and the reunion of Lutheranism accomplished if haste had ruled? The Lutheran Church takes the time necessary for a thorough discussion of the differences and the earnest study of the Word which must heal the division, for "it knows that we cannot bring about unity by ceasing to take the search for truth seriously." (H. Sasse, *Here We Stand*, p. 180.) Let Macfarland ridicule this attitude (quoting Sasse's statement in his book *The Christian Faith in a Day of Crisis*, pp. 37 and 303, he cries out: "We would seem to be back in Marburg!"), and let our impatient flesh cry out against the delay, we shall not let it have its way and are proud to have men know that we are still back in Marburg with Luther, the man of the apostolic spirit.⁸¹⁾

81) In his story of the Wittenberg Concord, G. Goesswein writes: "Dabei tat man, was Gott in solchem Falle fordert: man bekannte die goettliche Wahrheit frei und ungeschminkt. Man sucht eben nicht nach einer aeuusseren Form, durch welche man trotz aller Uneinigkeit im Innern doch nach aussen sich als Einigkeit darstellen koenne, sondern man trachtete nach *Geisteseinigkeit*. Zu einer solchen gelangt man nicht durch eine *oberflaechliche Behandlung der Streitfragen*. Je mehr eine heimliche Krankheit verborgen wird, um so tiefer frisst sie ein. Je schaefer die einmal vorhandenen Gegensaeetze widereinander gestellt werden, um so heller leuchtet die Wahrheit." (*Eine Union in der Wahrheit*, p. 44.)

Another thing: it can only harm the cause of the reunion of Christendom if in any negotiations looking toward unity union is proclaimed and church fellowship established before it is established that the articles of agreement, the formulas of concord, have been wholeheartedly accepted by all. Luther warned against hasty, precipitate, premature action in this matter. In the letter to Bucer in which he declared his readiness to sacrifice his life three times over in the cause of union, he also stated: "If your people are not yet ready to teach the doctrine of the Real Presence, I hold that we must postpone the matter until the divine grace works further progress. . . . Therefore I cannot act as though real and full agreement between us had been reached unless I would violate my conscience and sow the seeds of much greater confusion in our churches. An agreement of this sort would result in much worse discord." (XVII:1974.) Again: "Es will hie vonnoeten sein, dass man zuvor gewiss sei, ob die andern auch also halten, wie Bucerus guter Hoffnung meinet und ob man auch solches im Volke oeffentlich lehre und treibe, sonst moechte die Vereinigung einen boesen Grund gewinnen und hernach aerger werden, wie ich D. Luther dem Bucero zu Coburg gar fleissig vorhielt, dass man solch Vereinigung aus gutem, reinem Grund anfinge, oder liesse es anstehen." (XVII:1976.) Early in 1536 letters of Zwingli and Oekolampad, prefaced by a letter of Bucer, were published, in which preface Bucer praised the other two men for their orthodoxy. Luther declared that after reading these documents, he had little hope of concord and believed it would be better to leave matters as they were than to make them a hundred times worse by a fictitious union. (See J. Stump, *The Life of Ph. Melancthon*, p. 735; also Goesswein, *op. cit.*, p. 142 f., and Luther XVII:1943; 2093.) No man desired the reunion of Christendom more than Luther. When union with the Churches at Augsburg was in prospect, he declared: "For after this union is confirmed, I shall with tears of joy sweetly sing: Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for I shall leave after me peace for the churches." (XVII:2040.) And we can imagine how his flesh urged him not to delay any longer—the little disagreement still existing did not matter, etc. But Luther did not permit his impatient flesh to sweep him off his feet. His apostolic spirit, circumspect, cautious, alive to the interest of the Church, enabled him to wait and to labor patiently during long, wearisome years, till full concord had been reached. There must be no premature action, no forcing of the union. "Ich sehe fuer nuetze und gut an, dass man die Concordia nicht so ploetzlich schliesse, damit jene nicht uebereilet und bei den Unsern nicht eine Zwietracht sich erregt." (XVII:2058.) It would not be fair to the churches in

Switzerland and Southern Germany, who are not yet in full doctrinal agreement with us, and it would only create discord in our churches! Again: "Es kann eine solche grosse Sache, so lang und tief gewachsen, auf einmal ploetzlich nicht moegen vollbracht werden." (XXI b: 1954.) And the Old Adam wants to settle these weighty matters in a hurry!—Oh, for the apostolic spirit of Luther! The *Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung*, March 22, 1935, quoted these two statements of Luther and commented: "Here again you hear our Luther speaking just as you would expect him to speak! He will remain a straight and honest man, let it cost what it will. He knows that truthfulness, candor, and sincerity are the absolutely necessary prerequisites for any brotherly agreement, if it is to be genuine." Reporting on the Wittenberg Concord, Myconius says: "Luther hat wiederholet, wie er pflegt, mit grossem Ernst, dass entweder eine rechte Einigkeit, oder gar keine geschehe." (See Luther's Works, XVII:2094.)⁸²⁾

3. Patience, gentleness, mutual esteem must be exercised by those who are honestly working for the godly reunion of Christendom. "These were the qualities which Dr. Walther demanded as the essentials for the obtainment of a wider Lutheran fellowship. His words (in 1868) were: 'Patience, gentleness, mutual fraternal esteem, frank exchange of the convictions of each side, close study of Scripture, constant prayer, will be the necessary weapons for those who wish to attain the agreement for which we long and to frustrate the schemes of the devil.'" (*Lutheran Witness*, 1942, p. 220.) When Christians meet to discuss the matter of union, the spirit of suspicion, uncharitable judgments, quick-tempered impatience, and particularly, all self-conceit and self-exaltation must be barred from the conference room. Patience, meekness, humility must rule the discussion. Luther, the gentle Luther, employed this method. Writing to the representatives of the Swiss Church in Zurich, Bern, Basel, etc., Dec. 7, 1537, he says: "Yet, as I said before, where we in this point have not come fully to an under-

82) If the Old Adam is dissatisfied with the slow progress of a particular union movement—which through the grace of God may succeed—what will he say when he hears that the movement for the reunion of all Christendom will never fully succeed? He would give up the whole thing in disgust and advise us to cease our endeavors. Thank God that He has not made the Old Adam our adviser! The fact that the visible Church never will be one (Acts 20:29 f.; 2 Thess. 2; 1 Cor. 11:19) should not dampen our zeal. On the contrary, seeing that Satan will be active to the end in sowing dissensions, we should be the more zealous to advance the cause of the God-pleasing union, knowing that whatever measure of success God in His grace and wisdom will grant, these efforts will mightily further the work of the Church.—Can a man, knowing that there never will be a full reunion of Christendom, still pray for it and wholeheartedly work for it? Our overwise flesh sneers at the idea. But faith can do it.

standing, the best thing for the present is that we be friendly to each other, that we put the best construction on each other's acts, till the mire that has been stirred up settles. On our side, and I speak especially for my own person, we will, from the heart, dismiss all unkindness and regard you with confidence and love. When we have done all in our power, we still need God's great help and counsel. We need not indulge the disposition to suspect each other, and stir up strife, for Satan, who hates us and the Concord [the Wittenberg Concord, 1536], will find his own, who will throw trees and rocks on the way. Let it be our part to give each other our hearts and hands to hold fast with equal firmness, lest the afterstate of things be worse than the first. May the Holy Ghost fuse our hearts together in Christian love and purpose, and purge away all the dross of suspicion, to the glory of His sacred name and to the salvation of many souls." (XVII:2146.) From a letter to the burgomaster of Basel, Feb. 17, 1537; "God grant us increasing grace that we may harmonize more and more in a true, pure unity, in a sure accordant doctrine and view . . . also that we forgive one another and, *n. b.*, bear with one another as God the Father forgives us and bears with us in Christ. We must forget the strifes and smarts of the past⁸³) and strive for unity with patience, meekness, kindly colloquies, but most of all with heartfelt prayer to God the Father, the Father of all concord and love." (XXI b:2153. — See Krauth, *Conservative Reformation*, p. 139 f.) "We are prepared to confer amiably concerning all possible ways and means in order that we may come together." (*Augsburg Confession, Triglot*, p. 10.)

What attitude should we take if the honest attempt to reach a doctrinal agreement does not bear quick fruit and the discussions promise to extend over years? We have mentioned this point more than once already (pp. 326, 328, 384, 403), but on account of its great importance shall add a few more lines. In this situation Luther exercised great patience. "I have no doubt that there are among you [at Zurich, etc.] right pious folk, who are sincere and want nothing but the truth; and I cherish the glad and firm hope that, though they are still somewhat entangled, in time, if we deal gently with these good weak people, God will happily end all error and misunderstanding. Amen." (XVII:2162.) If one of our brethren has stumbled into a doctrinal error, we do not hastily break off fraternal relations with him, but according to Rom. 15:1 and 2 Tim. 4:2 we bear his infirmity and deal with him with all long-suffering. "Even if an individual member of the Church becomes

83) "Let bygones be bygones"—phrase used by Walther in the peace offer to the Buffalo Synod. (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1856, p. 380.)

guilty of an error which violates a clear word of God, such error does not at once deprive the respective person of ecclesiastical, fraternal, or intimate fellowship." (Walther, *Lehre und Wehre*, 1868, p. 318. See *CONC. THEOL. MONTHLY*, 1940, p. 298.) And when men who are not in church fellowship with us meet with us for the purpose of discussing the doctrine with a view to removing the differences, we certainly must not lose patience if harmony is not achieved at once; we shall continue the discussion as long as there are prospects of coming to an honest agreement. It may take years; but the delay shall not outwear our patience. In his essay on "Unionism" Dr. Pieper says: "The proper and God-pleasing way to treat the Christians' weakness in doctrine and knowledge is to strive to remove this weakness by patiently teaching them the whole truth of God's Word. That is a truly Christian work, and we should keep at it in great patience. We must not be quick to discontinue this work, even if it takes longer than we had expected. We keep it up with great patience as long as there is, in our Christian judgment, any prospect and hope of overcoming the error." (*Proc. Oregon and Washington District*, 1924, p. 27.) How long did it take till the Wittenberg Concord was effected! How much patience did the work connected with the Formula of Concord require!

It is not an easy matter to preserve or to restore Christian union. It is not an easy thing to practice the humility, gentleness, and patience required. We love to practice these virtues, but our flesh abominates them. If our flesh had its way, every union conference would soon break up in discord. A hard task is set before us, a task that can be accomplished only by crucifying our own flesh. If we are willing to die three times for the sake of Christian union, let us begin by killing our hot-tempered, our suspicious, our conceited flesh. May God give us a humble spirit! Why should we preen ourselves and set ourselves above the fellow Christian who is enmeshed in error? We owe it in no wise to ourselves but entirely to the wondrous grace of God that we have not fallen into the same error. God has been infinitely patient with us who are ever ready to stray away from His pure Word. God give us a portion of the apostolic spirit of Luther, who said: Let us "bear with one another as God the Father forgives us and bears with us in Christ," who said: "We must not forget how God bore with us and manifested patience for a long time when we were weak and even unbelieving. Hence we, too, must practice patience with our neighbor even if he cannot follow us at once and at times stumbles and errs. Hear how God here and there in the Prophets proclaims that He carries His people as a mother carries her child, Is. 46:3. This must be our method in

dealing with our weak brethren; we must exercise patience for a while and bear with their weak faith. . . . We must not bark at them in frightening words, but treat them in friendly fashion and instruct them with all gentleness; we do not intend to go to heaven alone; rather endeavor to bring your brother along. Even if these people now are our enemies and do not have the faith in perfection, they will, I trust, become our friends and drop their unbelief." (XX:12.)

Deal with the erring Christian with infinite patience! However, in order that the cause of the Christian reunion be not harmed, we must be careful to let all the world know that we sharply distinguish between the erring Christian and the error itself. We have great love for the Christian entangled in false doctrine but no love at all for his false doctrine. We can condone his weakness, but will never give him the impression that we thereby condone or even legitimate his error. We are willing to confer amiably with men who differ with us doctrinally, but we tell them in the most emphatic way that we consider their false teaching a wicked and horrible thing. Dr. Pieper: "The Christian Church can and should indeed have patience with the erring and seek to remove the error by instruction. But the Church never can or dare grant error equal right with the truth. If it does this, it is in every case a denial of the truth itself." (*Christliche Dogmatik*, III, p. 491.) Again: "Die Vaeter lehrten zwar Gottes Wort, um einen Ausdruck Luthers zu gebrauchen, mit aller 'Bescheidenheit' und unter steter Anbequemung an die Schwachen, aber sie haben sich nie auf Kompromisse zwischen Wahrheit und Unwahrheit eingelassen." (*Proc. Delegate Synod*, 1899, p. 39.) — Let us be on our guard against the Old Adam, the master of many wiles and arts, lest he betray us into turning the godly tolerance of the weak into the tolerance of false doctrine. Utter frankness is called for here, lest those with whom we amiably confer be strengthened in their error. Dr. Pieper: "It certainly is God's will (Rom. 15:1) that we should bear with the weak — those, too, who are weak in doctrine. That means that we must not at once cast them off as unchristians — that would be against all Christian love. But it does not mean that we declare their error to be the truth or, at least, a harmless matter. That would only be strengthening their erring conscience. Pay heed to Scripture. Scripture often admonishes us to have patience with the weak. But it never asks us to bear with a doctrinal error." (*Proc. Synodical Conference*, 1888, p. 26.)

Again, the time may come when "patience" would no longer be a Christian virtue and bearing with the "weak" would harm the cause of Christian union. When the "weak" brother has become strong in his defense of error, we can no longer deal with

him as a brother, but must denounce him as an errorist. And when men wanted to use "friendly" negotiations as a means of propagating their error, Luther's gentleness turned into holy wrath. In his essay on "Unionism" Dr. Pieper states: "Right here we must note *when* the weak cease to be weak, when they become false teachers and must be treated as such. This is the case when they demand *recognition* of their error by the Church, when they seek to make propaganda for it or even label the truth of God's Word as error and brand the true teachers as errorists." Again: "Luther is at pains to inculcate the Christian duty of leniency toward the weak and insists that we must bear with them in love and patience. He also warns us against self-exaltation and the feeling of superiority towards the weak and tells us that he who today is weak may be the strong one tomorrow and vice versa. But, on the other hand, Luther finds it altogether intolerable that the weak should set up their weakness as the source and norm of the Christian doctrine." (CONC. THEOL. MTHLY., 1930, p. 4.)⁸⁴⁾ When they take that attitude, severity must take the place of leniency. In the words of Dr. Walther: "The time for breaking off fraternal relations with those also who err in non-fundamental doctrines arrives then only when they *stubbornly refuse* to accept the convincing testimony of Scripture." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1868, p. 109. See *Popular Symbolics*, p. 19.) The same applies in the wider field of the union movement. There can be no "amiable conferring," no friendly negotiations with those who persist in the demand that their false teaching be tolerated or accepted. The contrary procedure would serve to establish the principles of unionism. It would hurt the cause of Christian union in the truth.⁸⁵⁾

84) Luther writes, for instance: "They appeal to Gal. 6:1 and demand that we cover their error with the mantle of charity which believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. . . . They say the matter is not of such importance that on account of this one article Christian unity should be disrupted, which is the choicest treasure of the Church, etc. . . . They charge us with stubbornness, because we will not yield to them by even one hair's breadth and will not tolerate their error. But I would rather have them and the whole world with them leave me and turn against me than that I should leave Christ and have Him turn against me. Christ would turn against me if I turned away from His clear and certain Word to follow their idle dreams and perversions of Christ's words. Der Eine Christus ist mir groesser als unzaehlig viele Einigkeiten in der Liebe. . . . Thus Paul bore the weakness and the fall of the Galatians and others whom the false apostles had misled; he looked at their sincere repentance. . . . But he dealt differently with the incorrigible false apostles, who defended their false doctrine and demanded that it be received as the truth; with them he dealt hardly, Gal. 5:12; 5:10; 1:8." (IX: 726 ff.)

85) It is not always easy to decide just when the charge of stubbornness must be raised; it is sometimes very hard to substantiate it, and we must act accordingly. Dr. E. E. Gerfen says on this matter: "Dr. Walther sagte: 'Unsere Synode schliesst niemand aus, weil er eine

4. Is polemics necessary for the reunion of Christendom? The unionists deplore and decry the use of polemics. Must we attack and denounce the false teachings of the Catholics, of the Reformed, yes, and of the erring Lutheran? Our flesh implores us not to do it; it hates theological controversies.

But we must do it. God commands it. "Reprove, rebuke." "Rebuke them sharply." (2 Tim. 4:2; Tit. 1:9-13.) St. Paul insisted that Scripture must be used "for reproof" (2 Tim. 3:16), and that we "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3). He himself denounced false teaching of any kind and degree, denounced it with a curse (Gal. 1:7 ff.). Luther, too, was unsparing in his denunciation of false doctrine. He loved peace as much as any man, but his love and fear of God's Word would not permit him to remain at peace with those who spoke one word against Holy Scripture. He said—and practiced accordingly—: "The Christian minister must not only be a pastor who instructs his flock how they may be true Christians, but must also battle off the wolves lest they attack the sheep and seduce and destroy them with false doctrine. The devil is never at rest. . . . I neglect a duty if I do not warn them against the wolves. . . ." (IX:1100.) Luther's apostolic spirit would not let him keep silence in the face of any denial of God's truth. "If Luther's life seemed largely one of warfare, it was not that he did not love peace much, but that he loved truth more." (Krauth, *The Conservative Reformation*, p. 138.)

But behold, it is this love of the truth and the attendant warfare against falsehood which works toward peace and union. Because Luther loved peace so much, he devoted the greater part of his life to this spiritual warfare. The fight against false doctrine a means of reuniting the Churches? The unionist cannot grasp the idea. He denounces it as wicked folly. He believes that theological controversy is one of the greatest obstacles to the reunion of Christendom. Macfarland insists that "unity is hindered by theological polemics." (*Christian Unity*, p. 284.) These unionists, says Dr. Th. Graebner, like "to refer 'to hair-splitting theologians' as the reason for the divided state of our Church. . . . The

irrige Meinung bezueglich einer Lehre hat, solange er willens ist, sich eines Besseren belehren zu lassen und nicht oeffentlich Propaganda fuer seinen Irrtum macht.' Diese Erklaerung der Toleranz steht in vollem Einklang mit der Schrift. . . . Natuerlich muss solche Toleranz endlich aufhoeren, es muss endlich zur Entscheidung kommen. *Wie lange sie aber dauern soll, das ist schwer zu entscheiden.* Die pastorale wie auch die synodale Seelsorge, die ja den irrenden Bruder gewinnen will, muss die Sache schliesslich entscheiden." (See *Kirchenblatt*, June 26, 1943.) Christian wisdom, the fear of God's inviolable Word, due regard for the welfare of the Church, and the willingness to suffer shame and reproach in this matter must combine to give the right answer to this difficult problem.

Church, we are told, is being kept apart by 'quarrels of theologians.' We are also told that 'a few first-class funerals' is all that is needed to reunite the Lutheran Church." (*The Lutheran Witness*, 1937, p. 244.) It seems strange that theologians cannot understand that if the churches are to be reunited, that which separated them must be removed. If it were not for the indifferentism which lies at the bottom of all unionistic thinking—that indifference to doctrine which is responsible for phrases like "hair-splitting theologians"—everybody would agree to the elementary truth that those who disturb the peace of the Church by teaching what is contrary to the teaching of the Church must be silenced in order to have a united Church. And that is the purpose of polemics, the sole purpose of Christian polemics. The gainsayers must be silenced. Yea, they must be won over for the truth, won over by the mighty power of God's Word. The problem of Lutheran union and of the reunion of Christendom can be solved in no other way than that the power of God's Word be brought to bear upon those who have disrupted the Lutheran Church and the Church in general, so that they forsake and abhor the error and embrace and love the truth of Scripture. That is the method and the purpose of Christian polemics.

It should not be hard to understand the need and the blessing of Christian polemics. The fathers understood this matter. The Formula of Concord states: "For thorough, permanent, godly unity in the Church it is necessary, not only that the pure, wholesome doctrine be rightly presented, but also that the opponents who teach otherwise be reproved." (*Triglot*, p. 855.) Others, too, understand it. Ph. Schaff says: "Honest and earnest controversy, conducted in a Christian and catholic spirit, promotes true and lasting union. Polemics looks to irenics. The aim of war is peace." (See Schmauk and Benze, *The Confessional Principle*, p. 41.) And a writer in *Christendom* (1937, Autumn, p. 557) makes bold to say: "The ecumenical movement, as suggested by the late Bishop Brent, is concerned not with controversy, but with conference. It may be perfectly true. But there are controversies still in Christianity, and they cannot be simply stopped. They must be resolved. Strangely enough 'controversy' seems now to be the most irenic and certainly the most effective method of reunion."⁸⁶

86) "Luthers Verhalten zu Marburg soll uns zum Vorbild dienen. Auch uns geht der Jammer der armen, zerrissenen Kirche zu Herzen. Da sollen wir treulich das einzige Mittel anwenden, das die Kirche vereinigen kann: das ist das Wort Gottes, *das treue Bekennen des Worts*. Das Wort Gottes ist das rechte Irenikon." (*CONC. THEOL. MTHLY.*, 1930, p. 506.) Rudelbach: "Our Church constantly maintained: the only, the sovereign, means to bring about the godly union is God's Word, God's Word in the form of the *Ἐλεγχος*. For since the Church is here not dealing with neutral opinions and usages, with matters where a Chris-

But our cowardly, ease-loving flesh will not hear of this. We are inclined to shirk the hardships which this spiritual warfare entails. We do not care to incur the enmity of men and to bear the reproaches which the testimony for the truth and against false doctrine inevitably calls forth.⁸⁷⁾ And our conceited flesh insists that it knows better than God how to reunite Christendom: not by opposing but by tolerating error. So, if we would follow God's plan for the reunion of Christendom, we must crucify our flesh with its love of ease and its wicked counsels. That is the hard way on which God has set us: strife without and spiritual struggles within.

tian can and should make concessions if only the essentials are retained intact, but with matters of faith and doctrine, things that touch her very life, the Church needs to apply the elenctical use of the Word, the Word as giving battle to the false doctrine in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. The elenctical office of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8) is her warrant for it, the *magna charta* of this necessary and salutary polemics; the apostolic directive concerning the use of the Word for reproof obligates the Church; and the right manner of this form of witnessing may be learned not only from the apostolic practice in dealing with the false teachers, but also from the example of Jesus Christ Himself, the Author and Finisher of our faith." (*Op. cit.*, p. 508.) President F. H. Knubel (U. L. C.): "The Christians are to testify, bear witness. Herein also is the unity of the Church fostered. . . . We now discern the fourth Christian responsibility for the unity of the Church. All groups of Christians must bravely bear witness against that which belongs to darkness. They must testify for goodness and righteousness and truth. It applies clearly to their convictions as to truth, as to the revelation of God. In this they must be free and courageous. Truth cannot be trimmed. Convictions cannot be abandoned as trifles." (*Church Unity*, p. 67 f.) *Watchman-Examiner*, Feb. 21, 1935: "In the religious world many people regard discussion as full of peril. They regard absence of discussion as a token of harmony, whereas it frequently indicates indifference to the great matters concerning which the minds of men should be aroused. . . . Unless we gravely mistake, debates have been a powerful force of working towards the essential harmony of our churches." Dr. J. T. Mueller quotes this and comments: "Es sind dies wichtige Punkte, auf die auch wir in lutherischen Kirchen uns zu besinnen haben. Bei aller Vereinigungslust muss uns doch dies Axiom in allem obenan stehen: 'Ehrlicher Kampf um die Wahrheit ist besser als unehrliches Vertuschen der konfessionellen Gegensatze.' Geltung hat dies schliesslich aber auch im eigenen engeren Kreis, innerhalb der synodalen Verbindung." (*CONC. THEOL. MTHLY.*, 1935, p. 389.) — Even *The Christian Century* is constrained to say: "It is the idea that church papers should skirt 'controversial issues,' that they should be written in a milk-and-water fashion free from any hint of an 'aggressive spirit,' that has reduced many a church paper to colorless sterility." (See footnote 20.)

87) Walther: "Manifold are the difficult and arduous tasks of a minister of Jesus Christ; but the most difficult and arduous of all, beyond question, is the task of proclaiming the pure doctrine of the Gospel of Christ and at the same time exposing, refuting, and rejecting teachings that are contrary to the Gospel. The minister who does this will discover by practical experience the truth of the old saying: *Veritas odium parit* (telling the truth makes enemies). . . . Had Luther followed the example of Staupitz of quietly teaching the pure Gospel to his brother monks without at the same time attacking the abominations of the

But it is the blessed way. The true friends of the Church are those who are ready to take upon themselves the odium of theological controversy. (See page 406 above.)

5. What our unionistic flesh wants to hear least of all are statements like this: "The contribution, then, which Lutheranism has to make to the ecumenical movement at this time is its confessionalism." (H. Sasse, *Some Prolegomena to the World Conference*, p. 21.)

Confessional Lutheranism insists on the proposition that all the doctrines of the Lutheran Confessions, being taken from Scripture, are absolutely binding, binding all Lutherans, binding all Christians. We do not feel at liberty to dispense ourselves from confessing any of these truths. Nor have we the right to give others such a dispensation. We love these truths too dearly to give up the least one of them. And we want all of our fellow Christians to share in the same blessing. A Lutheran by conviction would rather sacrifice his life three times over than consent to a union which provides for the sacrifice of one or more Lutheran teachings. Confessional Lutheranism insists on this one condition for Church union: common acceptance of the Christian doctrine, common acceptance of the Lutheran doctrine. The Formula of Concord laid down this condition: "We have no intention of yielding aught of the eternal, immutable truth of God for the sake of temporal . . . unity." And there are still many Lutherans who stand on the Confession of their Church. Recall the statement of Werner Elert quoted above: "The Lutheran Church declares itself ready to have Church fellowship with all Christians—under one condition: that we are one in doctrine."⁸⁸ Dr. W. Arndt: "We contend for the full, uncompromising acceptance of the Lutheran

Papacy with great earnestness, not a finger would have been raised against him. . . . They do not know how gladly the boldest champions of Christ would have kept peace with all men, how much they would have preferred to keep silence, how hard it was for their flesh and blood to come out in public and become targets for the hatred, enmity, vilification, scorn, and persecution of men. However, they could not but confess the truth and at the same time oppose error. Their conscience constrained them." (*Law and Gospel*, p. 265 f.) Luther: "Es ist jetzt eine ganz neue Welt. . . . Theologen wollen nicht Straefer sein, es verdreusst die Leute." (XIX:1928.) "Darum ist man uns Theologen feind, dass wir der Welt die Wahrheit sagen." (XXII:1514.)

⁸⁸) Professor Elert means, of course, oneness in the Lutheran doctrine. The statement quoted above, page 409, made in the same article, proves that. "Should our several Lutheran Churches sell the birthright of the pure preaching of the Gospel for all kinds of syncretistic pottage, they would not only be digging their own grave, but would also defraud Christendom of the message which God has given us in trust for all the others."

Confessions as a condition for church fellowship."⁸⁹) And C. P. Krauth, after quoting what "Gieseler, the great Reformed Church historian, says: 'If the question be, which, among all Protestant Confessions, is best adapted for forming the foundation of a union among Protestant Churches, we declare ourselves unreservedly for the Augsburg Confession,'" adds: "But no genuine union can ever be formed upon the basis of the Augsburg Confession except by a hearty consent in its *whole faith*, an honest reception of *all of its statements* in the sense which the statements bear in the Confession itself." (*Op. cit.*, p. 259.)

Does that mean that all Christians should be Lutherans? Does it mean that the reunion of Christendom can be brought about only in this way that all subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions? *The Christian Century* so understands it. It says in the issue of March 25, 1936: "Whatever Churches wish to unite, says Professor Sasse, it is above all things necessary that they decide what creed is right. Whatever Church would unite with the Lutheran Church must decide that the Lutheran Confession is right or else convince the Lutherans that it is wrong. "The contribution, then, which Lutheranism has to make to the ecumenical movement at this time is its confessionalism." (See the item in *CONC. THEOL. MTHLY.*, 1936, p. 539: "Confessional Lutheranism in the Way of Unionism.") Editor Morrison has understood us correctly. We want a union on the basis of the Lutheran Confessions. Dr. Morrison ridicules Dr. Sasse's position. Men are horrified at the "smug complacency, the sectarian bigotry, the Pharisaic self-exaltation" that permits Bishop Rahamaegi to say: "Die Parole ist: *Zum lutherischen Christentum!* . . . *Gemeindeleben in der Form des konfessionellen Luthertums!*" They are horrified at Dr. Pieper's statement: "Since God would have all men accept this whole Word and since the Lutheran Church actually accepts the whole Word of God, all men should be Lutherans." (See pages 467 and 468 above.) Our unionistic flesh implores us not to say such things. But we cannot say otherwise. Since we know that our Lutheran Confessions express nothing but God's truth, we are constrained to ask all the world to accept them. And we do that

89) See *CONC. THEOL. MTHLY.*, 1941, p. 2: "When we contend for the full, uncompromising acceptance of the Lutheran Confessions as a condition for church fellowship, the keystone of our position is the conviction that the teachings contained in our Symbolical Books are not the result of human speculation, but the truth as revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures. . . . What the Lutheran fathers confessed at Augsburg and reiterated in the Apology and the Smalcald Articles, what Luther laid down in his Small and his Large Catechism, and what was given classical expression in the Formula of Concord we consider to be not merely a valuable indication of the faith that lived in the authors, but the unadulterated doctrine of the Prophets and Apostles."

with all boldness. If they were the product of our own wisdom, we certainly would be ready to make all kinds of concessions and compromises. But since the doctrine therein confessed is God's doctrine, we are bold enough, bold in the Lord, to say: All men should be Lutherans!

But we have not yet exhausted the meaning of Sasse's statement. Lutheran confessionalism is a valuable, yes, the one absolutely necessary contribution to the reunion of Christendom, not only because it asks and demands a union in the truth, the only union which God recognizes, but mainly because it operates with the only means which can effect this union. The Lutheran Confessions are of such a nature that they compel assent of all Christians, and the spirit which they breathe and engender knits the hearts of men together in closest communion. Dr. Bente: "The doctrines of the Formula of Concord are the ecumenical truths of Christendom, for true Lutheranism is nothing but consistent Christianity. . . . Such being the case, the Formula of Concord must be regarded also as the key to a godly peace and true unity of entire Christendom." (*Triglot*, Historical Introduction, p. 256.) Put men into contact with the Lutheran Confessions, and you will see wonderful results. Let men really get acquainted with the spirit of Lutheranism, and they will be attracted to it. It is absolutely true what Theodosius Harnack says: "The Lutheran Church provides the truly catholic bond of unity of the Church."⁹⁰

Note, in the first place, that confessional Lutheranism is not laying down any harsh conditions. When we present the Lutheran Confessions as the basis of union, we are not asking men to accommodate their opinion to our opinion and to sacrifice their convictions in favor of our convictions. They are asked to bow to God. We would violate men's consciences if we demanded of them that they teach a certain doctrine because Luther taught it. But no man's conscience is violated if he accepts that teaching because Scripture teaches it. And in no wise does that involve the loss of his self-respect. We ask men to teach justification by faith and reject the teaching of work-righteousness not because the Lutheran Confession, but because Scripture does that. We ask men to teach universal grace according to the Formula of Concord simply because God asks them to do that. The Christians ought to find that

90) His full statement is: "The Lutheran Church has always had the well-founded conviction that God has, through the service of Luther, given His Christian people a genuine Reformation; that in her doctrinal principle and the resultant Confession she possesses the apostolic truth in its fullness and purity; that she is on that account the true continuation of the apostolic Church and also provides the truly catholic bond of unity of the Church." (*Die Kirche; ihr Amt und ihr Regiment*, p. 84.)

easy to do. It is asking them to do a hard thing, asking them to go against Scripture and against the witness of the Holy Spirit testifying through Scripture when they are asked to subscribe, say, to the Westminster Confession. But when we ask all Christians to unite on the basis of the Lutheran Confessions, they should not find any difficulties in the way. The Lutheran Confession is adapted for uniting all Christians, because it summons them not to any man's side, but to God's side.

The Lutheran platform is a broad one. All Christians find room on it. Not a single Christian's conviction needs to be sacrificed. And what the Lutheran Confessions teach, all Christians either already believe in their hearts or would accept on fuller instruction. "Luther and the Lutheran Church, maintaining the *πίστις χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου* fully and firmly against all deviations, do not represent a party issue, but are the mouth-piece of all Christendom." (Pieper, *Christliche Dogmatik*, II, p. 623.) Not a single teaching of the Lutheran Church serves a sectarian interest. All of them are ecumenical. They belong to all Christians. God wants all Christians to have them; all need them.

The Lutheran platform for the reunion of Christendom is a broad one. That is a fine statement quoted in footnote 23: "I am almost 'narrow' enough to think that the Lutheran Church is broad enough and deep enough to fulfill all requirements for a universal, 'catholic,' Church into which all other groups could merge." That is the right use of the term. Many like to use it in the bad sense. Dr. Pieper wrote in *CONC. THEOL. MTHLY.*, 1930, p. 2: "Some make 'ecumenical Lutheranism' to mean 'broad Lutheranism'; they want a 'broad Lutheranism,' which does not lay so much stress on the Christian doctrine as the Lutheran Church of the sixteenth and seventeenth century did and as the 'Missourians' today are doing." We certainly do not want a platform broad enough to carry any and all errors, the broad platform of unionism, on which Lutherans and Calvinists and Arminians come together in an uncongenial brotherhood. No, we need a basis of agreement to which all Christians can give their glad and willing assent. The Lutheran Confessions, binding men to nothing but God's Word, form such a basis.

Note, in the second place, that the fundamental principles of confessional Lutheranism furnish the mighty power which is needed for the restoration of the unity of the Church. There is the principle of the authority and majesty of Scripture, the principle which bids all men to yield instant allegiance to the Word of God and enables them to give this allegiance willingly and gladly. When men come under the influence of this principle, they will realize the wickedness of any false teaching and sooner or later

forsake it. The Word of God is the only power that can bring the erring back into the unity of the faith, and what the disunited Church needs is the application of this power. It needs the Lutheran confessionalism! For it is the Lutheran Church which has written on its banner the *Sola Scriptura* and consistently practices accordingly. What distinguishes the Lutheran Church from the other churches is this unquestioning submission to Scripture, its confessional loyalty to God's Word. All the world knows that.⁹¹⁾ And that is the contribution which Lutheran confessionalism makes to the ecumenical movement. Let the Christian world accept this contribution. Let it learn of the Lutheran Church to be loyal to God's Word, and a mighty force will be in operation for winning men back to the unity of the faith. The Lutheran Confessions know of no other way. And they know it is a sure way. They demand that "the controverted articles be thoroughly and accurately set forth and explained from the Word of God" and declare: "We are also in great hope that, if they would be taught aright concerning all these things, the Spirit of the Lord aiding them, they would agree with us, and with our churches and schools, to the infallible truth of God's Word." (Preface, Book of Concord, *Triglot*, pp.11,19.)

And there is that other great principle of Lutheranism: salvation by grace alone, justification by faith. "If this one article remains pure on the battlefield, the Christian Church also remains pure and in godly harmony and without any sects." (Formula of Concord, *Triglot*, p. 917.) If this article were preached throughout Christendom in the Lutheran fullness and purity and were accepted by all, the errors would gradually be eliminated and the godly harmony restored. Moreover, this article, justification by faith, "is our doctrine; the Holy Spirit teaches it *as also all holy Christian people*." (Luther, XVI:1689.) All Christendom is already united by this holy bond. And the better all Christians understand this article, the closer will be their outward union; the false teachings, which caused the disunion, cannot endure in the full light of this

91) This point is forcefully brought out in an editorial in *The Lutheran* of July 7, 1927. We can submit only these few selections from it: "Can the Lutheran Church justify its separate existence? . . . The Reformation under Luther's leadership has left us in no doubt as to what was then conceived to be the bedrock upon which evangelical Christianity must rest. . . . The old authority of the papacy was supplanted by a new authority. It was the authority of the Word, and that Word was found nowhere else but in the Scriptures. . . . The Lutheran Church must justify its separate existence by proving its loyalty to the authority of the Word. Judged by its confessions, its fidelity to that authority is so clearly established that he who runs may read. . . . It is not the Confessions that are the Lutheran Church's final authority. All that is claimed for them is that they are the Church's answer to the question: 'What saith Scripture?' The Church stands ready to challenge all Christendom to show that its answer to that question is not true to the source whence it has been drawn."

article. The doctrine of the *sola gratia* creates and preserves unity. We read in *Lehre und Wehre*, 1918, p. 182: "How the doctrine of God's grace creates and preserves unity is thus described by Luther: 'The Prophet here (Is. 2:4) uses a fine figure to describe the peace which cannot exist in the heart nor outwardly among men unless the heart is certain of the forgiveness. And no better means can be found to remove the disunity than that which Christ uses, when with one word he puts them all on the same level, finding all of them alike guilty of sin and all under the same condemnation. . . . That creates a fellow feeling among the Christians and draws them together when they realize that all are being saved through the very same grace and know that all are equal in their lack of any merit and that all are under equal guilt.' (VI:36.) F.P." — Verily the article of Justification, as taught by confessional Lutheranism, is a valuable contribution to the ecumenical movement, the most effective means for reaching Christian harmony.

Now we know why F. Bente and Th. Harnack could say that the only hope for reunion lies in confessional Lutheranism. (See above.) Oberkirchenrat Dr. Nagel (Breslau) says the same: "We do not forget for a moment that the Lutheran Church must make it her business to work for union. Not, indeed, in this way that she should tone down her confessionalism and compose the denominational differences by obliterating them, but this is her mission: to serve the body of Christ by her faithful adherence to the correct understanding of the Gospel, given to her by God's grace, and being a faithful witness of it, and thus working towards a true union, a union which is not based on a compromise between truth and error, but solely on the truth of the Gospel." (See *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1935, p. 628.) So does Professor Sommerlath (Leipzig): "For this reason our Church clings to her Confessions, the Augsburg Confession and the two Catechisms of Luther and the others, and jealously guards them, that she may abide in the truth. She wants unity, but insists that unity can be found only through an agreement in the truth. Our Church does not mean to hinder the unity through her Confession, but by upholding her Confession she is working in the interest of union. She wants honesty and truthfulness, for she knows that these are the foundation of a true spiritual union." (See *Allg. Ev.-Luth. Kirchenzeitung*, June 9, 1933.) So also Dr. Ihmels: "Those who heard him speak in the last decade on the ecumenical question, may have been surprised to hear him declare again and again that he could conceive of a union of the churches in no other way than that they all would arrive at the Lutheran understanding of the Gospel; to him that was a self-evident truth." (*Pastoralblaetter*, September, 1936.) Also *The Lutheran*, August 21, 1931: "The Lutheran faith is and continues to

be an effective attempt to unite the whole of Christianity." And there are non-Lutherans who say the same. See Gieseler's statement above. And hear the judgment of Professor W. W. Rockwell of Union Theological Seminary, New York: "Why should not you Lutherans now take the initiative? . . . Here is a basis for discussion of a perfectly proper question: Why cannot Protestantism agree on its oldest creed, the Augsburg Confession? The discussion may not eventuate in Church unity any more than will the great Life and Work, or the impressive Faith and Order Conferences, but it will set the world talking about the Lutheran claims. . . . If Lutherans are to win over the rest of American Protestants to their point of view, they must do so, not by denying Lutheran principles, but by their vigorous application." (See *The Lutheran*, September 29, 1927.) — C. P. Krauth: "The most powerful conservative influences within the Reformed churches have invariably been connected more or less immediately with the Lutheran Church. With her principles is bound up the only hope of Protestant unity." (*Op. cit.*, p. 126.)

The Christian reunion of Christendom can be reached only via confessional Lutheranism. "The true union," said Dr. Walther, "is none other than the true Evangelical Lutheran Church." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1871, p. 77.) The motto heading the article on the Marburg Colloquy in *Lutheraner*, Vol. 3, p. 67 (1847) reads: "Die lutherische Kirche macht keine Union; sie ist die Union." The Lutheran Church is the nucleus of any United Christian Church that may eventuate.

Those Lutherans are, therefore, doing the cause of the reunion of Christendom the worst possible disservice who in order to bring about union are ready to sacrifice the doctrinal principles of the Lutheran Church. There are such men. They are belittling Lutheran confessionalism. They do not want any distinctive Lutheranism. They are raising a generation whose Lutheran consciousness is waning. This alarming situation is thus described by Professor John P. Milton (Norwegian Lutheran Church): "Question: 'Is there a definite need of emphasizing Lutheran confessional loyalty in our unionistic day?' Answer: If we want to continue as a Lutheran Church, there is certainly need of strong emphasis on loyalty to our Lutheran Confessions. The spirit of the times is against creeds or the confession of a positive faith. It is something of an oddity to see a church that really tries to be true to its historic confessions or creeds. The Lutheran Church has hitherto been remarkably faithful to her Confessions in her preaching and teaching ministry. Yet it is not difficult to notice among her members a weakening of church loyalty, which usually has its roots in ignorance of, and indifference to, the Lutheran teaching. There is

need of urging on our members an informed and intelligent loyalty to Lutheran teaching as set forth in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the other confessional writings of the Lutheran Church. In this loyalty to a positive faith 'once delivered to the saints' lies her strength and hope for the future. There is no heroic mission of faith to be achieved through weak surrender to a complacent unionism which seems to think it matters little what you believe, just so you have some sort of faith in God." (*People Are Asking*, p. 10.) If this state of affairs should continue, there can be no reunion of the Lutheran Church and no reunion of Christendom. Our immediate task is, therefore, to arouse and strengthen Lutheran consciousness. What the Church needs today is men of strong convictions, of pronounced Lutheran convictions.⁹²⁾ The revival of Lutheran confessionalism would bring about the Lutheran union; and a united Lutheran Church could do much, oh, how much! for the reunion of Christendom. Dr. Bente: "The Lutheran Church has the mission to lead the way in the efforts at healing the ruptures of Christendom. But in order to do so, the Lutheran Church must be loyal to herself, loyal to her principles, and true to her truths. The American Lutheran synods, in order to steer a unity-union movement, must purge themselves thoroughly from the leaven of error, of indifferentism and unionism. A complete and universal return to the Lutheran symbols is the urgent need of the hour. Only when united in undivided loyalty to the divine truths of God's Word, will the American Lutheran Church be able to measure up to its peculiar calling of restoring to Christendom the truths of the Gospel in their pristine purity, and in and with these truths the true unity of the Spirit and a

92) Can there be any hope of union if the Episcopalians have strong convictions and the Presbyterians and the Lutherans have strong convictions? A writer in *The Living Church*, March 14, 1943, states: "If we know that we have the true Faith once revealed to the Apostolic Church and delivered to the saints. . . why not hold fast to that Faith? Why compromise our Faith and practice and heritage? Why not seek to lead the Presbyterians and others to a more complete understanding and conception of the Catholic Church . . .?" But if the Presbyterians likewise seek to lead the Episcopalians to a more complete understanding of the Presbyterian doctrine, and confessional Lutheranism stands out for the Lutheran doctrine, will the churches ever unite? There is more hope of union in dealing with firm convictions than in dealing with the unionistic indifferentism. We would rather deal with convinced Presbyterians than with flabby Lutherans. A man can be won over for the truth more easily if he believes that his teachings are based—and must be based—on the Holy Scripture than if he cares little for what Scripture states. For in the former case the power of Scripture has a chance to work on him. Where two parties are one in their love of the truth, one in their conviction that Holy Scripture is inviolable, and one party misapprehends some of the truth, there is still good prospect for their becoming one in doctrine. Devotion to the truth of Scripture is the indispensable prerequisite for the full apprehension of the truth.

fellowship and union, both beneficial to man and well-pleasing to God." (*American Lutheranism*, I, p. 9.) *The Lutheran Companion*, Feb. 24, 1943, addresses these solemn words to us Lutherans: "A supreme need among us is for Lutheran consciousness. To it belongs vision and zeal, and without these we must perish. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." . . . When has the Church Militant ever prospered through easy tolerance? . . . We plead for Lutheran consciousness. The Church of Christ is best served by Christian groups that are loyal to their convictions of truth as revealed to them by God. The duty lies upon us to declare with new purpose and zeal the old truths rediscovered in the Reformation and given a prime place and importance within our Church."⁹³) Prof. Rockwell lays his finger on a sore spot in our Church when he says: "If Lutherans are to win over the rest of American Protestantism to their point of view, they must do so, *not by denying Lutheran principles*, but by their vigorous application."

Lutheran confessionalism is the way to the God-pleasing

93) We must find space for some excerpts from an article by Pfarrer F. W. Hopf (Muehlhausen), published in *Kirchenblatt*, Oct. 25, 1941: ". . . In dem 'Zuruf' Wilhelm Loehes steht der Satz: 'Es ist keine Kirchengemeinschaft auf Erden, welche an die Stelle der lutherischen Kirche treten und allen Kirchen der Welt, ja der ganzen Welt, den Dienst tun koennte, welchen die lutherische mehr als manche zugeben wollen und als vielen Lutheranern selbst bewusst ist, getan hat und, wo sie noch des alten Wesens ist, noch tut. . . . Ihr seid die Kinder der Vaeter. Vergesst Euern heiligen Beruf und die Hut des Herrn nicht! . . . Leidet Euch, und haltet am Bekenntnis fest!'" Having pointed out what a priceless treasure the Lutheran doctrine of justification is, the writer continues: "In dieser heiligen Verantwortung fuer die Seligkeit der Gemeinde wurzelt auch unser unversoehnlcher Gegensatz gegen alle falsche Unionsmacherei in Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Wir koennen das Erbe unserer Kirche, das uns der Herr selbst durch Luthers Dienst anvertraut hat, fuer uns und die nach uns Kommenden nur festhalten, wenn der Unterschied zwischen echter und falscher Lehre nicht verwischt, sondern klar erkannt wird. In Loehes's Zuruf heisst es: 'Wenn Eure Feinde, die Unionisten, recht haetten, wenn die Unterscheidungslehren der protestantischen Kirche keine kirchengruendenden und darum auch kirchentrennenden waeren, wenn man bei solchem Zwiespalt dennoch die Einigkeit im Geiste, die volle, wie sie den Gliedern einer Kirchengemeinschaft noetig ist, haben und bewahren koennte: dann haette niemand seit dem Marburger Religionsgespraech mehr Unrecht gehabt als der Mann Martin Luther; heilig waeren Zwinglis Traenen. Wir waeren im Irrtum gewesen—und lutherische Treue, dieser nach unserm Wahn vor Gott grosse und schoene Name, waere nichts weiter als enger, verblendeter Eigensinn. . . . Wenn hingegen das Gegenteil wahr und das Recht auf unserer Seite ist, dann leiden wir in allen unsern Kaempfen und Leiden fuer die Wahrheit. Dann ist die festgehaltene Scheidung ein Scheideweg zum Frieden. Die ueber die Scheidung wachen, sind nicht zanksuechtige, unausstehliche Klopflechter, sondern eine veruegnungsvolle Schar, die, von aller Welt gehasst, doch aller Welt Frieden suchen, indem sie den Leuchtturm der reinen Lehre und den Altar des unverkuemmerten Sakraments hoch erheben und allen irrenden, herumgeworfenen Seglern den rechten Weg zum rechten Gestade zeigen.'"

reunion. Its immediate result is, indeed, separation. But the purpose of this separation is union. We have said something similar above, but it will bear repetition. When we obey God's command (Rom. 16:17) and separate ourselves from the teachers and the adherents of false doctrine, we preserve the unity of the faith in our own midst. And more than this, the refusal of a body of Christians to tolerate false teaching, the refusal to have church fellowship with those who uphold the false teaching, carries a tremendous force. God uses this witness, the witness of the word and of the act, to open the eyes of men to see the wickedness of the false teaching they have embraced. The first step towards the elimination of false doctrine is to isolate it, to show it up in its true color, to fill men with aversion to this repulsive thing. God commands us to separate ourselves from those who uphold false doctrine in order that they may separate themselves from their false teaching. That prepares the ground for a godly reunion, the union in the truth. The faithful, consistent confession of God's truth is the true irenicism. In the words of the Reformed historian D'Aubigne: "Exclusiveness is a character of Lutheranism. . . . This exclusiveness is necessary to unity. It must enter into the construction of the admirable machine prepared by the hand of the great Artificer three centuries ago. Exclusiveness is essential to the Church. . . . The Church ought to have a holy jealousy for the eternal truth of God; for *latitudinarianism* is its death. . . . This exclusiveness is what was confided to the charge of Martin Luther." . . . (See *The Lutheran Witness*, 1933, p. 119.) "Missouri aimed to bring together the Lutherans of America, and for that very reason she stood alone. Her isolation was, after all, of her own choosing. The ultimate object of the separation was union. 'True unity is oneness in faith,' says Krauth. And in order to win men back to the one faith, there had to be a body which clearly taught this one faith, which in doctrine and practice stood squarely on the Confessions and, by refusing to stand with errorists, refused to countenance their error. Nor could Missouri have preserved the faith if she had united with such as persisted in error or suffered them to unite with her. Faith cannot dwell with error. The body that experiments in that direction will lose its pure faith—and its power for good." (*Ebenezer*, p. 120.) Loehe: "Die festgehaltene Scheidung ist ein Scheideweg zum Frieden." "God give us disunity!" (See footnote 26.)

Separation is, indeed, painful. The way to the godly union is not an easy, but a hard way. It hurts to cut off the intimate relations of church fellowship with groups of church people. "We take no pleasure in our isolated position" (Pieper). "It is a grave matter wanting to separate one's self from so many lands and

nations and to profess a separate doctrine," "and to be called schismatics." (*Triglot*, p. 1061; 517.) Die Einsamkeit des Luther-tums! (See H. Sasse, *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1938, p. 124, and Landesbischof D. Dr. Schoeffel: "Tragik und Triumph des Lu-thertums," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1937, p. 65 f.) It hurts to be reviled as schismatics and to be shunned as disturbers of the peace and conceited Pharisees. "They call us an evil-minded tribe." (Walther.)⁹⁴ Our flesh refuses to bear this cross. And it protests that it is folly to expect isolation to work towards reunion. It refuses to go God's way. So, once again, the holy cause of the reunion of Christendom demands great sacrifices of us: we must put the Old Adam to death. But the gain promised by God is worth the price!—Dr. J. Fritz says in his essay on "Unionism": "Our loneliness in our church position among men need neither frighten nor discourage us; for He in whose service we are and who has given us the commission to preach His Gospel stands back of us with all His divine power and wisdom and presence and grace." (*Proc. Texas District*, 1940, p. 28.) Thus saith the Lord: "I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall; and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee." "Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them." ("Let other men come over to your side, but go not over to join them.") Jer. 15:19 f.

And now the final consideration. It is all-important. It is this: "When we have done all in our power, we still need God's great help and counsel." (Luther; see above.) It is God alone who can restore the broken unity. All Christians are united on this point. A writer in *Christendom*, 1937, Autumn, p. 559, expresses it thus: "And above all it is important always to remember that only the will of God can bring us peace and unity. 'Except the Lord build

94) "2 John 10 f. requires of a confessional synod that it have no fellowship with such bodies as have departed from the pure doctrine. Ah, what grief that entails! We are being reviled, called bad names, depicted as uncharitable, contentious, proud and supercilious spirits, as men who boast that they alone are orthodox, yes, and lay claim to infallibility. No, it is nothing easy; it is hard to bear the shame thus placed upon us. But, dear brethren, we must take this shame upon us. . . . Hier gelten wir fuer ein schaendliches Volk." (*Proc. Iowa District*, 1879, pp. 37, 42.)—Dr. Gerhard E. Lenski, for instance, writes in *The Luth. Church Quarterly*, 1941, p. 290: "As for our spiritual isolationists who stand apart and our rock-ribbed keepers of orthodoxy who cannot tolerate even the slightest semblance of fellowship or even friendliness until this 'wrong' is righted and that 'right' is realized—we would dare remind them once more that still great among ancient heresies is that of accepting with complacency a sectarian conception of the Church as contrasted with one which insists upon its unity, its oneness, and its universality."—"Pack of canines gnawing the creedal bones of doctrine!" (See footnote 23.) Etc.—On the other hand the editor of the *Lutheran Herald* declares that "his own tendency has been, shall we say, more than a little toward an 'isolationist' stand." (May 18, 1943.)

the house, they labor in vain that build it.'” Professor A. Schaller puts it this way: The unionizers “seem to have no inkling of the fact that God creates the brotherhood of faith. They do not recognize the wondrous miracle that is involved. . . . Fellowship of faith cannot be humanly manufactured. It is *never* a product of human scheming and planning.” (*Proc. Synodical Conf.*, 1940, p. 15.) Bishop Manning, in the sermon above: “Unity will come not through cleverly devised schemes and formulas, but through the power of the Holy Spirit in the minds and hearts of Christians.” A miracle of God’s grace and power has been wrought in every case of a union in the truth. It takes divine power to thwart the work of Satan, the instigator of every disunion and every false union. We need God’s almighty help in order to subdue our Old Adam, who refuses to go the hard way. The strength to resist his evil plans for a false and wicked peace must come from God. Do you realize that as often as you suppressed and crucified your uncharitable and impatient flesh a miracle of grace had been performed? Do you not know that the strength to hold out for Lutheran confessionalism is a gift of God? Behold the wondrous grace and wisdom of God which overrules our manifold mistakes and foolish counsels for good! And, above all, God alone can win the hearts of men for the truth. We utter the testimony—God puts His divine persuasiveness into it. All our work for the reunion of Christendom must be accompanied and carried by the prayer: “We beseech Christ to look upon the afflicted and scattered churches and to bring them back to godly and perpetual concord.” (*Triglot*, p. 103.)

If we know that Christ must do it, we will let Him do it in His own way and in His own good time. In a letter to Luther (May 14, 1536) Elector John Frederick said: “Aber hat der allmaechtige Gott zu einer Concordia zu kommen es versehen, so wird er es wohl damit wissen zu schicken.” (XVII:2086.)

And if we let Christ do it His own way—“teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”—our work will be crowned with success. Dr. Pieper: “If we thus humbly submit to God’s guidance and faithfully follow His directions, men may cry us down as wreckers of the Church, but God will continue to build His Church through us. ‘And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands, establish Thou it.’” (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1898, p. 4.)

God give us the will and the strength to do our full share in this blessed work! May He fill us with the Spirit that dictated these words of Dr. Walther: “Our Church has taken for her foundation Holy Scripture; on this foundation she has placed herself

firmly; from this foundation she will not depart a hair's breadth ('vel transversum, ut aiunt, unguem'). That is her character; for that God raised her up; through that she has been a blessing to all Christendom; that is her crown of glory—she will not and cannot let it be taken from her. If in former days the Church had reason—unless she was ready to sign her own death warrant—to guard with the utmost care against any infiltration of the unionistic spirit, the danger today is vastly greater. It is all too evident that Satan, having failed in his attempt to destroy the Church through rationalism, is now using unionism for that purpose. That is his most effective strategy; by means of it he has already delivered whole communions into the hands of total unbelief as its captives. . . . True union, the goal of Christ's Church, has already been achieved in the true Lutheran Church. True union is none other than the true Evangelical Lutheran Church. To the service of this union—the only true union—our *Lehre und Wehre* had dedicated itself, and it will continue in this work as long as God gives us the privilege to serve His truth and His Church." (*Lehre und Wehre*, 1871, p. 11.)

TH. ENGELDER

Outlines on the Old Standard Gospel Lessons

Third Sunday in Advent

Matt. 11:2-10

A question vitally concerning us, especially during the Advent season: Is Jesus of Nazareth really the Messiah promised of old? If not, we cannot rightly celebrate Christmas. In fact, then our whole faith is vain, and we are yet in our sins. Today unbelieving Israel denies the Messiahship of Christ. Does Christianity's faith "I believe that Jesus Christ . . . is my Lord," etc., rest upon a sure foundation? Our Gospel supplies the answer.

Jesus, the True Messiah

He Himself proves this

1. *By His divine works and words*
2. *By the fact that John the Baptist was the promised way preparer*

1

It was John the Baptist who induced Jesus to prove His Messiahship. V. 2. He was now in prison, Luke 3:19, 20; Matt. 14:3 ff. Yet through his disciples he heard of Christ's works, Luke 7: 18 ff. Two of these he sent to Jesus with the question: Art Thou the "Coming One"? V. 3. Ps. 40:7, 8; 118:26. To this he adds: Or *should we* (subjunctive) look for a different one? Ἐτερος,