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Christian Fellowship

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pious, and that he may not be disqualified as pastor by conditions in his home. 1 Tim. 3:5.

Making provision for later years is not a sin. Neglect of providing for the rainy day is a sin, of which some congregations and pastors are guilty. Our synodical pension system is a gift of God and should be received with thanksgiving. After years of tireless activity in the *Naehrstand*, *Wehrstand*, and *Lehrstand* the pastor and his wife enter the *Ruhestand*. The new generation rises. Old associations pass away. The pastor and his sacrificing service are almost forgotten. "New leaf, new life, new love." The aged pastor, yet young in spirit, does not suit the newer day. It is difficult for him to adapt himself when he reaches the crossing where God has placed the sign pointing to the *Ruhestand*. He is haunted by a sense of uselessness. "At evening time it shall be light," Zech. 14:7. Give us this day our daily bread! Sometimes we emphasize too much the darkness and uncertainty of the future and too little the brightness of it. The proverb which teaches us not to boast of the morrow, for we know not what a day may bring forth, does not deny the element of darkness and ignorance; but it ascribes that ignorance to us, not to the future.

Our blessed Lord Jesus put a last question to His disciples before rising to go to the Mount of Olives, Luke 22:35. "When I sent you without purse and scrip and shoes, lacked ye anything?" And shall we, who in spite of painful economy had at times an empty purse, a worthless scrip, torn shoes, not gratefully join the company of the holy Apostles in their answer: "Nothing"?

Los Angeles, Calif.

G. H. SMUKAL

Christian Fellowship

(Concluded)

IV

Restrictions upon Manifestations of Christian Fellowship

After having dwelt at some length on the manifestations of Christian fellowship, we now come to consider restrictions upon such manifestations. Let us begin by stating the obvious: There are restrictions; not man-made, originating in the decrees of church councils or in synodical resolutions, to be sure, but imposed by God Himself, the Head of the Church. To us this may seem self-evident, yet it is not conceded by all who lay claim to the name "Christian." There are those who aver that Christian fellowship must be *unrestricted*. Nothing must be allowed to limit it, they say, for that would be contrary to the spirit of the Founder of our faith, who openly consorted with publicans and sinners.

"Self-withdrawal and exclusiveness belong to the religion of the Old Testament; the New Testament requires communion of all who partake of its spirit, even with those in whom the life of Christ does not yet bear sway."¹¹³ The position which we have maintained in our Synod for almost one hundred years is branded as unchristian aloofness, which has no warrant in Holy Writ.

How shall we defend ourselves against such charges? By appealing our case to the Word of God. It should be said at the very outset that all those who criticize us severely because of our refusal to practice indiscriminate church fellowship are guilty of the same mistake that so many religionists make; they emphasize one or several passages of Scripture to support their argument, but partially or totally disregard others which invalidate their assertions. Excluding believers from Christian fellowship, they say, is not consonant with the principle of Christian love. They point to such words as, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned"¹¹⁴ "Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves,"¹¹⁵ but ignore all those passages which bind reproof, correction, separation, and even excommunication upon the hearts and consciences of believers. When the Tempter subtly urged Christ to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple, and even quoted Scripture to seduce Him, our Redeemer did not find the real deceit in this, that Satan omitted a significant phrase from Psalm 91, but that he quoted one verse of Scripture without taking into account what was said elsewhere. For this reason Christ rejected the sinister suggestion of the evil one by replying: "It is written *again*, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God."¹¹⁶ "*Scriptura per Scripturam interpretanda et concilianda.*" (Bengel.) One Biblical truth cannot be inconsistent with another. If we have learned of Jesus to see the truth as revealed in Scripture, and to see it whole, we shall know that there are definite restrictions upon the manifestations of Christian fellowship. They result, first, from an ungodly life.

1. Restrictions Resulting from Unholy Living

That there are restrictions upon Christian fellowship we may gather, first, from 2 Thess. 3, where Paul writes: "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which he received of us."¹¹⁷ Further on he says: "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be

113) John F. Spalding, *The Best Mode of Working a Parish*, p. 89.

114) Luke 6:37.

116) Matt. 4:6, 7.

115) 1 Pet. 4:8.

117) 2 Thess. 3:6.

ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."¹¹⁸) The Apostle is referring to the idlers who, misinterpreting his words about the imminence of the Lord's return, worked not at all, but were busybodies. Obviously, the words "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly," στέλλεσθαι ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ παντὸς ἀδελφοῦ ἀτάκτως περιπατοῦντος, and "have no company with him," μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι αὐτῷ, cannot be tantamount to excommunication; otherwise Paul would be contradicting himself, for he states in verse 15: "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."

Just what the words "withdraw yourselves" and "have no company with him" imply Paul does not say. It is commonly assumed that Paul is urging exclusion from the love feasts (ἀγάπαι) and from the Lord's Supper (κυριακῶν δεῖπνον, 1 Cor. 11:20, 21), usually celebrated in connection with the former. Whether this assumption is correct or not, so much is certain: Christian fellowship was to be limited, or restricted, in the case of all those who disregarded Paul's evangelical admonition. The idlers and busybodies were to be singled out and excluded from intimate association with other members of the congregation. Faithful pastors, whom God has appointed as "watchmen over the house of Israel," have a right and a duty to bar from the Lord's Table those who openly flout apostolic teaching. If a brotherly admonition remains fruitless, such members are to be barred permanently and excluded from the Christian congregation; every form of religious fellowship is to be denied them.

This becomes evident from 1 Cor. 5:1 ff. The situation there referred to was this: A member was guilty of incest, an offense of the most revolting kind. He was impenitent; yet he remained in the congregation. The Apostle sharply reprovved the Corinthians for not removing the offender from their midst. He was deeply grieved at their indifference, and he summarily directed them: "Put away from yourselves that wicked person," ἐξάρατε τὸν πονηρὸν ἐξ ὑμῶν αὐτῶν.¹¹⁹) This can be nothing else than what we are accustomed to call "excommunication." The incestuous offender was to be excluded from the fellowship of the congregation. Though he was still called a brother, he was no longer a Christian in fact, being impenitent, and therefore he was not to be regarded as a brother in the faith. The practice of Christian fellowship was to cease altogether.

Paul had told them in an earlier letter that they were not even to eat with a fornicator, though he might be called a

118) 2 Thess. 3:14, 15.

119) 1 Cor. 5:13.

brother.¹²⁰⁾ If they were not even to sit at the same table with such a man, they certainly were not to kneel at the same altar and jointly partake of the Lord's Supper. Paul's peremptory language in 1 Cor. 5:13, "Put away from yourselves that wicked person," is clearly reminiscent of the stern injunction in Deut. 17:7: "So thou shalt put the evil from among you." There the reference is to the stoning of an idolater. Even as idolaters were not to be tolerated among the children of Israel, so manifest and impenitent sinners should not be allowed to enjoy the fellowship of a Christian congregation.

This is by no means unchristian, as some would have us believe, but according to the very words of Him whose name we bear. He has stated explicitly: "If he [the trespassing brother] neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."¹²¹⁾ We cannot continue to maintain brotherly relations with those who turn a deaf ear to kindly admonitions and remain impenitent. The fraternal relationship which existed before is to be terminated. The Lord Himself declares: "Whosoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven."¹²²⁾ A person who has sinned and fails to repent is no longer a child of God; by that same token he is no longer a brother in the faith and cannot be regarded as such. Christians should therefore no longer associate with such a one as a brother. Religious fellowship with all that it implies must cease the moment excommunication has taken place.

Those who denounce excommunication as uncharitable do not understand the real purpose of such action. According to Scripture it is remedial. Exclusion from Christian fellowship is not intended to destroy, but to save. Paul makes that clear in 1 Cor. 5:3-5. "I verily, as absent in body but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one *unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved* in the Day of the Lord Jesus."¹²³⁾ By the very act of excommunication the offender is

120) 1 Cor. 5:11.

121) Matt. 18:17.

122) Matt. 18:18.

123) The Greek for the last part of verse 5 is: παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ σατανᾷ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῆ. We take this to mean: to destroy the sinful lusts of the flesh. It should be observed that Paul is not speaking of the destruction of the body (σῶμα), but of the *flesh* (σάρξ). The sinful nature is to be crucified and slain, so that the new man may be revived and that the soul, with the body, may be saved at the Last Day.

to be brought to a knowledge of his sin and led to repentance. If the sinner, despite his impenitence, is allowed to enjoy uninterrupted and unrestricted fellowship with the Christian congregation, he is led to believe that all is well with him. He is strengthened in his carnal security. If, however, he is excluded from the fellowship of the brethren, he must say to himself: "I must be on the wrong road. If those who once called me 'brother,' who showed me every kindness and pleaded with me to come back, no longer regard me as one of their own, I must be in bad company." Termination of Christian fellowship by excommunication is aimed at the salvation of the sinner. This is apparent also from 2 Thess. 3:14, where Paul states as the purpose of the withdrawing "that he may be ashamed."

The second object of excommunication is the welfare of the congregation. Paul asks the Corinthians, who permitted the fornicator to remain a member of the congregation: "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?"¹²⁴⁾ The sin of one member affects the whole body. One may mislead others. Then, too, toleration of the conduct of offenders implies concurrence in their actions and debases the moral standards. If we continue to acknowledge as brethren those who have denied the faith, we become partners (*κοινωνοί*) with people with whom we have nothing in common; to use Paul's language, we become "unequally yoked together with unbelievers."¹²⁵⁾ That is precisely what we are warned not to do. "For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?¹²⁶⁾ And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."¹²⁷⁾ They who are not God's sons and daughters are not brethren, and we cannot recognize them as such. Moreover, by refusing to maintain fellowship with them, we are not appointing ourselves as judges; the almighty Lord, whose Word we obey, is the Judge.

124) 1 Cor. 5:6.

125) 2 Cor. 6:14.

126) τίς γάρ μετοχή δικαιοσύνη και ἀνομία; ἢ τίς κοινωνία φωτι πρὸς σκότος; 2 Cor. 6:14.

127) 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

2. Restrictions Resulting from Unscriptural Doctrine and Practice

What was said of the restrictions resulting from unholy living applies with equal, if not greater, force to limitations resulting from unscriptural doctrine and practice. To some it may seem that in this respect we have no solid ground to stand on. The argument of most latitudinarians who condemn our traditional position runs something like this: "We are all the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. We are therefore members of the one Holy Christian Church, of which Christ is the Head. You Missourians, you members of the Synodical Conference, certainly do not claim that eternal life is dependent on membership in your organization. Why, then, should you not recognize members of other Christian churches as brothers and sisters in Christ and give expression to such fellowship by joint worship, common prayer, and open Communion? You are guilty of confessional isolationism; you are separatists. You are largely responsible for the rifts in Christendom."

It is true that all who trust in Christ's atoning work for their salvation are children of God regardless of church affiliation;¹²⁸⁾ and we greatly rejoice in this fact. Unhesitatingly we regard all such as Christian brethren and with them "through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love."¹²⁹⁾ But it is also true that we cannot tell with unerring certainty who is a Christian. The Lord only knows them that are His.¹³⁰⁾ We can regard a person as a Christian *only on the basis of his profession of faith, his adherence to the Word, and his conduct.* "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."¹³¹⁾ Accordingly, we can manifest our fellowship only among those who are *professing* Christians.

Now, it is a matter of common knowledge that we have not practiced church fellowship¹³²⁾ with all who profess faith in the

128) Matt. 7:21: "Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven." John 4:21-24: "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Ye worship, ye know not what; we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

129) Gal. 5:5, 6.

130) 2 Tim. 2:19.

131) Rom. 10:10.

132) Such fellowship includes united congregational worship, pulpit and altar fellowship, co-operation in church work, as the support of

Triune God. The question naturally arises: With which professing Christians shall we have church fellowship? To which shall unrestricted fellowship be denied? Scripture supplies the answer. Christ has charged His Church: "Teach them to observe *all* things whatsoever I have commanded you."¹³³ He will have no one teach men otherwise than God's Word teaches.¹³⁴ The disciples, true to the Lord's commission, made "sound doctrine" a matter of conscience and warned most solemnly against every form of error. From this it follows that we can conscientiously establish fellowship relations with those only who accept the whole Bible as the Word of God and teach men so, and that we must deny fellowship to such as persistently and stubbornly deviate in any point from Scriptural teaching.

Again it is argued: "Scripture tells us: 'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.'¹³⁵ Why should this exhortation not include those who differ from you in some teachings? Why should you cause unnecessary division by placing undue emphasis on divergent doctrines?" However, before we draw the unwarranted conclusion from this verse that in the interest of peace and harmony we must ignore doctrinal differences and practice religious fellowship also with the heterodox, we should take into account what is written *elsewhere* in Scripture. Peace at any price in the realm of religious convictions is not sanctioned by the Word of God. Jesus said to His disciples: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division; for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son and the son against the father, the mother against the daughter and the daughter against the mother, the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."¹³⁶ What is the cause of this dissension even in the family circle? Nothing else than clashing religious beliefs. To be sure, we should live peaceably with all men; we should go out of our way to preserve peace and good will in a world where there is so much strife and war; but this apostolic injunction does not justify every kind of religious fellowship. There is a higher duty than the maintenance of peaceful relations; peace must not be sought at all costs. For its sake we must not sacrifice principles and displease God. Jesus was the Prince of Peace; but to carry out His mission, He was bound to antagonize

Christian schools, colleges, missions, charitable endeavors, of which mission work is an integral part, and the publication of Christian literature.

133) Matt. 28:20.

135) Rom. 12:18.

134) Matt. 5:19.

136) Luke 12:51-53.

the religious leaders of His day by His bold testimony of the truth and His unmitigated denunciation of their hypocrisy and false teaching.¹³⁷⁾ "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."¹³⁸⁾

The Apostle of brotherly love, who to his dying day urged his "little children" to love one another, wrote also this: "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine [the doctrine of Christ Incarnate], receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds."¹³⁹⁾ Here John is not referring to showing hospitality to strangers by giving them shelter, which is explicitly enjoined upon Christians by the commandment of love, but to a saluting and reception of religious teachers whereby we acknowledge them as brethren. The greeting "Godspeed" which John has in mind clearly was an expression of religious fellowship, otherwise the Apostle would not add the words: "He that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds," *κοινωνεῖ τοῖς ἔργοις αὐτοῦ τοῖς πονηροῖς*. And certainly no Christian who prays daily, "Deliver us from the Evil One" (*ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ*), should deliberately have a share in evil deeds, whatever their character may be.

If we reflect for a minute, we see the serious implications of the words of John. He who has fellowship with an errorist has a share in his evil deeds in more ways than one. *First*, he sins against the *Lord and His Word*; for he is indifferent to the truth, which must be supreme. The Lord has said: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My Word."¹⁴⁰⁾ And Jesus declares: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed."¹⁴¹⁾ *Secondly*, he sins against the *Church*, for he gives offense to its members by leading them to believe that one doctrine is as good as another, thus making them indifferent. In the *third place*, he sins against the *false teachers* by strengthening them in their conviction that they possess the truth, rather than testifying and "in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."¹⁴²⁾ And *finally*, he sins against his *own soul*, because he exposes himself to the corrupting influence of error, which is never static but spreads "and

137) Matt. 16: 6: "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Cp. also Matt. 23: 1 ff.

138) C. P. Krauth, *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology*, p. 138.

139) 2 John 10, 11.

141) John 8: 31.

140) Is. 66: 2.

142) 2 Tim. 2: 25.

will eat as doth a canker."¹⁴³) "Evil communications corrupt good manners."¹⁴⁴) More exactly translated, the words read: "Evil associations corrupt good morals." Paul does not quote this word from Menander merely to warn against keeping company with Epicureans, although this is also in his mind. In 1 Cor. 15 he is taking issue with those who denied the resurrection and thereby espoused a hedonistic philosophy of life.

The ancient Church was thoroughly imbued with the spirit expressed in the warning words of St. John, "If any bring not this doctrine, do not bid him Godspeed." Ignatius and Irenaeus reiterate them, and Patriarch Alexander of Constantinople drew strength from them to remain firm when he was urged by the emperor to greet and receive Arius. Our fathers who wrote the Lutheran Confessions likewise denied the *Bruderhand* to those who did not adhere strictly to the teachings of the inspired Word. They declare again and again, "We believe, teach, and confess." But they are just as emphatic in the denial of error. In the Book of Concord we frequently meet with the expression "We reject and condemn." Animated by a fervent love of the truth, let us follow in their footsteps; let us ever regard false doctrine, in the light of Scripture, as an *evil work*, as something that has its origin in him who is the Evil One κατ' ἐξοχήν, the father of lies; then we shall never hesitate to deny fellowship to all such as teach *otherwise* than God's Word teaches.

Paul is no less outspoken on this question than John. He wrote to his assistant Timothy: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth. But shun [περίστασο] profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker; of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," ἀποστήτω ἀπὸ ἀδικίας πᾶς ὁ ὀνομάζων τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου.¹⁴⁵) The iniquity which Timothy should renounce includes false teachings which vitiate the Gospel of Christ. To deny the resurrection or to spread other error is certainly unrighteousness, ἀδικία, which should be avoided by all who love the truth. The strong simile of the spreading of gangrene makes the words of Paul all the more impressive.

143) 2 Tim. 2:17.

144) 1 Cor. 15:33: φθειρουσιν ἡθη χρηστὰ ὀμλίαι κακαί.

145) 2 Tim. 2:15-19.

If we turn to Paul's First Letter to Timothy, we hear the great Apostle speak in a similar vein. "If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting [*νοσῶν περὶ ζητήσεως κτλ.*] about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; from such withdraw thyself."¹⁴⁶⁾ The words that Paul employs in speaking of truth and error are highly significant. He speaks of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ as "sound doctrine," *ὑγιαίνοντες λόγοι*, healthy words, whereas he describes the errorist as *doting* about questions, as a man who is sick [*νοσῶν*]. Now, sickness may be very contagious. We do not like to expose ourselves to contagion by coming into close contact with the diseased. Health authorities solicitously safeguard the health of our citizenry by warning against contact with the afflicted and, in cases of so-called communicable diseases, even shut up the victims in isolation hospitals, where no visitors, not even the closest relatives, are allowed, so that the healthy may be protected. Shall we do less in a spiritual way? Shall we wantonly expose ourselves to becoming infected by "unsound" teaching, by fellowshipping with those who teach error? Ought we not to feel deeply grateful to our heavenly Physician for having "noted" the dispensers of corrupting doctrine and having put them under quarantine?

The language in Galatians 1 is even stronger than that of 1 Timothy 6. Paul did not make common cause with the Judaizers just because they, too, preached a way of salvation, though not *the* way taught by Christ. He openly denounces everyone who promulgates a different Gospel as being anathema. "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."¹⁴⁷⁾ Lest anyone brush these words aside or make light of them, he repeats them by saying: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."¹⁴⁸⁾ The verdict of Paul is the verdict of God, who called Paul to be an Apostle and put him into the ministry.

The solemn words of Paul in Galatians 1 are an echo, as it were, of the strict command of the Lord God to Israel of old: "When ye are passed over Jordan into the land of Canaan, then ye

146) 1 Tim. 6:3-5. Although the last four words, *ἀπίστασο ἀπὸ τῶν τοιούτων*, are not in the critical text, they are in perfect agreement with other passages that enjoin separation from teachers of false doctrine.

147) Gal. 1:8.

148) Gal. 1:9.

shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you and destroy all their pictures and destroy all their molten images and quite pluck down all their high places.”¹⁴⁹⁾ Men have found fault with this divine directive as coming from a God who is just another bloodthirsty tribal deity, unworthy of our veneration and love. But before we pause to answer these specious charges, let us note the motive for this stern command. It was prompted not by cruel vindictiveness, but by the Lord’s burning desire to safeguard his chosen people and keep them from lapsing into idolatry; for he continues in v. 55: “If ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come to pass that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell.”¹⁵⁰⁾ This is precisely what happened. As long as Joshua lived, they served the Lord; but when he had died and had been gathered unto his fathers, they forsook the Lord God of their fathers and followed other gods, the gods of the people round about them, and bowed themselves unto them and provoked the Lord to anger.¹⁵¹⁾ They did not drive out all the idol worshipers. Associating with them proved demoralizing and disastrous. It has ever been thus. Therefore the Scriptures so frequently and so earnestly warn against fellowship with all that do not worship the true God and unreservedly embrace His Word.

While we have no call to exterminate all the enemies of Christ or to call down fire from heaven upon all those that “follow not with us,”¹⁵²⁾ we should not make any spiritual covenant with them nor worship at the same altar, lest, as it happened in Israel, they become pricks in our eyes and thorns in our sides and cause us to fall away from the truth. Witness the tragic results among the Swedes in the East and all those Lutherans who fellowshipped with the Episcopalians and other Reformed bodies. Let us be warned, too, by the action of the Israelites who made a league with the fraudulent Gibeonites because they had not “asked counsel at the mouth of the Lord.”¹⁵³⁾

On the other hand, we may learn a lesson from those faithful exiles who refused to let the adversary share in the rebuilding of the Temple. Though the latter pleaded, “We seek your God as ye do, and we do sacrifice unto Him since the days of Esar-Haddon, king of Assur, which brought us up hither,” Zerubbabel, Joshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel said unto them: “Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God, but we

149) Num. 33: 51, 52.

150) Num. 33: 55.

151) Judg. 2: 12.

152) Luke 9: 53-56.

153) Josh. 9: 14.

ourselves together will build unto the Lord God of Israel." ¹⁵⁴) According to the standards of many spineless churchmen in our day that may seem to be a most loveless attitude; but it is an attitude born of a holy desire to worship the Lord, our God, and to let His Word establish our creeds and be the canon for our practice.

The clarion call that comes to the Church of the new covenant out of the sanctuary is this: "Brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle." ¹⁵⁵) "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation (περὶ τῆς κοινῆς ἡμῶν σωτηρίας), it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." ¹⁵⁶) — "Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them." ¹⁵⁷) "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition reject." ¹⁵⁸) There is no dearth of such passages. If we will only learn anew to view every kind of false doctrine as sin and an evil work, we will not make light of error and be led by a spirit of moderation and meekness, falsely so-called, to establish and maintain church fellowship with those that do not continue in *all* things written in God's Book, but we will, harsh as it may seem to the carnal mind, unwaveringly refuse the hand of fellowship to all those who deliberately deviate in any way from God's holy Word. This is what Luther did on that historical day at Marburg when he refused to take the hand of Zwingli because that would have meant that the great point which divided them was not an article of faith, and Luther believed in his inmost heart that it was.

At this point we may be confronted by the objection: "What you say is, in the main, true, and we have no quarrel with you when it comes to fellowshiping with Unitarians, Modernists, Roman Catholics, Reformed Churches, and all such as Paul had in mind in Galatians 1, because they either deny the entire Gospel or vitiate it at vital points. We cannot, however, take the same attitude with regard to Lutherans who agree with us on all *fundamental* doctrines, but do not see eye to eye with us on some *non-fundamentals*. We can hardly refuse the hand of fellowship to them."

Our answer to this objection is: We would indeed not deny Christian fellowship to those who differ on the interpretation of some passage or passages, which may well be understood in more

154) Ezra 4:2, 3.

155) 2 Thess. 2:15 .

156) Jude 3.

157) Rom. 16:17.

158) Titus 3:10.

ways than one,¹⁵⁹) as long as there is no contradiction of clearly revealed doctrines. But beyond that we should bear in mind: "The Bible, being the inspired Word of God, is clear, able to make us wise unto salvation, and therefore in need of no interpretation. Moreover, the Bible is a unit, one undivided and indivisible whole, of which we cannot accept one part and reject another without being in danger of losing all. *Principiis obstare necesse est.*"

The words spoken to Joshua of old still have weight and meaning for us: "Be thou strong and very courageous that thou mayest observe to do according to *all* the law which Moses, My servant, commanded thee; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."¹⁶⁰ The final testament of Christ to His New Testament Church was: "Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe *all* things whatsoever I have commanded you."¹⁶¹ Paul assured the elders of Ephesus that he had declared to them *all* the counsel of God, and in the same breath he warned them against men who would arise out of their own midst, speaking perverse things and thereby drawing the disciples after them.¹⁶²

We shall not argue with those who wish to make a distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines; but we must insist that *all* Scripture is inspired by God, every word of which we should keep inviolate; and the inference "Agreement in fundamentals only is necessary for church fellowship" has no warrant in Scripture.

While we certainly do not deny the state of grace of those who have the right foundation, which is Jesus Christ and His Gospel, but who build on that foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, we cannot approve of their manner of building. For we are told in that same passage that though they themselves shall be saved, yet so as by fire, their superstructure, which is false doctrine or error, will not endure.¹⁶³

Our relationship to other church bodies, whether non-Lutheran or Lutheran, must ever be determined not by our own ratiocinations or reflections, likes or dislikes, fear or favor of men, but solely by an unswerving, uncompromising loyalty to the eternal, unchanging Word of our God, who has called us unto the fellowship of His Son. To Him alone we are responsible. Such loyalty may make us extremely unpopular and even hated; it may involve us in endless doctrinal controversies. But shall we refuse to do battle

159) For example: Did Mary have children after Jesus was born? Did John the Baptist doubt the Messiahship of Jesus when he was in prison? Who is the first, second, and third angel in Revelation 14?

160) Josh. 1:7.

162) Acts 20:27-30.

161) Matt. 28:18-20.

163) 1 Cor. 3:11-15.

for the Lord when the truth is at stake? Shall we say, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace? Shall we pretend that we are united when we know that we are not? God forbid! May we always find our doctrinal position described in the words of the Psalmist: "Princes have persecuted me without a cause, but my heart standeth in awe of Thy Word. I hate and abhor lying, but Thy Law do I love."¹⁶⁴ "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee and of them that keep Thy precepts."¹⁶⁵

In view of what has been said as regards church fellowship with others, it becomes our inescapable duty to exercise doctrinal discipline *in our own midst*. We should justly be charged with insincerity and hypocrisy if we were to refuse the hand of fellowship to Christians in other church bodies while tolerating error in our own. Error must be exposed and combated wherever it rears its head. Among the reasons given for the organization of our Synod were these: "the conservation and continuance of the unity of the true faith and the united effort to resist *every* form of schism and sectarianism." We must watch zealously over the purity of doctrine and continue to practice doctrinal discipline if these words of our founding fathers are not to become a dead letter. "Though it may be an extremely painful task to cut off the right hand or to pluck out the right eye and to cast it away, yet the synod which will tolerate known errorists in its own ranks, unrebuked, ceases to be a truly Lutheran body. Every one who is a Missourian in spirit and in truth is ready always rather to separate from father, mother, sister, brother, than to yield, or even to jeopardize, the truth of the Gospel."¹⁶⁶

Before concluding this paper, we should like to add a few quotations which seem particularly apposite and which set forth the Scriptural principles governing Christian fellowship and doctrinal unity so much better than we have been able to do. The quotations are not short, but they are worth reading and heeding. The first is from the heart of Luther.

In his exposition of Gal. 5:9, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," we find the following: "Ein wenig Sauerteig versauert den ganzen Teig. Das ist eine Warnung, die Paulus gross achtet, davon wir billig auch viel halten sollen. Denn es ist mit der Lehre so genau abgemessen, dass man ohne grossen und merklichen Schaden weder etwas dazusetzen noch davonnehmen kann; mit dem Leben aber ist es also, dass es wohl etwas auf sich nehmen oder etwas nachgeben, tun und leiden kann, wie es die Notdurft

164) Psalm 119:161, 163.

165) Psalm 119:63.

166) F. Kuegele, *Lutheran Witness*, Vol. XVI, p. 66.

erfordert. Wenn einem ein klein Staeublein in ein Auge faellt, kann er es nicht leiden. St. Jakob hat sehr fein gesagt: 'Wer an einem suendiget, der ist am Ganzen schuldig,' Jak. 2:10. Darum soll die Lehre sein gleichwie ein feiner ganz gueldener Ring, daran kein Risslein noch Bruch sei; denn sobald solcher Ring ein Risslein oder Bruch bekommt, ist er nicht mehr ganz. Verflucht sei die Liebe in Abgrund der Hoelle, so erhalten wird mit Schaden der Lehre vom Glauben, der billig alles zumal weichen soll, es sei Liebe, Apostel, Engel vom Himmel und was es sein mag. Wir lassen es geschehen, dass sie die christliche Liebe so hoch ruehmen als sie immer moegen; wir ruehmen dagegen von der Majestaet und Herrlichkeit des Worts und Glaubens. Die Liebe kann man etwa nachlassen, dass es ohne Schaden und Gefahr ist; das kann aber mit dem Wort und Glauben nicht geschehen. Die Liebe soll alles leiden und jedermann weichen; dagegen soll und kann der Glaube gar nichts leiden und kurzum niemand weichen. Die Liebe, so gern weicht, alles glaubt, zugute haelt, vergibt und leidet, wird oft betrogen, gleichwohl verliert sie damit Christum nicht, laesst sich darum auch nicht irremachen, faehrt immer fort, hilft und tut wohl jedermann. Dagegen, wenn es in Sachen ist, so die Seligkeit belangen, und die Schwaermergeister ihre Luegen und Irrtum unter dem Schein der Wahrheit lehren und damit viel Leute verfuehren, da muss man wahrlich keine Liebe erzeigen, ihren Irrtum auch nicht billigen und rechtsprechen. Denn da verliert man nicht eine Wohltat, einem Undankbaren erzeigt; sondern das Wort, den Glauben, Christum selbst und das ewige Leben. Darum habe des keinen Zweifel, wenn du Gott in einem Artikel verleugnest, so hast du ihn gewisslich in allen verleugnet; denn er laesst sich nicht stueckweis zerteilen in viel Artikel, sondern ist ganz und gar in einem jeden und in allen zumal *ein* Gott. Darum vermahnt Paulus mit diesem Spruch beide, Lehrer und Zuhoerer, dass sie nicht denken sollen, es sei die Lehre des Glaubens so eine geringe und leichte Sache, dass wir damit spielen und kurzweilen moechten unsers Gefallens. Sie ist ein Sonnenglanz, der vom Himmel herabkommt und uns erleuchtet, entzuetet und regiirt. Gleichwie aber die ganze Welt mit all ihrer Weisheit und Gewalt den Sonnenglanz, so vom Himmel herab stracks auf die Erde geht, nicht lenken kann, also kann man der Lehre des Glaubens nichts weder ab- noch zutun, man wolle sie denn ganz und gar verkehren.

"Wo die Sakramentierer ernstlich und von Herzen glaubten, dass es Gottes Wort sei, wuerden sie damit nicht so leichtfertig scherzen und spielen, sondern es in hoechsten Ehren halten und ohne allen Zweifel und Disputation glauben, was es ihnen sagt und vorhaelt; wuerden auch wissen, dass *ein* Gotteswort alle, und

wiederum alle Gottesworte *eins* seien; wuerden wissen, dass alle Artikel unsers christlichen Glaubens *einer* seien und wiederum, dass *einer* alle sei, und wo man *einen* fallen laesst, dass gewiss die andern allesamt mit der Zeit einzeln nachfallen; denn sie haengen all aneinander und gehoeren zusammen. Darum soll es uns gar nicht irren, dass sie viel ruehmen, wie gern sie die Liebe und Einigkeit unter uns und ihnen erhalten wollen und wie herzlich wehe es ihnen tue, dass sie zertrennt werden soll. *Denn wer Gott und sein Wort nicht liebhat und ehrt, dem ist nicht geholfen, er liebe sonst, was er wolle.*"¹⁶⁷⁾ (Italics ours.)

Those who advance the oft-heard argument that it is wrong and uncharitable to apply the warnings of Scripture against errorists to such as deviate from Scripture in some seemingly non-essential doctrines, will do well to take to heart also the following words of the great Reformer:

"Ist es doch gar leicht geschehen, wo man nicht mit allen Kraeften an dem lieben Wort haelt, dass man es ewig verliere. Das Gut ist ja nicht so gering zu achten, wie die Welt wohl tut, und etliche unversaendige Geister vorgeben, durch den Teufel betrogen, ueber dem Sakrament oder anderer Irrung: man solle nicht ueber *einem* Artikel so hart streiten und darueber die christliche Liebe zertrennen, noch einander darueber dem Teufel geben; sondern, ob man gleich in einem geringen Stueck irrete, da man sonst in andern eines ist, moege man wohl etwas weichen und gehen lassen und *gleichwohl bruederliche und christliche Einigkeit oder Gemeinschaft halten*. Nein, lieber Mann, mir nicht des Friedens und der Einigkeit, da man Gottes Wort ueber verliert; denn damit waere schon das ewige Leben und alles verloren. Es gilt hier nicht weichen noch etwas einraeumen, dir oder einigen Menschen zuliebe, sondern dem Wort sollen alle Dinge weichen, es heisse Feind oder Freund. Denn es ist nicht um aeusserlicher oder weltlicher Einigkeit und um des Friedens willen, sondern um des ewigen Lebens willen gegeben. *Das Wort und die Lehre sollen christliche Einigkeit oder Gemeinschaft machen.*"¹⁶⁸⁾

"Weil sie [die Papisten] sich erbieten nachzugeben und dergleichen von uns begehren, zeigen sie, dass ihnen gleich viel gilt Gottes Wort und Menschenlehre. Lieber, Gottes Wort nachzugeben oder aendern, stehet bei Gott selbst nicht, denn er kann sich selbst nicht leugnen oder aendern. Wer es aber aendern und nachlassen soll, der muss eine hoehere Macht haben, denn Gott selbst hat. . . . Des unterstehet sich auch niemand, denn der

167) Quoted according to *Dr. Martin Luther's Auslegung der Epistel an die Galater*, herausgegeben von Ch. G. Eberle, p. 163f. Cp. Luther, St. Louis ed., Vol. IX: 644f.

168) Luther, St. Louis ed., Vol. IX: 831.

Antichrist. . . Die heilige christliche Kirche ist nicht ein Rohr noch ein Zahlpfennig. Sie wankt nicht, sie gibt nicht nach, wie des Teufels Hure; sondern sie ist 'ein Pfeiler und Grundfeste der Wahrheit'. Und wozu waere nuetze oder not in der Welt eine Kirche Gottes, wenn sie wollte wanken und ungewiss sein in ihren Worten oder all Tage was Neues setzen, jetzt das geben, jetzt das nehmen? Ja, wozu waere ein solcher Gott nuetze, der uns also wollte wanken und zweifeln lehren? . . . Moechte aber ein *Gut-herziger* sagen: Was schadet's denn, dass man Gottes Wort hielte und liesse daneben diese Stuecke alle, oder je etliche, so leidlich waeren, auch gleichwohl bleiben? antworte ich: Es moegen gut-herzige Leute *heissen*, sie sind aber *irrherzige* und *verfuehret-herzige* Leute. Denn du hoerst, dass nicht sein kann, neben Gottes Wort etwas anderes lehren. Est ist gewisslich ein Irrwisch und Irrtum, wenn es gleich ein einiges Stueck waere; denn die Kirche kann und soll nicht Luegen und Irrtum lehren, auch nicht in einigem Stueck; lehret sie *eine Luege, so ist's ganz falsch.*"¹⁶⁹⁾

Our next spokesman is Pastor F. Nagel. In 1846 he addressed the Neustadt-Eberswalder Pastoral Conference as follows:

"Um die Schrift und die Praxis der ersten Kirche im Verhalten gegen die Irrlehrer recht zu verstehen, muessen wir uns etwas gegenwaertigen, was der heutigen Zeit so gut wie abhanden gekommen zu sein scheint. Falsche Lehre ist wesentlich Suende, und zwar eine offenbare Suende, welche der aertzlichen und richterlichen Behandlung der Kirche ebensowohl unterliegt wie alle uebrigen offenbaren Werke des Fleisches. Die Schrift, die Propheten und Apostel strafen unverkennbar die Abgoetterei, falsche Propheten, falsche Apostel, Irrlehrer mit viel groesserer Schaerfe als die sonst lasterhaft lebenden Christen. Falsche Lehre ist eine Suende gegen das erste Gebot, eine feine Abgoetterei. Und wenn St. Johannes warnet: 'Kindlein, huetet euch vor den Abgoettern,' so warnet er damit zugleich vor falscher Lehre.

"Falsche Lehre ist eine Suende wider das zweite Gebot, ein Missbrauch, eine Entheiligung des Namens Gottes, jenes Luegen und Truegen, das Luther unter die Suenden gegen dies Gebot rechnet. Falsche Lehre ist die vornehmste Suende gegen das dritte Gebot, die vornehmste Entheiligung des Feiertags. Falsche Lehre ist ueberhaupt auch die vornehmste Suende gegen die andere Tafel, gegen die Liebe des Naechsten. Denn was toetet, verfuehrt, bestiehlt und beluegt den Naechsten mehr und schlimmer als falsche Lehre? Darum waere es ein Widerspruch, wenn dieselbe Schrift, die 1 Kor. 5:11 verbietet, mit Hurern, Geizigen, Trunkenbolden und Raubern auch nur im gewoehnlichen Sinne zu essen,

169) Luther, St. Louis ed., Vol. XVII:1338ff.

falls sie aeußerlich zur Kirche gehoeren und die Busse versagen, andererseits doch die Sakramentsgemeinschaft mit denen gestatten, wohl gar fordern sollte, die offenbar falsche Lehre fuehren, davon auch nicht ablassen wollen. Dieser Widerspruch ist der Heiligen Schrift um so weniger zuzutrauen, als die Stelle 1 Kor. 5:11 auch die 'Abgoettischen' nennt, wozu nach der tiefen Anschauung der Bibel auch die gerechnet werden muessen, die falsche Lehre fuehren. Schon hier zeigt sich recht klar, dass der Umstand, dass jemand nur in einigen, aber doch nicht in allen Glaubensartikeln falsch lehrt, ihn keineswegs berechtigt, die Sakramentsgemeinschaft zu fordern. Denn ein Trunkenbold versuendigt sich als solcher auch noch nicht groeblich gerade gegen alle Gebote; er kann in manchem andern Betracht aeußerlich sich exemplarisch auffuehren. Und dennoch, wenn nichts weiter auf ihn gebracht werden koennte als diese offenbare Trunkenheit, soll, falls er nicht Besserung zusagt, die Brudergemeinschaft ihm versagt werden.

"In diesem Zusammenhange erscheint die Union als die Zerstoererin der biblischen Kirchengzucht, und zwar zunaechst derjenigen, welche zugunsten der ersten Tafel des Gesetzes geuebt werden soll, und es muesste eine der seltsamsten Naturwidrigkeiten sein, wenn es dieser Union gelingen sollte, zugunsten der zweiten Tafel eine biblische Kirchengzucht aufzurichten und durchzufuehren. Hier wird klar, dass die Union von mir fordert, mich fremder Suenden teilhaftig zu machen, was doch die Schrift wiederholt verbietet. Wie ein Prediger, der einem unbussfertigen Trunkenbold das Abendmahl reicht, zwar nicht selbst ein Trunkenbold ist, aber dennoch der Kraft nach der Suende der Trunkenheit sich teilhaftig macht, gleichsam der Hehler dieser Suende wird, so kann jemand, der mit denen, welche oeffentlich und hartnaeckig falsche Lehre fuehren, die Sakramentsgemeinschaft aufrichtet, zwar fuer seine Person an der reinen Lehre festhalten, aber er macht sich ohne weitere Frage hierdurch auch jener falschen Lehre vollstaendig teilhaftig. Ja die *ihm hieraus erwachsende Verschuldung ist groesser als die jener Irrlehrer, eben weil er die Erkenntnis der reinen Lehre hat*. So sagt auch St. Johannes gerade von demjenigen, der den gruesst, welcher die Lehre Christi nicht bringt: er macht sich teilhaftig seiner boesen Werke."¹⁷⁰⁾

The last quotation is from Franz Delitzsch, written at a time when he still believed wholeheartedly in the Bible as the inspired, infallible Word of God and accepted the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church as a true and correct confession of Christian doctrine:

170) *Zeitschrift fuer die gesamte lutherische Theologie und Kirche*, 1847, Heft 1.

“Das Bekenntnis unserer lutherischen Kirche ist schlackenreines Metall aus dem Ofen des Elendes; es ist die friedsame Frucht muehseliger Kaempfe nach innen und aussen. Es ist nicht das Ergebnis einer unnoetigen Streitsucht und einer ueber das Wort hinausgehenden Spitzfindigkeit, sondern der Erkenntnis- und Erfahrungsschatz eines unablaessigen Forschens und Ringens, wie es Gott von uns fordert; die goettliche Wahrheit, entnommen aus dem in sich klaren und zureichenden Worte, geglaubt, gelehrt und einstimmig bekannt von denen, die sie lieb hatten und eben darum auf dem allerheiligsten Grund und Boden sich vereinigten; das Siegeszeichen der streitenden Kirche, welche die Waffenruestung Gottes,¹⁷¹⁾ deren die triumphierende nicht mehr bedarf, noch nicht abgelegt hat, weil ihr noch obliegt, wider Fleisch und Blut, wider die Welt, wider den Satan und seine Engel zu kaempfen. Die rechtglaeubige Kirche, ihres Berufes zu streiten sich bewusst, trug, wie dort das Haus Juda beim Baue des zweiten Tempels¹⁷²⁾ in der einen Hand die Kelle, in der anderen das Schwert. Sie vergab dem Worte Gottes, das ihr Gott vertraut hatte, nichts zugunsten eines falschen Friedens. Sie lag zu Felde mit blanken, schneidenden Waffen geistlicher Ritterschaft, dass es glaenzete als der Tauben Fluegel, die wie Silber und Gold schimmern.¹⁷³⁾ Sie war ein geduldiges Lamm gegen die, welche nach dem Blute ihrer Bekenner duersteten, aber eine mutige Loewin gegen die, welche zu Wort und Sakrament etwas hinzufuegen oder davontun wollten. Die symbolischen Buecher der lutherischen Kirche sind ihr Heldenprotokoll und ihre Siegesakten — *wir waeren Verraeter, wenn wir sie dem alten kirchlichen oder dem neuen weltlichen Papsttum zuliebe darangaeben*. Wo die Vaeter zu kaempfen aufgehoert, da kaempfen wir mit den erprobten Waffen weiter; wir waeren aber undankbar gegen Gott, unsern Hort, der ihre Haende streiten und ihre Faeste kriegen gelehrt hat,¹⁷⁴⁾ wenn wir die Kriege des Herrn, die sie gefuehrt, ignorieren wollten. Das Wort Gottes ist unvergaenglich, aber auch das demselben gemaesse rechtglaeubige Bekenntnis. Die Typen verrosten, die Schwaerze erbleicht, das Papier verfault, aber des Herrn Wort bleibt in Ewigkeit. Das ist aber das Wort, welches von dem Engel mit dem ewigen Evangelio wieder hervorgebracht, in den symbolischen Buechern unserer Kirche niedergelegt und von allen treuen Lehrern, die ihren Eidschwur hoch und teuer hielten, verkuendigt worden ist.”¹⁷⁵⁾

171) Eph. 6: 11 ff.

172) Neh. 4: 17.

173) Ps. 68: 14.

174) Ps. 144: 1.

175) Franz Delitzsch, *Der Fluegel des Engels, eine Stimme aus der Wueste im vierten Jubelfestjahre der Buchdruckerkunst*, 1840, p. 62 f.

3. Our Supreme Duty — A Cheering Hope

To conclude, we should like to borrow Paul's felicitous phrase from Eph. 4:16: "Speaking the truth in love," ἀληθεύοντας ἐν ἀγάπῃ. "Speaking the truth in love" — here lies our duty toward, and our hope for, the Church of Christ on earth, and particularly for our beloved Lutheran Church.

Speaking the truth, professing, proclaiming it, without equivocation, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come and which have come to pass, that is still our only duty, the old duty in a new age. Christ says of Himself: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."¹⁷⁶ It is our sacred obligation to continue where the Lord, His disciples, and all true confessors left off. To this end were we reborn, and for this purpose are we still in this world, that we should confess Christ and His Word and that we hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. We have no other duty, and may we never grow remiss in performing it, especially in a day and age to which the words apply: "The time will come when *they will not endure sound doctrine*, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and *they shall turn away their ears from the truth* and shall be turned unto fables."¹⁷⁷

"Speaking the truth in love." While the truth must ever be proclaimed, it should always be done without animus and bitterness. *Fortiter in re, suaviter in modo*. Let kindness and love govern our words and actions; let patience and forbearance rule at all times; let meekness and humility show itself in our conduct toward all whom it is our duty to oppose in doctrinal controversy. Firmness and meekness, holy zeal for the truth and fervent love of the opponent, are not incompatible when we are contending for the faith. Mercy and truth meet together here, righteousness and peace kiss each other.

"Speaking the truth in love" — there lies our hope for the Church, a hope that maketh not ashamed. "*Verbo victus est mundus, Verbo servata est ecclesia, etiam Verbo reparabitur.*" (Luther.) For the truth is still the power of God unto salvation and unto unification. Therefore we need not be troubled whether men will accept or reject our testimony, praise or persecute us. The Savior has given us the assurance: "Everyone that is of the truth heareth My voice."¹⁷⁸ The truth will establish not only fellowship with the Father and the Son, but also with one another. The truth which

¹⁷⁶) John 18:37.

¹⁷⁷) 2 Tim. 4:3, 4.

¹⁷⁸) John 18:37.

wins the hearts of men unites those that have been won by the bond of a common faith and hope.

This inward unity will always manifest itself; not perfectly, to be sure, in this present evil world. Christians will never be united in one *visible* body; nor is this necessary. But the day will come when we shall be united with all the saints in perfect, unmarred, unbroken communion before our God, to hymn forever with our angel brothers the honor and wisdom, the power and mercy of Him who bought us to be His own and to live with Him in His heavenly kingdom. Oh, that we were there!

Milwaukee, Wis.

C. A. HARDT

Keeping the Doctrine Pure

I

In the year 1924 a book was published entitled *Great Preachers As Seen by a Journalist*. In closing the last chapter of the book the author said, "I believe that the creeds within Protestantism are more shell-like and fragile than appears on the surface. Some of these ministers I have written about in this book were born in one creed and preach now in another. Ask me at the end of my work what conclusion stands out in my mind, and I must say, 'I have found plenty of signs that the Protestant Churches of America will one day be one great Church. The uselessness and the pity of today's schisms and doctrinal conflicts will, of themselves, bring about a great consolidation, which our children, if not we ourselves, shall see.'"

Such an expression of doctrinal indifferentism is characteristic of our age; but not of our age only, it has always been so, differing in degree only. Doctrinal indifferentism came into the world with the fall of man. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him," 1 Cor. 2:14. This "foolishness" is still found in the old Adam of the Christian. As "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost," 1 Cor. 12:3, even so only the Holy Spirit can guide men into all truth, John 16:13. Those who let their own sinful reason guide them cannot come to a full knowledge of the truth.

As we scan the pages of Holy Scripture, we find that opposition to the revealed truth of God and apostasy have been the outstanding sin of man. In the Book of Deuteronomy we read, "And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this Law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the Law, and put it in the side of