

**John Michael Reu**

# Unionism



**LutheranLibrary.org ● 580**

# Unionism

## Also Available from [LutheranLibrary.org](http://LutheranLibrary.org)

- *What is Scripture and How Can We Be Certain of its Divine Origin?* by John Michael Reu

## About The Lutheran Library



The Lutheran Library is a non-profit publisher of good Christian books. All are available in a variety of formats for use by anyone for free or at very little cost. There are never any licensing fees.

We are Bible believing Christians who subscribe wholeheartedly to the Augsburg Confession as an accurate summary of Scripture, the chief article of which is Justification by Faith. Our purpose is to make available solid and encouraging material to strengthen believers in Christ.

Prayers are requested for the next generation, that the Lord will plant in them a love of the truth, such that the hard-learned lessons of the past will not be forgotten.

Please let others know of these books and this completely volunteer endeavor. May God bless you and keep you, help you, defend you, and lead you to know the depths of His kindness and love.

# Unionism

By John Michael Reu, D.D., Litt.D.

Buffalo, Iowa, Ohio Synods  
© 1939 / 2020  
(CC BY 4.0)

[LutheranLibrary.org](https://LutheranLibrary.org)

# Contents

[Also Available from LutheranLibrary.org](#)

[About The Lutheran Library](#)

[Contents](#)

[Preface by Lutheran Librarian](#)

[About Dr Reu by Em. Poppen](#)

[Unionism](#)

[An Open Letter To The Lutheran Pastors Of The United States And Canada](#)

[Fellowship Negotiations With The United Lutheran Church In America](#)

[I. Recommendations](#)

[II. Doctrinal Statement on Inspiration and the Scriptures](#)

[Declaration Of The Representatives Of The American Lutheran Church](#)

[I. Scripture and Inspiration.](#)

[II. Universal Plan of Salvation, Predestination and Conversion.](#)

[III. The Church.](#)

[IV. The Office of the Public Administration of the Means of Grace.](#)

[V. The Doctrine of Sunday.](#)

[VI. The Doctrine Concerning the Last Things.](#)

[Statement Submitted To The Intersynodical Committee Chicago, January, 1938 By The Representatives Of The Missouri Synod](#)

[Report And Resolutions Of Committee No. 16 Relative To Overture 513](#)

[Copyright Notice](#)

[How Can You Find Peace With God?](#)

[Benediction](#)

[More Than 100 Good Christian Books For You To Download And Enjoy](#)

# Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce this author to a new generation of those seeking authentic spirituality.

JOHN MICHAEL REU (1869-1943) studied at Loehe's Neuendettelsau Mission Institute in Bavaria and was ordained to the Lutheran ministry at the age of 20. He served pastorates in Mendota and Rock Falls, Illinois, and taught at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa for 44 years. [Wikipedia] "It was said of Reu, that the Bible was a love story from beginning to end, God wooing back His own and sustaining them with heavenly food. Reu understood the main task of Christian education to be telling the story of God as revealed in scripture. And for Reu, the study of scripture was more than just the pursuit of knowledge, but had to do with formation and feeding of the soul. He leaves a legacy of a man who was a teacher, pastor, student and lover of God's word." [Mark Kvale & Robert C. Wiederaenders; Biola]

---

The Lutheran Library Publishing Ministry finds, restores and republishes good, readable books from Lutheran authors and those of other sound Christian traditions. All titles are available at little to no cost in proofread and freshly typeset editions. Many free e-books are available at our website [LutheranLibrary.org](http://LutheranLibrary.org). Please enjoy this book and let others know about this completely volunteer service to God's people. May the Lord bless you and bring you peace.

# Introduction by Em. Poppen.

## About Dr Reu

Dr. Reu, the author of the two lectures, needs no introduction to anyone acquainted with Lutheran theology and theologians of our generation, both in America and wherever else in the wide world there are Lutherans. He has been in the Lutheran ministry for over a half century and has been serving the Church and the Kingdom as a professor of theology in Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, for more than forty years. His outstanding scholarship and the objectivity, clarity and thoroughness of his presentation of theological subjects are too well known to need further commendation at this time. But two facts in his favor, perhaps not so generally known, which should win for him the good will and openness of mind of pastors in all Lutheran synodical groups to devote time and study to the lectures, are his intimate knowledge of the historical background and development of every Lutheran group, not in America only, but in world Lutheranism, and the ease with which he finds himself thoroughly at home in a rural pastoral conference as, well as in a Lutheran World Convention.

## Introduction

The first lecture, on Unionism, was delivered before a free conference of pastors of the Missouri Synod and of the American Lutheran Church, in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, May 8, 1939. It was written and presented in the German language and then published in the June, 1939, issue of the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, the official German-English theological journal of the American Lutheran Church, which Dr. Ben has edited for many years. For the English version, here presented, we are indebted to Pastor Julius Bodensieck. The exegetical part of the lecture, written as a supplement at the Conference's



request, was presented at a subsequent meeting, held in Cedar Rapids, September 15, 1939. The discussion of the question whether it is God's will that there be agreement in all points of doctrine, is an addition to the lecture, made by the author since the conference meetings at Cedar Rapids.

The lecture on Scripture was delivered at the Luther Academy, at its session at Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, in the summer of 1938. It appeared in *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* in the issues for July and August, 1939.

It is the writer's fond hope and fervent prayer that God may bless the reading and study of these lectures, so that He may thereby be glorified and the cause of Lutheran unity may be furthered.

February, 1940.

EM. POPPEN.

# Unionism

THE TOPIC ASSIGNED to me is “Unionism.” It will be profitable first of all to define the term Unionism. A glance at church history will probably help us to arrive at a clear—cut definition. You, the members of the Missouri Synod, agree with us, the members of the American Lutheran Church, that Melanchthon is the father of Unionism in the Lutheran Church. On what grounds do we regard Melanchthon as the outstanding unionist?

Melanchthon ceased to regard differences concerning the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper as divisive of church fellowship. Whereas at the diet of Speier he was tormented by qualms of conscience after he had agreed to enter a pact with the southern Germans and the Sacramentarians without full agreement in doctrine; and whereas at Augsburg in 1530 he consistently resisted all the pleas of Landgrave Philipp to disregard the differences with respect to the Lord’s Supper, subsequently he viewed these differences as non-divisive, as his *Variata*, of 1540 plainly shows (*viz.*, through the omission of the words *vere adsint* and of the phrase *improbant secus docentes*). Here we discover the first mark of Unionism: A difference in doctrine which hitherto has been regarded as divisive, is suddenly made to lose its divisive significance.

What was it that brought about this change in Melanchthon’s thinking? We will not misstate the case when we maintain that it was his desire to unite with Calvin and his followers, his hope to amalgamate Wittenberg and Geneva in one church. Perhaps his hopes were not so visionary as those of Philipp of Hesse, who in April 1529 envisaged one unbroken evangelical battle line, reaching from Zurich to Scandinavia; still, he was deeply interested in a unification of all Protestant forces. The second mark of Unionism, therefore, is this: Differences in doctrine are made to lose their divisive significance with a view to uniting hitherto separate churches.

From 1540 onward Melanchthon maintained that 1 Corinthians 10:16, especially the words, “the communion of the body and the blood of Christ,” offered a formula which might form a common basis for both Wittenberg

and Geneva even though he knew definitely that the Reformed interpreted this statement in a totally different sense than the Lutherans. According to Lutheran teaching, Christ's body and blood are really present in, with, and under the bread and the wine used in the Eucharist, with the result that every one who partakes of bread and wine partakes also of Christ's body and blood; according to Calvin, it is only the believer who receives communion of the body and blood of Christ, and he enjoys this experience not in the celebration of the Lord's Supper but by lifting himself up to heaven to the right hand of God. Melancthon knew that Luther had said with reference to 1 Cor. 10:16, "Here, I think, is a passage that crushes Carlstadt and all his fanatical host. For me it is true medicine whenever my heart is assailed by doubts concerning this Sacrament. Yes, if there were no other text beside this one, there would be enough to strengthen our consciences and to confound our adversaries." Nevertheless, it was precisely this text which Melancthon chose as the formula of uniting the Lutherans and the Reformed. The third mark of Unionism, therefore, is this: A formula of unification is found which each of two hitherto separate churches may accept but which each of them interprets differently. An external bond is found for internally divided groups.

Even a fourth mark of Unionism may be discovered in a study of Melancthon. Unless we are very badly mistaken, Melancthon personally continued all his life to believe in the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper even though he was willing to enter into church fellowship with Calvin. We find this attitude of tolerance quite frequently among unionists. It is often used to assuage a troubled conscience, one's own as well as that of others; for the unionist declares that every one may continue to hold his own private convictions and merely needs to respect and tolerate those of another. This attitude is totally wrong, for it disregards two important factors: (a) In tolerating divergent doctrines one either denies the perspicuity and clarity of the Scriptures, or one grants to error the right to exist alongside of truth, or one evidences indifference over against Biblical truth by surrendering its absolute validity; and (b) in allowing two opposite views concerning one doctrine to exist side by side, one has entered upon an inclined plane which of necessity leads ever further into complete doctrinal indifference, as may plainly be seen from the most calamitous case on record, viz., the Prussian Union. Doctrinal indifference is at once the root of Unionism and its fruit. Whoever accepts, in theory as well as in

practice, the absolute authority of the Scriptures and their unambiguousness with reference to all fundamental doctrines, must be opposed to every form of Unionism.

If Melancthon's case is typical, we may say that we find Unionism wherever the absolute authority of the Scriptures and their unambiguousness with reference to all fundamental doctrines is, in theory or in practice, treated with indifference, wherever wrong views of Biblical doctrines are tolerated (even though one may personally cling to the correct doctrine) for the purpose of establishing fellowship with a church to which one previously refused it, and where one finds a formula of unification which externally unifies the two groups but which is differently interpreted by each of the two groups and, therefore, does not really and truly unite them.

All subsequent Unionistic endeavors bear these characteristic marks more or less clearly. We mention the Compromise of Sendomir (in Poland) of 1570, which established the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper, but had such a vague form that it allowed a purely Calvinistic interpretation. Or we might refer to the Syncretistic endeavors of Calixtus and his followers, where it is interesting to note that Calixtus himself, at least until 1634, professed the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Or to the Prussian Union, which accorded equal rights to Lutherans and Reformed even in those days when it claimed to be no more than "a union in church government" ("kirchenregimentliche Union"). Finally we may refer to the "American Lutheranism" of Schmucker and the former General Synod, where open communion was commonly practiced and all distinctions between the Lutheran and Reformed pulpit were demolished. In all these cases we have simon-pure Unionism, possessing the above mentioned four marks.

---

Unionism does not, however, need to signify the attempt, or the mere willingness, to merge the Lutheran Church and the Reformed Church into one church body. On the contrary, it is clearly Unionistic when with more or less frequency Reformed Christians are admitted to Lutheran pulpits and to Lutheran altars. Since no Reformed pastor can be expected to preach the kind of doctrine which Lutherans are convinced is the Biblical truth, and since we are appointed as the guardians and witnesses of this truth, it cannot be anything else but indifference toward the specifically Lutheran truth

when one admits a Reformed pastor to his pulpit. No specific Scripture statements need to be adduced in order to prove this point. That we must condemn this form of Unionism follows with inner necessity from our duty as guardians and witnesses and from our conviction that the Scriptures possess absolute authority and unambiguousness with reference to all cardinal doctrines.

Least of all have I ever been able to understand how it is possible to admit non-Lutherans to the Sacrament, or even to invite them indiscriminately, and to justify this practice by declaring that the Lord's Supper had been instituted in order to manifest publicly the union of all those who believe that Christ has given His life for them. It cannot be denied, of course, that one of the effects of the Lord's Supper is the realization and manifestation of the union existing among the communicants themselves. In fact, there is no other act through which the disciples of Jesus are so closely and really united in the bond of fellowship as here in the Lord's Supper, where the one body and one blood of the Lord enters, under the bread and the wine, into all those who partake; and nowhere else is the distinctive character of the Church of God and its essential unity so clearly demonstrated as in the Lord's Supper, where the disciples gather around a table which the outsiders do not know or possess and where they stand revealed as true brethren of one another and as disciples of the Master. If, however, all deception is to be kept far from the sanctuary, this external demonstration of unity must be the reflection of the inner unity of faith and confession; altar communion, in other words, demands unity in faith and confession, and not merely a sort of general unity with reference to Christ as the Savior of the world, but also with reference to the Lord's Supper. We must insist on this because the correct understanding of the Lord's Supper is in itself a very important matter and because it is, so to speak, the focus of a number of important truths of Scripture, but especially because a most elementary sense of truthfulness should keep us from advertising as a demonstration of unity an act concerning which no unity exists.

We know how indignant Luther was when in 1533 he was asked by the council and congregation of Frankfort on the Main concerning open communion. He said among other things, "I am deeply disturbed over the fact that in one and the same church and at one and the same altar both parties—the Lutherans and the Sacramentarians—accept and receive one and the same Sacrament, but that some believe they receive mere bread and wine

while the others believe that they receive the true body and the true blood of Christ. I often wonder whether it may be credible that a preacher could be so hardened and wicked as to be silent in this matter and to allow each group to hold a different View concerning the Sacrament which he distributes to both. But if there is such a preacher, he must have a heart of stone or steel or diamond; he must indeed be an apostle of wrath, for Turks and Jews are much better because they deny our Sacrament openly and freely and so keep us from being deceived and from falling into idolatry. But these fellows must be genuine arch-devils; they distribute only bread and wine and do not let communicants believe that they receive Christ's body and blood, and so deceive them most miserably. This is too wicked and violent; God will shortly stop this terrible abuse. Let everyone be warned against such preachers as against the very devil himself" (Weim. Ed., 30,656).

Luther's mode of expression may seem to be somewhat drastic; but the position he assumed is essentially correct. It was purely a return to this genuinely Lutheran position when the General Council in 1868 passed the following well known resolutions:

"As regards the communion with those not of our Church we hold: That the principle of discriminating as over against an indiscriminate communion is to be firmly maintained. Heretics and fundamental errorists are to be excluded from the Lord's Table. The responsibility for an unworthy approach to the Lord's Table does not rest alone upon him who makes that approach, but also upon him who invites it."

and:

"As regards the exchange of pulpits... no man should be admitted to our pulpits, whether of Lutheran name or any other, of whom there is just reason to doubt whether he will preach the pure truth of God's Word as taught in the Confessions of our Church."

Two years later, 1870, when the General Council was interrogated by the Minnesota Synod as to its conception of "fundamental errorists," the following reply was given:

"In employing the term 'fundamental errorists' it understands not those who are the victims of involuntary mistakes, but those who willfully, wickedly and persistently desert, in whole or in part, the Christian faith, especially as embodied in the Confessions of the Church Catholic, in the purest form in which it now exists on earth, to wit, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and thus overturn or destroy the foundation in them confessed."

A little later, in 1875, at the meeting in Galesburg, Ill., this principle was formulated in this way:

“Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran ministers only;  
Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only.”

It is obvious that a departure from this rule is Unionism. This conviction is expressed in the Minneapolis Theses of 1925 as follows:

“According to the Word of God and our Confessions, church fellowship, that is mutual recognition, altar-and pulpit-fellowship, and eventually cooperation in the strictly essential work of the Church, presupposes unanimity in the pure doctrine of the Gospel and in the confession of the same in word and deed. Where the establishment and maintenance of church-fellowship ignores present differences or declares them a matter of indifference, there is Unionism, pretense of union which does not exist.” — “The rule ‘Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors only, and Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only’ is not only in full accord with, but necessarily implied in, the teachings of the divine Word and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. This rule, implying the rejection of all Unionism and Syncretism, must be observed as setting forth a principle elementary to sound, conservative Lutheranism.”

---

Is there a third form of Unionism? Indeed! While the two forms of Unionism discussed above involve indifference over against doctrinal distinctions between Lutherans and Reformed, there may be a similar indifference over against Biblical truth within the Lutheran Church, which may prevent those who wish to cling to the Confessions, from entering into, or remaining in, fellowship with certain parts of the Lutheran Church. All Lutheran churches, indeed, accept either the entire Book of Concord of 1580 or at least the Augsburg Confession and Luther’s Small Catechism as their confessional basis and in one form or another expect their pastors and professors to subscribe to it. But it is common knowledge that even during the era of rationalism the ministers of the Lutheran Church were expected to subscribe to the confessional books of the Church—even Semler, the father of modern Bible criticism and of liberal theology in general, insisted on their official recognition—but did not offer anything beyond the theology and religion of the natural man. Therefore, the “Brief Statement” of the Missouri Synod is perfectly justified in saying:

“The orthodox character of a church is established not by its mere name nor by its outward acceptance of, and subscription to, an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine which is *actually* taught in its pulpits, in its theological seminaries, and in its publications. On the other hand, a church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of errors, provided these are combated and eventually removed by means of doctrinal discipline.”

This is what separates us not only from the new German Evangelical National Church, which according to its constitution is as plainly Unionistic as possible and in its subsequent development does not even deserve the title “Church” any more; it also separated us from the “Lutheran State Churches,” as they existed before 1933. Even in these nominally Lutheran church bodies the various “Richtungen” or conflicting schools of theological thought were accorded equal rights as a matter of principle, and doctrinal discipline was applied only in the most extreme cases of liberalism, and in this way the confessional basis of the Church was more or less fatally undermined. It is precisely at this point that we find ourselves separated from the United Lutheran Church in America. We readily concede that the constitution of this church body is Lutheran; we must admit that the Washington Declaration of 1920, sanctioning the Galesburg Rule, was a courageous act; we may be eager to assume that the statements adopted as a result of the negotiations with the American Lutheran Church—including the statement concerning the inerrancy of the Scriptures—are sincere expressions of faith and not the result of political astuteness; we may heartily rejoice over the fact that not only numerous laymen but also many pastors govern their life and their ministry in accordance with these principles and wage a valiant battle against the un-Lutheran elements in their church, at times under distressingly difficult circumstances. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that official publications within the United Lutheran Church have made far-reaching concessions to modernism on some very vital questions: that several seminaries have men on their faculties who disagree with the Confessions of the Church on many points; that there are several theological seminaries in which there is no introduction into the confessional books of the Church; that pulpit and altar fellowship with the Reformed is practiced widely and with immunity; that there are still hundreds of pastors who belong to lodges, particularly the Masonic lodge, and that congregations which, as a matter of principle, call only Freemasons as their pastors, are left unmolested by the officers of the church. Fairness requires us to express our grateful joy over the fact that the leaders of the Church are making use of



the few available means (the constitution of the United Lutheran Church does not allow its president very much freedom of action in this sphere) for correcting these abuses; and we pray the Lord to endow them with perseverance and increased fortitude. But at the present time these conditions exist not only throughout the length and breadth of our country, but the synods which are immediately involved are frequently entirely inactive, and there are even voices which defend the continuance of this deplorable state of affairs and praise their own indifference as true evangelical freedom. To establish church fellowship with the United Lutheran Church under such circumstances would be Unionism, inasmuch as such action would involve indifference toward the truth, and such indifference is a mark of Unionism.

At this point the objection may be raised: Why does the American Lutheran Church take part in the Lutheran World Convention, in which the Lutheran Churches of Europe also hold membership? Or in the National Lutheran Council, which includes also the United Lutheran Church? Or in the National Lutheran Educational Conference, where anyone bearing the name "Lutheran" is admitted? I am glad to enter upon a discussion of these questions, especially because they form the basis of the charge that we are guilty of Unionism.

As far as the Lutheran World Convention is concerned, it must be admitted by every one that its "Confessional Resolution" is soundly Lutheran; on the other hand, many church bodies and representatives of churches holding membership in the World Convention regard this confessional resolution as no more than an empty form. The confessional resolution of 1929 has the following form:

"The Lutheran World Convention acknowledges the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only source and infallible norm of all church doctrine and practice, and sees in the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, especially in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism, a pure exposition of the Word of God."

In spite of the correctness of this formula, however, if membership in the Lutheran World Convention were to involve church fellowship in the narrower sense of that term, then our participation would actually be Unionism because in that case we would have church fellowship with those who teach destructive errors or, to say the least, refrain from exercising and requesting doctrinal discipline against such errorists.

The situation, however, assumes an entirely different aspect when it is remembered that the Lutheran World Convention is no more than a free conference, which may express itself on points of faith and life but has no power to pass binding resolutions. Even financial and similar promises must first be ratified by the individual church bodies before they become binding. It may be asked: If that is the case, why have a confessional paragraph in the constitution at all? The answer is: By the same right by which a life insurance company or a fire insurance company may declare in its constitution that only persons bearing the name Lutheran may hold membership. Moreover, the confessional paragraph in the constitution has incalculable value because the moment un-Lutheran views are expressed in its program, in the public discourses and in the discussions, any member of the Convention is justified in witnessing against such erroneous views. In this way the Lutheran World Convention may become an excellent instrument for reminding the Lutheran Churches of their Confession and for obtaining more general validity for this Confession in the various associated bodies. To be sure, such witnessing requires that one knows not only the Confessions of the Lutheran Church but also the theological work done in the Lutheran churches of Europe, and that one has the necessary courage to state and defend his own Lutheran convictions before all the learned representatives of the Lutheran world. Such testimonies of Lutheran truth in distinction and opposition to the views of the majority have not been missing at any of the three meetings of the Lutheran World Convention. You will pardon me for referring in proof of this statement to some things which I felt it my duty to state at the three conventions; at the same time this affords me the opportunity to indicate what position on some of these questions my synod and I myself assumed even at that time.

At the Eisenach convention, 1923, Dr. Jorgensen of Denmark had read a paper on "The Confession as the Foundation of the Church." There followed a second lecture on the same subject (the "Korreferat") and the discussion. Among other things I said:

"We cannot emphasize too strongly the fact that the Lutheran Church can be held together only by the bond of a common confession. It is equally important, however, that we understand the content and compass of this confession. For me and for the Lutheran Synod of Iowa which I am here representing, the Book of Concord, 1580, is the confession upon which, because of its agreement with Scripture, our union is founded. We not only

consider that confession a historic testimony of the faith of our fathers, but we find in it, accepting it in its entirety, an expression of our own faith. Therefore we condemn *secus docentes*, and have no pulpit or altar fellowship, that closest form of church fellowship, with those who refuse to take seriously this part of the confession. This restriction, which may appear as a fetter, we consider in no wise an undesirable restraint, but rather a most appropriate limit within which our conscience, bound by the Word of God, forces us to do our work. I should like especially to mention three points which we find in the confessions, the basis of the Lutheran Church...

“The third point which I would stress today is our attitude toward Scripture, as this is expressly stated in the confessions of our Church, and as it is presupposed by the way Scripture is employed in the confessions. In the Introduction of the Formula of Concord stands the great word that the Holy Scriptures are the pure fountain of Israel, that we have in them the purest sources, *purissimi et limpidissimi fontes*, of divine saving truth. If Scripture is the Source and therefore the norm and standard of saving truth, then it is presupposed that it has originated under a peculiar influence of God. The fact of inspiration belongs therefore to the confessions, which must be the foundation of the truly Lutheran Church. We are not committed to a definite theory of inspiration, for this must always remain a mystery, but surely to the fact itself. However, we must accept it in the sense in which the Bible, particularly the New Testament, testifies to it. I may appear to be old fashioned if I adhere to the threefold basis of inspiration: *impulsus ad scribendum*, the *suggestio rerum*, and the *suggestio verbi*. I may think as much as I please of a different psychological process, a process differing from that of the old dogmatics, in that it admits in the second and third points the mental cooperation of the sacred writers, yet my conscience is so bound to God’s Word that I cannot give up these points. The Holy Scriptures are for me in their totality the authoritative, sufficient, absolutely dependable, sure and vital presentation of the revelation of God once given for our salvation, as they were formed through a peculiar operation of the Holy Spirit upon the writers. And this fact, I repeat it, belongs to the content of the confessions which are the foundation of the true Lutheran Church. It is in my opinion the duty of the Lutheran Church in particular inwardly to master this fact and to make it help to clear the thought of our time.”

I concluded with the “plea to the Lutheran theologians of my dear fatherland to reexamine, before the face of God, their theological attitude con-

cerning the Holy Scriptures.” I have received a number of letters which indicate that this testimony has made an impression on some theologians and has not been in vain.

It was not different at Copenhagen in 1929. Here I delivered the main address on Luther’s Catechism and used this opportunity for testifying against the principle of equal rights for conflicting schools of theological thought. The pertinent passage reads as follows:

“I would not curtail the freedom of research; I have a high regard for the assured results of science; I recognize questions which need not disrupt church-fellowship. But to my mind it is an intolerable situation when on the one hand the people pray the First Petition, ‘Hallowed be thy name,’ that is, ‘Grant, dear heavenly Father, that Thy Word be taught in its truth and purity and preserve us from ever teaching and living otherwise than as Thy Word directs,’ and when these same people, on the other hand, remain inactive spectators when those who have been appointed as the witnesses of God’s Word, in the professor’s chair and in the pulpit, in the school-room and in the sickroom, systematically teach and preach a doctrine contrary to the Word of God. I cannot understand how under such conditions one can keep his conscience inviolate unless he prays and testifies against them, if need be even suffers for the cause and keeps on battling until things have been remedied. St. Paul had good reasons for speaking of ‘wholesome’ and ‘sound’ doctrine and for warning against errorists; and so did Luther. False doctrine is like impure air, and produces the same results. Luther said, ‘No poison is more noisome and destructive than false doctrine.’ Even the convention at Lausanne will have profitable consequences for us only in case it helps us to see more clearly the specific characteristics of our Church, if we feel urged to examine them anew in the light of the Word and to cling to them with the faithful strength which the Spirit of God supplies.”

In opposition to two lectures which laid undue emphasis upon the social work of the Church—the one paper was written by an American, the other by a Norwegian—I placed strong emphasis upon the inward nature of the kingdom of God. My remarks were as follows:

“We must preserve the inward, spiritual nature of the kingdom of God on earth. When does the kingdom of God come to us? Ever more voices answer today: It will come when international peace has been established, when war has been outlawed forever, when all the churches have been united in one great ecumenical organization, when social injustice has been

removed, and when epidemics and incurable diseases are things of the past. And in what manner will this blessed season be ushered in? Through energetic efforts put forth by Christians and others, through conferences, and organizations? This is precisely the way in which the kingdom of God does not come. Man-made organizations and unions, leagues and societies, conventions and executive boards and lengthy reports—they all are earth-born efforts, beating the air and of no avail, unless they are pervaded by the vital breath of the Holy Spirit. The Small Catechism gives an entirely different answer. It asserts that the kingdom comes when the Father in heaven gives us His Holy Spirit so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and live godly lives, here in time and in heaven forever. I, too, know of a paradise to come; but it will not be the crowning culmination of a natural development of everything good that now exists in the world; it will arrive only after the day of judgment, after the abrupt termination of the present natural development, namely when Christ Himself returns ‘to judge the quick and the dead.’ In blessed hope I long for this day of perfection. But until then the kingdom of God is the kingdom of the Cross, and its only means are the Word and the Sacraments.”

In Paris, 1935, it was the same. We opposed the attempts to modify the nature of the Lutheran World Convention as a free conference so energetically that they were nipped in the bud. Every form of union with the Reformed was successfully combated, even merely permitting Reformed Christians to partake of the Lord’s Supper as visitors. And in view of the conditions then existing in Germany it was stated in unmistakable terms that a Lutheran church must of necessity possess a Lutheran church government.—The pastor of your small congregation, members of the Missouri Synod, attended the convention as an observer and was not the only one to thank me for taking this position.

Of course, membership in the Lutheran World Convention requires vigilance, clearness of vision, and resolute courage. I mention only two cases in point: on the one hand, the ever recurring attempts to change the free-conference nature of the World Convention, and on the other hand, the repeated suggestion to place a communion celebration on the program of the meeting. To date we have been successful in preventing both of these innovations, and on my motion the American Lutheran Church resolved at Sandusky to instruct its delegates to prevent such departures also in the future. It is obvious that membership in the Lutheran World Convention does not

involve Unionism—unless prayer fellowship with those who confess the second article of our Catechism as sincerely as we do but otherwise retain associations which we must reject, be defined as Unionism. More concerning this point later.

The second ground on which we are sometimes accused of Unionism is our membership in and cooperation with the National Lutheran Council. There was, indeed, a period when membership in the National Lutheran Council entailed the danger of Unionism, since the Council did not sufficiently confine its activities to the sphere known as *res externae*. This was one reason why the former Synod of Iowa for a number of years did not hold membership in the Council. But when, through the influence of Dr. Hein, the constitution of the National Lutheran Council had been changed and the Council itself was clearly defined as an agency which represents the various constituent church bodies within accurately circumscribed limits in certain external matters, this danger was reduced to a minimum. We do not deny that this danger still exists; but it does not lie within the constitution but in the lack of vigilance on the part of those who should strictly observe the constitution. Of course, here too we are in prayer fellowship with Lutherans with whom we have not established church fellowship.

The third point I mentioned is the connection of our colleges and seminaries with the National Lutheran Educational Conference. But only he who is utterly ignorant of the nature of this conference can possibly discover Unionism in this connection. For this conference concerns itself with such problems as teaching methods, organization, financing, discipline and accreditation, and with the question how the interests of Lutheran schools can best be safeguarded in relation to the National Educational Conference, the bureaus of accreditation, and the National Educational Bureau at Washington. Glance, if you will, at the report on the last meeting of the National Lutheran Educational Conference, held in January, 1939, at Louisville, Ky. The subjects discussed at this meeting were as follows: "Lutheran Ideals of Democracy; How Achieve Greater Solidarity in Lutheran Higher Education in America; The Challenge of the New Social Order to the Church-Related College; Problems of Personnel Work in Lutheran Colleges; The Christian College, Bulwark of American Democracy; The Meaning of the Accrediting Policy of the American Association of Theological Schools; Theological Education in Europe and America; A Frank Appraisal of the Lutheran

College in 1939.” There is no trace of Unionism to be found here, unless it be prayer fellowship. To be sure, there is a danger here too: if the proposed “Christian Education Sunday” should happen to find widespread acceptance, some of us may be asked to preach from pulpits of Lutheran bodies with which we are not in fellowship. But this danger can easily be averted; moreover, it may be advisable to drop the idea of a “Christian Education Sunday” entirely.

I do not propose to enter upon a discussion of our membership in the American Lutheran Conference, for all the constituent bodies of this Conference have adopted the Minneapolis Theses, including the Galesburg Rule. I am not unaware of the fact that, in some instances, these Theses, particularly the Galesburg Rule, are ignored in practice; but I know also that the proper authorities are waging an aggressive and resolute battle against such abuses. Moreover, the organization of the American Lutheran Conference differs in some essential points from that of the United Lutheran Church and supplies the presidents of its constituent synods with far more effective means for improving conditions. Nor should it be forgotten that undue haste may be as tragically fatal as procrastination.

---

Some of you, no doubt, have been waiting for some time for a discussion of a fourth form of Unionism; some of you have the opinion that it is Unionistic to cooperate, or even merely to pray, with someone with whom one does not agree in all points of doctrine. Some think that there must be complete agreement not only in the doctrines of sin and grace, of the person and work of Christ, of faith and justification, of conversion and predestination and similar central truths, but also in the doctrines concerning Antichrist, the conversion of the Jews, the resurrection of martyrs and in the interpretation of Revelation 20; and others add still more points: the interpretation of the “days” in the account of creation, the “Schwagerehe,” the nature of betrothal, the effect of John’s baptism, the reference of John 6:51ff. to communion, taking interest, and the like. It is said that only when there is complete agreement in all these points can there be church fellowship, and since prayer fellowship and church fellowship are identical, prayer fellowship requires the same complete doctrinal agreement.

I am ready to admit, at the outset, that the eschatological doctrines mentioned above may be discussed and taught in a manner which the church cannot tolerate. I concede furthermore that persons holding divergent views on these questions may strive for union in a manner which we must reject and which perhaps may be called Unionistic, namely, when they are indifferent toward the real teachings of the Bible on these questions; for indifference toward the statements of the Scriptures is always sinful, even when relatively unimportant points are at stake. Finally, I am willing to admit that prayer fellowship and church fellowship are identical when we have in mind prayer in the public service, and that even private prayer fellowship may have Unionistic effects if the person with whom I pray regards my prayer fellowship with him-as a sign of complete doctrinal agreement and if I allow him to keep this wrong impression.

But where these three conditions are not present, I am unwilling to have cooperation without full agreement branded as Unionism. In the earlier history of the Lutheran Church there has been only one attempt made at defining Unionism along these lines, and even then some of the above mentioned points were excepted. It was Abraham Calovius who made this attempt in his *Consensus Fidei Repetitus Verde Lutheranae*, written in 1655 and published in 1664. He went so far as to suggest excommunication of those who were unwilling to admit that the saints of the Old Testament had the same explicit knowledge of the divine Trinity as was later set forth in the Athanasian Creed. But Calovius was unsuccessful, and his *Consensus* was soon forgotten.

The notion that those who wish to enjoy church fellowship must agree in all points of doctrine, rests upon an erroneous interpretation of 1 Cor. 1:10 and similar Scripture texts. Careful study of the respective contexts will lead to different results.

Furthermore, this notion requires more than what *Augustana* vii declares to be essential for unity in the church.<sup>1</sup> Here we read: “*Ad veram unitatem ecclesiae satis est consentire de doctrina evangelii et administratione sacramentorum.*” Now we must not, of course, ignore the historical situation in which this famous “*Satis est*” was pronounced. It set forth that agreement in ceremonies is not necessary for church union, but only agreement in doctrine and in the administration of the Sacraments. Nevertheless, it is very significant that the doctrine is simply denoted as doctrine, *evangelii*. The question whether one is justified in charging interest or in marry-



ing his sister-in-law can hardly be said to pertain to the *doctrina evangelii*; the same applies to the statement that the pope is the Antichrist (though we may admit that the fact of Antichrist's coming may be a part of it). It may also be said that here in America too little attention has been paid to the fact that the expression *doctrina evangelii* must be viewed in the light of Article xii of the Schwabach Articles; the first 17 articles of the Augsburg Confession are based entirely upon Luther's "Short Confession" and the Schwabach Articles. In Article xii of the Schwabach document we read: "This church is nothing else than the believers in Christ who believe and teach the above mentioned articles and statements and on that account are persecuted and tormented in the world, for wherever the Gospel is preached and the Sacraments are used properly, there is the holy Christian Church." What are these "above mentioned articles"? Of course, none other than the eleven preceding articles, i.e., 1. the article of the Trinity, 2. and 3. of the person and work of Christ, 4. of original sin, 5. of justification, 6. of faith, 7. of the creation of justifying faith by the Spirit through the Gospel, 8-10. of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, 11. of confession and absolution. I do not mean to imply that these eleven articles are a complete enumeration of all those doctrines in which Lutherans must be agreed; but I think that we find here an indication as to the kind of doctrines on which we must be agreed, namely, the articles of fundamental importance, and certainly not those of nonfundamental importance, among which we find all the points concerning which in the opinion of some there must be full agreement unless one is willing to bear the odium of Unionism.

It should also be pointed out that Dr. Walther himself— e.g., in the article, "The False Supports of the Modern Theory of Open Questions," written in 1868—has restated the distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental articles, and did so in discussing this very question, on what grounds one is compelled to terminate fellowship with another person or church body. Here we read:

"The church has never achieved a higher degree of doctrinal unity than unity in the fundamental articles; only a misguided chiliast could hope that the church might ever attain to a higher degree... of unity."

or, at another place:

“Far be it from us to hope that brotherly fellowship with an individual or church fellowship with a church body should terminate, if they are not quite correct dogmatically in their Christian knowledge... As soon as an individual or a church body manifests the willingness to submit unconditionally to the entire Word of God and to retain nothing that militates against the foundation of the Christian faith— be it the real foundation, Christ, or the dogmatical foundation, the doctrine of justification by faith, or the organic foundation, the Scriptures—, we will gladly extend to such an individual the hand of fraternal fellowship and are willing and ready, from the heart, to establish church fellowship with such a church body.”

More important, however, than Walther’s position or the statement of Augustana vii is the lack of Scripture proof for both the contention that church fellowship can be established and maintained only where there is complete doctrinal agreement, and for the claim that one may have prayer fellowship only with such persons as differ from him in no point of doctrine.

The former of these two assertions is sometimes proved from 1 Cor. 1:10 and Eph. 4:11-16. But do these two texts really prove what they are said to prove?

1 Cor. 1:10 reads as follows (A. V.): “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing (ἵνα τὸ αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες; Luther: *dass ihr allzumal einerlei Rede fuehrt*) and that there be no divisions among you (μὴ ᾗ ἔν ὑμῖν σχίσματα Luther: *Spaltungen*), but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (ἦτε δὲ κατηρτισμένοι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ νοῖ καὶ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ γνώμῃ; Luther: *in einem Sinn und in einerlei Meinung*).” It is said that no better proof passage could possibly be found, for here the Christians are admonished to speak the same thing in doctrinal matters and to be joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. But does this text really treat of unity in doctrine, more specifically: of unity on every point of doctrine? Heinrici declares (in Meyer’s Commentary, 8th ed., 1896, p. 52) that τὸ αὐτὸ λέγειν “is frequently used in classic Greek to denote the outward expression of an agreement in attitudes and interests;” in proof of this he refers to λέγειν ἔν καὶ ταυτό in Polybius 2, 62; 5, 104 and to ἡμῶν καὶ ὑμῶν ταῦτα λεγόντων in Thucydides 4, 120. Nor can it be denied that the primary meaning of γνώμη is “attitude.” For abundant proof see W. Bauer, Griechisch-dentsches Woerte’rbnch zn den Schriften des Nenen Testaments, 3rd ed., 1937, and the pertinent article in Kittel’s Theologisches Woerterbuch znm Nenen Testament (vol. i, 717; 1933). Cremer, indeed, rendered γνώμη as “judgment, opinion,” but he referred in this connection to Aristo-

tle's word that γνώμη always pertained to τὰ πράκτικα (Eth. Nicom. Vi, 12), and he took νοῦς in I Cor. 1 to mean "attitude," *Gesinnung* (*Woerterbnch der neutestamentlichen Graezitaet*, 1911, p. 248f).

Paul's admonition that the Corinthians agree in their attitude and in their judgment concerning the acts of a person (τὰ πράκτικα) fits very nicely into the context; for the term σχίσματα and the entire following discussion pertains to the parties or cliques which threatened to destroy the unity of the Corinthian congregation. These cliques would not have originated nor developed so rapidly if all members of the congregation had possessed the right attitude and the correct moral judgment. If these cliques are to be abolished and if the unity of the congregation is to be restored, then all its members must cultivate the same attitude and have the same moral judgment concerning the activity of Paul and Apollos (and Peter?), and their manner of speaking must give evidence of this attitude and judgment. No longer will they be divided by party cries, "I am of Paul," "I am of Apollos," "I am of Cephas," "And I am of Christ." The questions which agitated the Corinthian Christians so deeply and which pertain chiefly—with the exception of the problem discussed in chapter 15—to the realm of morals, will then be solved with greater unanimity.

It may be objected here that the term σχίσματα refers to differences in doctrine, to doctrinal disunion. This is indeed the case; but it has this meaning only when the connotation which it acquired in subsequent centuries is transferred to its New Testament usage. This procedure, however, is not justifiable. In the New Testament σχίσμα literally means "rent" or "hole" (Matt. 9:16; Mark 2:21) and, metaphorically, "division, difference of opinion, disunion" (John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19). In the text before us Paul speaks of disunion, of divisions. These divisions affected even the Agape-feasts and the holy communion (11:18); probably the Pauline party, the Apollos group, the Petrine party and the Christine group each met by itself as a separate group. The congregation still formed one united worship-group; it had not yet broken up into so and so many αἵρέσεις; but the danger was imminent that the formation of groups might lead to such a result (11:19).

The fact that 1 Cor. 1:10 speaks of the agreement in attitudes and moral judgments and their verbal expression, and not of agreement in doctrine and its expression in identical terminology, becomes obvious also when we consider that no doctrinal differences seem to have existed among the various parties or cliques at Corinth; perhaps one may conclude that such a danger

existed with reference to the Petrine group at the time Paul wrote this letter; but it was, at the time at least, no more than a danger (Compare Zahn's discussion in his *Einleitung zum Neuen Testament*, 3rd ed., 1906, vol. 1, p. 2011f).

But even if νοῦς and γνώμη were to be taken here in the sense of doctrine, this passage would not prove that there must be perfect agreement in all points of doctrine before church fellowship may be established; the text would demand no more than an agreement in the fundamental doctrines. Those who press the term τὸ αὐτὸ λέγειν to such an extent that there must be complete agreement not only in all points of doctrine but also in dogmatical terminology if church fellowship is to be established, are guilty of a misuse of this passage. More yet, they plainly contradict the Scriptures themselves. A few illustrations will suffice: Do the synoptics use καλεῖν in the same sense as Paul? Does μετάνοια always mean contrition and faith? Is there not rather a wider and narrower use of this word? What about the words “regeneration” and “conversion”? Does not James, though knowing what πίστις really means (2:1), still allow something to pass as “faith” (2:14) which Paul would hardly have called by that name? In short, this demand for absolute identity in theological terminology is—stupid.

The second text, Eph. 4:11-16, means substantially the same thing. Here “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of Christ” (εἰς τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ) is named as the goal to be reached by the Christians, the church of God on earth. The context is as follows: In verses 4—6 Paul had strongly emphasized the unity of the Church of God; now he expects to hear the objection, “But to everyone of us is given the grace of God (i.e., not saving grace, but charismatic grace, enabling a person to perform some special service) in different measure” (verse 7 a). Paul has two answers to this objection. In the first place he admits that there are differences in charismatic endowment, but explains this in verses 7b-10 by declaring that it is the exalted, though once humiliated Christ who directs this process and has the right to distribute His gifts according to His good pleasure. Secondly, he emphasizes that this difference of endowment is profitable or even necessary for the edification of His Church, His body (verses 11-16). He speaks first of the gifts of grace, then of the persons endowed with these gifts. Christ has given some as apostles, some as prophets, others as evangelists, and still others as shepherds and as teachers. There are wide differences among these persons and among the

offices which the varying gifts of grace enabled them to administer; yet they all, particularly because of these differences, serve “toward (εἰς) the perfecting of the saints, toward (εἰς) the work of service, toward (εἰς) the building up of the body of Christ till we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, toward (εἰς) a full grown man, toward (εἰς) the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ.”

The goal toward which all these various offices are to lead, is designated as “the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.” Paul is not speaking of unity of doctrine, but of unity of faith, of πίστις. Now when it is said that this term πίστις never occurs in the New Testament in the objective sense = *fides quae creditur*, this is not quite correct, for we do find the objective usage of πίστις not only in Jude 3 but also in Gal. 1:23. But in our present text it cannot be used in this objective sense; the term ἐπίγνωσις τοῦ υἱοῦ Θεοῦ Which follows πίστις and is evidently parallel to it, excludes this interpretation; just as the knowledge of the Son of God is something subjective, so also faith. When Christendom, the body of Christ on earth, has become completely united in that confident faith which relies solely and exclusively on Christ, and in the recognition of His divine sonship, and when it lives up to the implications which this faith involves, then the goal is reached for the attainment of which the exalted Christ has given the persons and offices in verse 11. And when the Christians are fully united in this confident assurance and knowledge of Christ, then they will no longer allow themselves to be “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness.”

This is, in brief, the sense of this text. It can hardly be used as proof for the contention that church fellowship requires unity in all points of doctrine. Such unity is here not even mentioned as a goal to be reached. On the other hand, unity in our subjective convictions of faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God is possible only on basis of unity in doctrine, for there is no *fides qua creditur* without *fides quae creditur*. We may say then: Indirectly Eph. 4:11-16 belongs into the present discussion; not, however, as proving that the goal is unity in all points of doctrine, but only as proving that Christians should strive to come to an agreement in fundamentals. Surely no one will seriously maintain that assurance of faith and knowledge of the Son of God can be present only where everyone regards the *Schwagerehe* as forbidden, believes the “days” in the creation account to have been 24—hour

days, and assumes that the Trinity is as clearly revealed in the Old Testament as in the New. That would be an untenable position.

This much is true: Since also those statements of the Scriptures which mention the non—fundamental matters, are the Word of God, therefore Christian theologians, having attained to a clear comprehension of the fundamentals, will strive to understand also the other statements of the Bible. They may engage in this task separately, or in cooperation with one another. If they arrive at the same conclusions, they will rejoice. Such agreement will help to strengthen their personal conviction; but they will guard against declaring their conviction to be the only correct and decisive one. They will not forget that the non— fundamental matters are chiefly found in the more or less obscure texts; they will not attempt to limit their own exegetical labors nor those of others; and they will always remember that they themselves are subject to error. They will make no attempt to force their conclusions upon others, and least of all will they set a definite time limit beyond which those of different opinions may no longer express their convictions nor be tolerated but must be excluded from church fellowship as though they had obstinately hardened themselves against their better knowledge and refused to learn the truth. In spiritual matters, and above all in religious matters, neither majority nor minority counts, but only one thing: the truth. The truth, however, often asserts itself only slowly here on earth; yes, there are instances where the truth is never fully known, even among sincere Christians and faithful Lutherans; for their understanding is clouded by sin whether they are aware of it or not.<sup>2</sup> Whoever ignores this fact exposes himself to the charge of conceit. Whoever thinks that he must, on account of non-agreement in non-fundamentals, sever or reject church fellowship with brethren who bow as sincerely as he does to the Word of God and who desire above all else to accord supreme authority to the Scriptures, should be made to understand that he separates himself from his brethren on account of something which has nothing to do with our salvation and stands far out in the periphery of Christian doctrine. You, the members of the Missouri Synod, are not going to commit this grave error, as Walther's statements and the resolutions of your St. Louis convention indicate; and I am happy because of this fact.

What has been said above requires only one qualification: the interpretation of the Scripture texts dealing with non-fundamentals must not run counter to the analogy of the Scriptures. However, we must not assume that

the analogy of the Scriptures is identical with the dogmatics of the seventeenth century; moreover, it is the entire Bible which must be consulted in this process.

---

There remains only the question whether occasional private prayer fellowship with Lutherans, with whom one is not in church fellowship, or with members of other churches, is to be labeled Unionism. If prayer fellowship is as exclusive as church fellowship, this is, of course, the case. But are they really identical? For me it is impossible to assume that they are unless more pertinent Scripture proof is adduced than has been done in the past. Christian prayer presupposes no more than the faith that, for the sake of Christ, I may come to God as my Father, with cheerfulness and confidence. When another has and confesses this faith, there exists that common bond which allows me to pray with him to our common Father. He is a member of that *Una Sancta*, of God which has members in all the branches of the empirical church, and so am I. Why should I not be allowed to pray with him? Of course, not in the public service; for that would involve indifference toward 'the Confession of the congregation and might lead others into the same kind of indifference or it might give offense; but in private, on special occasion. The Bible texts I. Tim. 2:5, 6; Eph. 2:18-22; 4:1-6 seem to me to be sufficiently plain on this point. I know of no Scripture text which forbids such prayer fellowship.

To prove the opposite view the passage Matt. 7:15 is commonly adduced. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." The question is, who are these false prophets? Jesus is not thinking here of false prophets in general, but defines them at once as such false prophets as come dressed in garments of sheep but inwardly are ravening wolves. They pose as harmless people, but in reality they are very dangerous. It is not a mere coincidence that Jesus describes them as persons who are dressed in garments of sheep. "Wolves do not wear garments nor do they attempt to hide their identity beneath the skins of dead sheep. Moreover, a sheepskin coat is worn by shepherds and other poor people as a protection against cold weather and cannot be regarded as a symbol of harmlessness or benevolence. Therefore the term 'garments of sheep' here refers to the shaggy mantle worn by prophets, also

by false prophets (see Zech. 13:4).” This, then, is the meaning: Beware of false prophets who claim to be the ambassadors of God. If they really were divinely appointed prophets their activity would result in salvation. But since they merely pose as such, they may be compared to wolves who break into the sheepfold and only kill and destroy. At first it may be impossible to recognize the men as impostors and hypocrites, but later, when “their fruits,” i.e., the results of their destructive work are to be seen, they will stand revealed in their true nature. Destruction, death and ruin follow in their wake. If this is not clear at the moment when they first arrive, one need only inspect their previous fields of activity. Such deadly and destructive results will surely follow unless the congregations of ,. Christian disciples are on their guard, from the very beginning, and unless they turn their attention, their eyes (προσέχετε) to these men and allow them no freedom of action in their midst. In other words, the false prophets are men who intend to defraud and deceive, who falsely pose as messengers of God and who break into Christian congregations with the purpose, or at least with the result, of causing death and destruction. Their activity is particularly ruinous in the moral-realm as appears from the expression “fruits” and especially from the verses following. The εἰς ὑμᾶς makes it plain that Jesus is thinking of congregations of disciples; the false prophets who are coming from without wish to sneak surreptitiously into the congregations and there carry on their work of destruction.

Does this text refer to the problem of whether or not to pray with false prophets? Of course, not specifically, but indirectly it does. For if we are to beware of such false prophets as. of enemies of our spiritual life, we certainly should not pray with them. But—are those Lutherans who do not agree with me in every single phase of doctrine, to be identified with persons who falsely pose as messengers of God in order to mislead the church of Christ and to destroy its spiritual life? It is unthinkable that this text refers to the sincere Christians in other denominations, and still more unthinkable in the case of Lutheran believers who may disagree with me in certain questions of dogmatics. We belong to the American Lutheran Church, and your synod at St. Louis has declared that there exists the necessary doctrinal foundation for the establishment of church fellowship. Now, my question is: Are we such false prophets who pose as messengers of God in order to destroy the spiritual life in your congregations for our own per-



sonal gain? If we are not, then this Bible text cannot be a biblical ground for your refusal to have prayer fellowship with us.

Another text which is often used in your circles as a proof text in this connection is Romans 16:17. Let us examine this passage. We read: “Now I beseech you, brethren, to mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them for such do not serve the Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly and by sweet words and fair speeches deceive innocent hearts.” The apostle admonishes the Christians at Rome to mark, i.e. carefully to watch those who seek to arouse divisions and “skandala” which are contrary to the doctrine which they have learned. The first thing that strikes the exegete is the definite article before “divisions” and “skandala;” the article has demonstrative force and refers to very definite divisions and “skandala,” known to the readers of the epistle and, as it were, standing before their very eyes. But these destructive agents against whom Paul warns the Christians at Rome, have not as yet begun their Wicked activities within the Roman congregation; this is clearly evident from the words following our text. Therefore these divisions and “skandala” must have occurred elsewhere than in Rome. Paul does not state explicitly where they did occur. But—as Zahn has correctly pointed out—among the numerous Christians whom Paul greets in verses 1-16, there are several persons who have accompanied Paul during his missionary activity in Asia Minor and Greece or have been designated by Paul as his companions: Aquila and Priscilla (verse 3), Epaenetus (verse 5), Andronicus and Junias (verse 7) and Herodian (verse 11). These men know from their own experience and observation how the Judaistic errorists had worked in Galatia and elsewhere and how their sole aim had been to bring about divisions and “skandala” in the congregations organized by Paul. The term τὰ σκάνδαλα may be translated. “obstacles,” stumbling blocks placed in someone’s way, or (probably more correctly) as “snares” or “traps;” in either case it is obvious that the purpose is wicked. The Judaistic doctrine that the work of Christ had to be supplemented with the works of the Law was indeed apt to cause division and strife in the Pauline congregations; and there was grave danger that many Christians might fall into their traps, particularly because the Judaizers did not deny the necessity of Christ’s work of atonement but unctuously, with sweet sounding words and phrases spoke of Christ’s own demands of high moral living and because they emphasized that the Law of Moses, being the Law of God, must not be abolished. The

important battle which Paul had to wage against this wrong doctrine, was known to the friends of Paul who had come to Rome from Palestine and who are greeted in Romans 16 (and it is doubtful that those whom he had not met personally should have been entirely ignorant of his activity. Nor is the definite article before “divisions” and “skandala” the only fact that leads us to think that Paul here warns against the Judaizing heresy. Another fact is the description of the errorists which Paul gives in verse 18. Paul says, “They do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ but their own belly.” This clause is reminiscent of Phil. 3:3. There, in distinction to the Judaizing errorists Paul speaks of himself and his coworkers as men who “worship God in the spirit, who glory in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh;” and in 3:19 he describes the errorists as people “whose God is their belly.” (I am convinced that Ewald’s interpretation of 3:18ff. is correct, according to which the apostle does not speak of libertine Christians but of the same Judaizing errorists who are discussed from 3:2 on.) And when Paul declares that the Judaizers serve their belly and not Christ, we are reminded of Gal. 6:12, 13. There Paul states that the Judaizers insist on the circumcision of Gentile Christians “lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.” They know very well that as long as they themselves observe the Law and succeed in placing it upon the Gentile Christians, the Jews will ignore their faith in Jesus as the Messiah and their missionary activities and will allow them to live within the pale of Judaism in peace and Quietness. The moment, however, when the cross, in the form of a gospel free from the Law, begins to attack the Torah, in that very same moment the entire undiminished power of Jewry—a power which already then had assumed vast dimensions—will be unleashed against them and quickly put an end to their quiet and undisturbed existence. Also the phrase “sweet words and fair speeches” fits the Judaizing errorists perfectly. They had mastered this art so completely that they had even succeeded in “fascinating,” in bewitching the Galatians (τίς ὑμῶν ἐβήσκαθεν; Gal. 3:1). Even the fact that Paul, while writing his final salutation, very abruptly warns once more against errorists, fits the Judaizers. We note the same sudden injection of such a warning in Gal. 6:12ff. Paul does not wish to conclude that epistle without one more earnest warning against the Judaizers, against whom the entire epistle was directed. He has already begun to write the conclusion of the epistle, “Behold, with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand,” but once more he interrupts himself in order to warn against the Judaizers with

words more vehement than in any preceding section of the epistle.<sup>3</sup> We note the same suddenness in Phil. 3:2 with its threefold, powerful Βλέπετε; “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision!” To conclude: Paul has in mind the Judaizing errorists. Stoeckhardt arrives at the same conclusion, though he thinks Paul may have had in mind also other errorists; he mentions those who deny the resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15), but so far as our present problem is concerned the final result would be the same.

If Paul is speaking here of the Judaizers, then it is clear what we are to understand by διδαχὴ ἣν ὑμεῖς ἐμάθετε. This can be no other than the doctrine of the free grace of God, a doctrine constantly proclaimed by Paul and all the other apostles. Whatever the composition of the Christian congregation at Rome may have been, whether they had come from Asia Minor or Palestine or elsewhere or whether they had heard the Gospel first of all in Rome, all of them have received this one identical doctrine of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, a doctrine diametrically opposed to that of the errorists; for the παρά in verse 17, like the παρά in Gal. 1:9, does not mean “beside” but “opposed to, contrary to.”

What we find here in Romans 16, then, is a serious warning against those who teach righteousness by works instead of the New Testament doctrine of grace. It is not a warning against any kind of heresy, but against one very specific error; it is an admonition to cling to the central doctrine of the New Testament, not to all sorts of individual doctrines somewhere in the outer circumference of the doctrinal system. Therefore we are not justified in finding here a reference to fellow Lutherans who cling to the basic doctrine of the New Testament with the same faith as we but do not agree with us in all individual doctrinal points. Strictly speaking, one cannot even infer from this text that we Lutherans are in duty bound to separate from non-Lutherans as long and as far as they retain this basic doctrine of the New Testament; we have this duty, of course, but the present text, in its primary meaning, does not express it. A Lutheran using this text as the ground for refusing to pray with Lutherans who do not subscribe to all his dogmatical views, is obliged to prove, or must be audacious enough to claim, that we who practice prayer fellowship with such Lutherans, serve our belly and not the Lord Jesus Christ, for verse 18 cannot be construed differently than as a characterization of the errorists of verse 17.

The third text which is adduced is 2 Cor. 6:14-18. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness

with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? 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.” I must confess that I have never been able to understand how anyone could seriously appeal to this text in this connection. It should be unnecessary to prove that those with whom we are not to have fellowship according to this text, certainly cannot be Christian believers, e.g. Baptists or Methodists, and least of all Lutheran believers with whom we are not in perfect doctrinal agreement. Paul does not speak here of believers at all, but of unbelievers, unrighteous persons, of darkness, of Belial and of idols. Fellowship dare not be established between Christians and the children of the world for these two have as little in common as Christ and Belial, as righteousness and unrighteousness, as light and darkness, as the temple of God and the temple of idols; they are mutually exclusive, absolutely and in every sense.

I know indeed that by means of clever manipulation this text is made to serve as a proof text for the rejection of prayer fellowship with other Lutherans. This is how it is done: In verse 14 Paul says: “What communion hath light with darkness?” At once the conclusion is drawn: Here Paul establishes a general principle which is to be applied in all cases. To be sure, there is still much light, or truth, in believing Christians in various denominations and especially among believing Lutherans, even though they do not agree with one in all points of doctrine; but there is also a larger or smaller amount of darkness, or error, and insofar as this remnant of darkness still exists among them, it behooves those who themselves are pure and undiminished “light,” to keep themselves absolutely separate from the others.

The proponents of this interpretation do not observe that they are injecting different meanings into Paul’s terms “light” and “darkness;” to Paul “light” is by no means only “knowledge” nor is “darkness” merely lack of such knowledge; moreover, Paul speaks here of absolute light which has no room whatever for darkness, and of absolute darkness which has no room for light. Futhermore, if this procedure is permissible in the case of “light”

and “darkness” it must be permissible also with the other pairs of opposites; but this method will finally lead to the assumption of a fourth or a sixth of Christ and a fourth or a sixth of Belial. It surely does not arouse confidence in the correctness of a thesis if such means are required in order to prove that it is Scriptural.

Nor is Gal. 1:6-9 applicable. For the “other gospel” which is mentioned there and described as one that is not worthy of the name “gospel” and whose proponents are anathematized, is the gospel preached by the Judaizers, a gospel which is mixed with much of the Law and in this way changed into its very opposite. Before adducing this text, directly or indirectly, it will be necessary to prove that the believing members of other denominations or those Lutherans with whom one does not agree in every point of doctrine, have perverted the Gospel into law and so destroyed the nature of the Gospel. After this proof has been delivered the text may be used in justification of the refusal of prayer fellowship.

Another text which is sometimes used in this connection is the section 2 Thess. 3:6-15, because we read here, “Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which he received of us,” and later on, “Have no company with him.” Indeed, here, for once, we have to do with someone who is not outside the Christian congregation but who belongs to the Christian congregation. But the problem which Paul discusses here is not wrong doctrine but rather disorderly conduct; it is a problem of ethics. According to Paul, the consequence of such disorderly conduct shall be the suspension of social fellowship in order that the offender may come to his senses, but not the suspension of religious or church fellowship. And even though the right and the duty of excommunication were involved here, the entire discussion would not apply to the field of wrong doctrine with which we are at present concerned.

It is more intelligible that 1 Tim. 6:3-5 is adduced as a proof text, for here we have a definite statement about errorists. “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 quoting 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.” It must not be overlooked, however, that the expression, “If any man teach otherwise” like the German, “*So jemand an-*

*ders lehrt,*” is much more general than the Greek ἑτεροδιδασκαλεῖ. The ἑτεροδιόκαλοι mentioned in the pastoral epistles are a very specific group of errorists, viz. Gnostics, as is clear from 1 Tim. 2:3f. and 4:1-11.

Also in 6:3ff. Paul speaks of these same errorists; in verses 4-5 he speaks of their work and the results of their activity. Who gives us the right to apply what is here said concerning such horrifying perversions of Christian doctrine to believing members of other denominations and to use this text as the Biblical proof for our refusal to have prayer fellowship with such Lutherans as do not agree with us in every point of doctrine?

The same Gnostic heretics are meant in 2 Tim. 2:16-18.

In Titus 3:10, 11 where we find regulations for the treatment to be accorded to a heretic, we should note that Paul does not speak of heretics in general, but of a member of the church who was inclined to follow, or had actually begun to follow, those who engage in “foolish questions and genealogies and contentions and strivings about the Law,” i.e., Jewish Gnostics. Is it justifiable to apply these strictures to Lutherans who do not agree with us in every detail?

These same Jewish Gnostics are censured in Tit. 1:10-16.

The only text now remaining is 2 John 10:11. “If there come any unto you. and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.” Here everything depends on the meaning of ταύτην τὴν διδασχὴν. The demonstrative pronoun makes it clear that John refers to a very specific kind of doctrine; the meaning is: “this selfsame, above—mentioned doctrine.” The preceding verses therefore must indicate what doctrine is meant. Now verse 9 states, “Whosoever transgresses and abides not in the doctrine of Christ, has no God; he that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both, the Father and the Son.” The question is, what is meant by ἡ διδασχὴ τοῦ Χριστοῦ? Is it the doctrine concerning Christ, or the doctrine which Christ taught? The latter interpretation is not impossible; it is often used with the genitive of authorship. But this subjective interpretation is excluded in this case by the context, particularly if the expression “the doctrine which Christ has taught” is, without any justification, made to become so inclusive as to cover the sum total of Biblical truth with all its actual or alleged implications. This mode of interpretation would lead to the assertion: Whoever departs ever so slightly from the truth embodied in the Scriptures has no God. In other words, sincerely believing Presbyterians and Methodists etc., and

Lutherans who do not fully agree with my interpretation of Biblical truth. have no God! That is the height of absurdity. Nor does this interpretation agree with the parallel texts I John 2:18-23 and 4:1-3. No, ἡ διδαχὴ τοῦ Χριστοῦ must be taken in the sense of “doctrine concerning Christ.” This is the meaning of the text: Men who—like the errorists of John’s day—deny the actual incarnation of Christ, have not God; but those who confess and believe it, have both the Father and the Son. Now verse 10 forms an appropriate continuation: Those who do not preach this doctrine of Christ, viz., His real incarnation, those who are known not to teach it, must not be regarded as brethren and must not be received in the home because they have excluded themselves from the Church of God and have joined the ranks of Antichrist; such men must not even be saluted, neither as brethren nor as persons with whom closer religious relations might be established.

To conclude this discussion: I cannot find any Bible texts which forbid prayer fellowship with non-Lutherans who sincerely believe in Christ as the God-man and their only Savior and pray with me to the Father in Christ’s holy Name, and still less any text which forbids such prayer fellowship with Lutherans who do not agree with me in all points of doctrine. The Bible texts commonly adduced to fortify this position can be forced to carry this meaning only when they are generalized in wholly unjustified fashion. The glory of the Missouri Synod has been its strict adherence to the Word of God; why does it, by unwarranted generalizations, go beyond the Word of God?

Private prayer fellowship with Christian believers is, therefore, in my judgment not Unionism, provided the conditions mentioned on p. 38 are observed. Prayer fellowship with those who do not believe in Christ as their incarnate Savior is, of course, a totally different matter. I cannot, e.g., justify prayer fellowship in a ministerial association if it has members who deny that Christ is the Son of God and our only Savior.

---

We are living in an age of indifference, an age of church mergers and unions. Against infection with this spirit let us guard! But let us also guard against narrowing the limits of church fellowship beyond those set forth in the Scriptures! Let us be on guard against every form of real Unionism; but

let us also keep from dissipating our strength by condemning as Unionism what in reality is not Unionism!

---

1. Compare M. Reu, *The Augsburg Confession. A Collection of Sources With an Historical Introduction*, Chicago, Wartburg Publishing House, 1930, pp. 40-44, *esp. p.* 43, and p. 21-24.↵
2. It is for this reason that the American Lutheran Church declared at its convention at Sandusky “that we are firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non—fundamental doctrines.”↵
3. It sometimes is said that Rom. 16:17, 18 does not refer to the Judaizers because Paul had completed the discussion of this point in previous chapters; but the passage from Galatians just mentioned presents an exactly parallel analogy. This fact, and also the definite article before “divisions” and “skandala” show that one dare not generalize this verse; it should not be robbed of its own peculiar significance.↵



# **An Open Letter To The Lutheran Pastors Of The United States And Canada**

Dear Brethren:

Those of you to whom the postman will bring a copy of this little volume should be informed that it is a gift of the Board of Publication of the American Lutheran Church.

It was the intention of the Board to provide a complimentary copy for all Lutheran pastors in the United States and Canada. The undersigned was therefore authorized to make an offer to this effect to the presidents of all Lutheran synodical bodies. This was done and the offer was accepted by the presidents of the following eight synodical groups, to-wit: The United Lutheran Church in America; The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States; The Norwegian Lutheran Church of America; The Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America; The Lutheran Free Church; The United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church (Suomi Synod); The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran National Church of America. Every pastor of the American Lutheran Church will also receive a copy. The cooperation of the presidents of the synodical groups mentioned above is hereby acknowledged with appreciation and thanks.

The American Lutheran Church, at her 1938 convention, resolved to observe 1940 as her Tenth Anniversary Year. Through God's gracious providence she came into being August 11, 1930, by the merger of three Synods, Buffalo, Iowa, and Ohio. Gratitude for God's unmerited and abundant mercy and goodness in all her needs and problems prompted our Church to set certain goals as objectives whose attainment should be a worthy aim and an expression of faith, gratitude and zeal on the part of our parishes and pastors. Some of the objectives sought after are material; others—and these

are to be kept in the foreground— are spiritual. Some of the latter center in the earnest and unified effort to seek, by God’s grace and guidance, the spiritual strengthening and enrichment of our entire constituency. One of the spiritual objectives, which led to the distribution of this publication, was expressed in the following words by our 1938 Church convention, to-wit: “To endeavor to carry forward in a larger way the unification of our scattered Lutheran forces in the land, endeavoring to repeat, in a manner more glorious, the victory which made our merger in 1930 such a happy consummation.” The distribution of this little book is our Publication Board’s contribution to such a worthy cause.

Since her beginning, the American Lutheran Church has made earnest and continuous efforts to help in bringing about true spiritual unity among Lutherans. She has expressed this desire and fostered this purpose at her conventions, in her publications and by all other available means. It was with this end in view that she helped to organize and constitute the American Lutheran Conference. She has had two Commissions on Fellowship at work, which have for several years held conferences with similar groups of the United Lutheran Church and of the Missouri Synod. In all these negotiations, the American Lutheran Church has not sought or encouraged the promotion of any plan of further synodical mergers. Her aim has been, and is still, the establishment of pulpit and altar fellowship on the basis of Scriptural and Confessional unity in the faith, and cooperation in the furtherance of the Gospel and the extension of the Kingdom of God.

It may be of value and interest to many Lutheran pastors outside of the American Lutheran Church to have an authentic record of the actual results of the deliberations of our Fellowship Commissions with the Commissions of the United Lutheran Church and of the Missouri Synod.

The negotiations with the Commission of the United Lutheran Church culminated in the so-called “Pittsburgh Agreement,” which was adopted at a joint meeting of the two Commissions in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, February 13, 1939.

The document is as follows:

## **Fellowship Negotiations With The United Lutheran Church In America**

The following Recommendations and Doctrinal Statement have been unanimously adopted in joint sessions of the Fellowship Committees of the United Lutheran Church and of the American Lutheran Church:

## **I. Recommendations**

"We recommend that the American Lutheran Church and United Lutheran Church in America adopt the following Resolutions:

"1. That all persons affiliated with any of the Societies or Organizations designated in the Washington Declaration of the U. L. C. A. as 'Organizations injurious to the Christian faith,' should sever their connection with such society or organization and shall be so admonished; and members of our churches not now affiliated with such Organizations shall be warned against such affiliation. Especially shall the shepherds of the flock be admonished to refuse adherence and support to such Organizations.

"2. That Pastors and Congregations shall not practice indiscriminate pulpit and altar fellowship with Pastors and churches of other denominations, whereby doctrinal differences are ignored or virtually made matters of indifference. Especially shall no religious fellowship whatsoever be practiced with such individuals and groups as are not basically evangelical."

## **II. Doctrinal Statement on Inspiration and the Scriptures**

"1. The Bible (that is, the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments) is primarily not a code of doctrines, still less a code of morals, but the history of God's revelation, for the salvation of mankind, and of man's reaction to it. It preserves for all generations and presents, ever anew, this revelation of God, which culminated and centers in Christ, the Crucified and Risen One. It is itself the Word of God, His permanent revelation, aside from which, until Christ's return in glory, no other is to be expected.

"2. The Bible consists of a number of separate books, written at various times, on various occasions, and for various purposes. Their authors were living, thinking personalities, each endowed by the Creator with an individuality of his own, and each having his peculiar style, his own manner of presentation, even at times using such sources of information as were at hand. Nevertheless, by virtue of a unique operation of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21) by which He supplied to the Holy Writers con-

tent and fitting word (2 Peter 1:21; 1 Corinthians 2:12, 13) the separate books of the Bible are related to one another, and taken together, constitute a complete, errorless, unbreakable whole of which Christ is the center (John 10:35). They are rightly called the Word of God. This unique operation of the Holy Spirit upon the writers is named inspiration. We do not venture to define its mode, or manner, but accept it as a fact.

“3. Believing, therefore, that the Bible came into existence by this unique cooperation of the Holy Spirit and the human writers, we accept it (as a whole and in all its parts) as the permanent divine revelation, as the Word of God, the only source, rule, and norm for faith and life, and as the ever fresh and inexhaustible fountain of all comfort, strength, wisdom, and guidance for all mankind.”

This statement will be submitted for ratification to the United Lutheran Church and to the American Lutheran Church at their next regular conventions, both of which will be held in October, 1940.

Fellowship negotiations between the Commissions of the Missouri Synod and of the American Lutheran Church made such favorable and encouraging progress that definite statements indicating the extent of agreement reached could be made to the 1938 general conventions of both synodical bodies.

The statements submitted were the following:

## **Declaration Of The Representatives Of The American Lutheran Church**

Having carefully discussed with representatives of the honorable Synod of Missouri, in a number of meetings, and on the basis of the Minneapolis Theses, the Chicago Theses, and the Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod, the points of doctrine that have been in controversy between us or concerning which a suspicion of departure from the true doctrine had arisen, we now summarize what, according to our conviction, is the result of our deliberations in the following statements:

### **I. Scripture and Inspiration.**

- a. The Bible (that is, the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments) is the Word of God, His permanent revelation, aside from which, until Christ's return in glory, no other is to be expected.
- b. The Bible consists of a number of separate books, written at various times, on various occasions, and for various purposes. Their authors were living, thinking personalities, each endowed by the Creator with an individuality of his own, and each having his peculiar style, his own manner of presentation, using at times even various sources at hand (Num. 21:14; Josh. 10:13; Luke 1:1-4). Nevertheless by virtue of inspiration, i.e., the unique operation of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21) by which He supplied to the Holy writers contents and fitting word (1 Cor. 2:12, 13) the separate books of the Bible constitute an organic whole without contradiction and error (John 10:35) and are rightly called the Word of God.
- c. Since the Bible is the Word of God, it is the only source, rule and norm for faith and life, and the ever fresh and inexhaustible fountain of all comfort, strength, wisdom and guidance, a means of grace for mankind (John 5:39; Rom. 1:16).

## **II. Universal Plan of Salvation, Predestination and Conversion.**

A. We confess that there is an eternal divine plan of salvation according to which God before the beginning of time resolved to prepare salvation for all through Christ (Acts 2:23; 4:28; 1 Pet. 1:20; cf. 2 Cor. 5:18) and to communicate the salvation prepared for all mankind to all men through Word and Sacrament (Luke 14:16-24; Matt. 11:28; John 12:32; 1 Tim. 2:4-7). To this end it is His purpose by His Word to work in all men true repentance and creatively to produce saving faith in them (2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:23), not irresistibly but in all cases with the same seriousness and the same power (Luke 14:23; Isa. 55:10, 11). To this end He also purposes to justify those who have come to faith, to preserve them in faith and finally to glorify them (1 Cor. 2:7; 1 Pet. 1:5); which, however, does not exclude but rather includes that those who have come to faith must at all times work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12; Hebr. 3:12; Col. 1:23). To this universal plan of salvation, revealed in Christ and proclaimed in the Scripture, all Christians must adhere.

B. We confess that in addition there is an eternal election or eternal purpose of God, according to which we declare with Paul that the fact that we have come to faith and will finally be saved is due to nothing whatever in ourselves nor to anything whatsoever that we have done or not done, omitted or not omitted, with natural powers or with so-called “powers of grace bestowed upon us,” here in this life, but solely and alone to this eternal election or eternal purpose of God (2 Tim. 1:9; Eph. 1:3-6; Rom. 8:28-30).

C. Concerning the relationship of the universal plan of salvation and the eternal election to each other, we declare the following:

1. Only when both are maintained with equal emphasis will the full Scripture truth be expressed.
2. According to the Scripture, the eternal election took place solely by grace, for Christ’s sake, and by way of the universal order of salvation, and it is carried out in time in the same manner.
3. When the Scripture speaks of this eternal election, it as a rule takes its position in time, after men have come to faith, and in presenting this doctrine Scripture addresses itself only to believers.
4. Whenever Paul speaks of eternal election, he does so with a feeling of unspeakable gratitude for the grace experienced, or for the purpose of consoling believers in all manner of tribulation, but in no case implying that God had considered him and the rest of the believers better than the others and had elected them unto faith on that account, or that his election is due to a grace of God that exists exclusively for the elect.
5. The eternal election of the believers unto sonship is not founded upon a second, different will of grace, but upon the identical universal will which God earnestly entertains regarding all men.
6. Beyond these truths the Scripture teaches nothing concerning the relation of the universal plan of salvation to the eternal election. For that reason all attempts to combine the two and thus to explain why some come to faith and salvation and others do not, are human constructions which should be avoided. As such a well-intended but nevertheless human construction we consider the statement of the old dogmaticians, made under peculiar circumstances, when they said that the eternal predestination took place *intuitu fidei*. It is true: if the term “election in view of persevering faith (*intuitu fidei finalis*)” is interpreted in this

manner only, that God has decreed from eternity to give on Judgment Day—for the sake of the merits of Christ imputed to them—the crown of glory to those whom He Himself by His grace has brought to faith and has kept in faith unto the end, then such an interpretation expresses indeed a truth clearly revealed in Scripture. It is also true that the Scripture doctrine of election includes as the final step the glorification of the elect. But the Scripture and the Confessions do not say that the eternal election or predestination unto the adoption of children took place in view of faith. Hence, for the sake of clarity in doctrinal presentation this terminology should be avoided.

### **III. The Church.**

In connection with the doctrine of the Church, the question debated was, whether it is permissible to speak of a visible side of the church when defining its essence. We declare that to do so is not a false doctrine if by this visible side nothing else is meant but the use of the means of grace.

### **IV. The Office of the Public Administration of the Means of Grace.**

The office of the public administration of the means of grace is a divine institution. The power to forgive or retain sins, to preach the Law and the Gospel has been committed by Christ not to an individual person as Peter and his so-called successors, nor only to the twelve apostles, nor to a special order, but to all Christians (Matt. 16:19; 18:18, John 20:19, 20; to be compared with Luke 24:33-36). In order to have one in her midst who exercises this power publicly, in her name and by her order, the Christian congregation calls a capable person. By the call the congregation erects the office of the public administration of the means of grace in her midst. Ordination is the confirmation of the call; it is not a divine but a commendable human ordinance.

### **V. The Doctrine of Sunday.**

That which is contained on this point in the “Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Ev. Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States”

is *publica doctrina* among us.

## **VI. The Doctrine Concerning the Last Things.**

### **A. In General.**

When considering the question concerning the Antichrist, the future conversion of Israel, the resurrection of the martyrs, and the millennial reign of Christ, the fact must not be overlooked that we are dealing here with the correct understanding of prophecy and fulfillment, that this understanding is not always easy, and that even in the days of Christ the believers had an entirely different conception of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy in many points than actually occurred but that nevertheless the fulfillment coincided exactly with the prophecy. We are certain that the same will be the case with respect to the New Testament prophecy. Not only will the great events, which even now stand out clearly and unmistakably in the prophecy of Jesus and His apostles—the return of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, the passing away of the old world and the creation of the new heaven and the new earth, the twofold termination of all history in eternal life or eternal damnation—find their realization, but even the individual details will be fulfilled, though the latter perhaps in an entirely different manner than some of the faithful expect on the basis of their understanding of Scripture. However, since all New Testament revelation constitutes a unity, nothing should be taught concerning the subjects named in our introductory sentence that would involve a negation of the following truths:

1. That as Christians we must at all times be ready for the return of Christ;
2. That as Christians we are bound, until the return of Christ, to the use of the means of grace and to the way of salvation revealed in the Gospel.
3. That the Church on earth, until the return of Christ, will continue to be a kingdom of the cross.

### **B. In particular, we confess the following:**

1. In regard to the Antichrist we accept the historical Judgment of Luther in the Smalcald Articles (Part II, Art. IV, 10) that the Pope is the very



Antichrist (German: “*der rechte Endechrist oder Widerchrist*”), because among all the anti-christian manifestations in the history of the world and the church that lies behind us in the past there is none that fits the description given in 2 Thess. 2, better than the papacy, particularly since the denial of the fundamental article of the Scripture on the part of the papacy, viz., the justification of the sinner by grace alone, for Christ’s sake alone, by faith alone, constitutes the worst perversion imaginable of the very essence of Christianity and inevitably carries with it the dissolution of every God-pleasing moral world-order.

The answer to the question whether in the future that is still before us, prior to the return of Christ, a special unfolding and personal concentration of the antichristian power already present now, and thus a still more comprehensive fulfillment of 2 Thess. 2, may occur, we leave to the Lord and Ruler of Church and world history.

2. With reference to the question concerning the conversion of Israel, which some find indicated especially in Rom. 11:25, 26, we declare with Dr. Walther that to assume such a conversion “must not be regarded as a cause for division” (Milwaukee Kolloquium, page 156).
3. With reference to the assumption of a physical resurrection of the martyrs, which some find indicated in Rev. 20:4, we declare that we are not ready to deny church fellowship to anyone who holds this view, merely on that account; since we cannot consider the argument that this assumption violates the analogy of Scripture as cogent (cf. Matt. 27:52, 53), and since the representatives of this opinion do not assume a rule of the martyrs here on earth but hold that they go directly to heaven and rule there with Christ.
4. With reference to the thousand years of Rev. 20 we declare with Dr. Walther (Milwaukee Kolloquium, page 157), that “it is not possible to say with absolute certainty either that the thousand years have already been fulfilled or that they still lie in the future.” If they should still lie in the future, nothing must be taught concerning the then existing Church on earth that would contradict the limitations stated under VI, A.”

"With the other points of doctrine presented in the Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod we are conscious of being in agreement. We also believe that in regard to the points touched upon in Sections I-IV the doctrines stated in the Brief Statement are correct. However, we were of the opinion that it would be well in part to supplement them in the manner stated above, in part also to emphasize those of its points which seemed essential to us. With reference to Section III and VI, B, we expect no more than this, that the honorable Synod of Missouri will declare that the points mentioned there are not disruptive of church fellowship.

If the honorable Synod of Missouri will acknowledge Sections I, II, IV, V, and VI, A, together with the statements following after VI, B, concerning our attitude toward the Brief Statement, as correct, and declare that the points mentioned in Sections III and VI, B, are not disruptive of church fellowship, the American Lutheran Church stands ready officially to declare itself in doctrinal agreement with the honorable Synod of Missouri and to enter into pulpit and altar fellowship with it.

At the same time we recognize it as our duty to do what we can to bring about the acceptance of these doctrinal statements by the bodies with which we are now in church fellowship."

The statement of the Missouri Synod Commission was as follows:

## **Statement Submitted To The Intersynodical Committee Chicago, January, 1938 By The Representatives Of The Missouri Synod**

"As to further steps to bring about church fellowship between the two bodies represented here, the representatives of the Missouri Synod submit the following statement:

1. The establishment of Church fellowship between the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod will depend on the action taken by both bodies with reference to the Brief Statement and the Declaration of the Representatives Of the American Lutheran Church.
2. The establishment of church fellowship between the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod will depend also on the es-

- establishment Of doctrinal agreement with the aforementioned Brief Statement and Declaration on the part of those church bodies with which the American Lutheran Church is in fellowship.
3. It is understood that, as far as the Missouri Synod is concerned, this whole matter including the Declaration Of the Representatives of the American Lutheran Church, must be submitted for approval to the other synods constituting the Synodical Conference.
  4. We deem it advisable that until church fellowship has been officially established, the pastors of both synods meet, in smaller circles, wherever and as often as possible, in order to discuss both the doctrinal basis for union and the questions Of church practice."

---

Copies of both documents were distributed at all 1938 District conventions of the Church. There was a free and open discussion of their contents at all our District conventions.

Copies of both documents were also sent to the Presidents Of our sister synods in the American Lutheran Conference and to the President Of the Conference.

At its general convention in June of this year, the Missouri Synod adopted the following report Of one of its floor committees, which pertains to the "Declaration" and the "Statement":

## **Report And Resolutions Of Committee No. 16 Relative To Overture 513**

"At the last Synodical Convention in Cleveland (1935) the appointment of a Committee on Lutheran Union was authorized. This committee, appointed by the President Of Synod, has held six meetings with the representatives of the Hon. American Lutheran Church.

As a result of these meetings the representatives of the American Lutheran Church accepted the doctrinal contents Of the "Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod," but in order to supplement and emphasize their position the representatives of the American Lutheran Church made an official statement called "The Declaration Of the Repre-

sentatives of the American Lutheran Church.” The Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod, together with the Declaration Of the Representatives Of the American Lutheran Church, show the doctrinal position which the American Lutheran Church representatives accepted.

Your Committee finds in the position of the representatives Of the American Lutheran Church:

- a. First of all an agreement in the doctrinal statements concerning teachings disputed in the past or still in debate in some sections of the Lutheran Church of America, notably in the doctrines of inspiration, predestination and conversion, Sunday, and the office of the public administration of the means of grace. It is with great joy that we note that in the chief difficulty which separated our Synod from the constituent bodies of the American Lutheran Church, the doctrine of predestination, unanimity has been reached and the false teachings held by some Lutheran teachers have been repudiated. Concerning agreement in this doctrine, the sainted Dr. F. Pieper declared thirty-five years ago in his *Die Grunddifferenz in der Lehre von der Bekehrung und Gnadenwahl*, page 28: “If unanimity in this point can be attained, that is from the heart we refrain from seeking a rational answer to the question, ‘Cur alii prae aliis’ ‘why some rather than others’ (are elected), this is a sign that we are truly of one spirit... A Lutheran Church in America thus united would have to become a great blessing for the Church of the whole world.” It is similarly gratifying that concerning the Holy Scriptures the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives specifically and in opposition to some other Lutheran bodies emphasizes the verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of the Scriptures.
- b. In some non-fundamental points concerning the doctrine of the Last Things, the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives asks tolerance for certain teachings and interpretations which have been rejected in our circles.
  1. This concerns particularly the doctrine of the Anti-Christ. With the Missouri Synod, the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church, on the basis of the Scriptures and the Smalcald Articles, teaches that the Pope is the Anti-Christ; but the question as to whether the" future will

bring a specific unfolding and personal concentration of the present Anti-Christian power is left to God.

While the Missouri Synod teaches on the basis of 2 Thess. 2:3-12 and in accord with the Smalcald Articles (Part II, Article IV:10) that the Pope is the very Anti-Christ for the past and the future, your Committee finds that the Synodical fathers have declared that a deviation in this doctrine need not be divisive of church-fellowship (Lehre u. Wehre, Vol. 19, 1873, p. 290; Lehre u. Wehre, Vol. 25, 1879, p. 25E).

Note: In this and the following paragraphs the Synodical fathers are mentioned and quoted. This must not be understood in any way as if we were basing any doctrine on what the Synodical fathers teach. We simply mention the fact that they considered some non-fundamental doctrines as not necessarily divisive of Church fellowship.

2. A second non-fundamental doctrine which the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives mention is the doctrine concerning the conversion of the Jews. The American Lutheran Church representatives do not state that their church teaches, in opposition to ours, that there will be a universal conversion of all Jews. They do state, however, that some find this doctrine indicated especially in Rom. 11:25 and 26, and that the acceptance of a conversion of the Jews must not be regarded as divisive of church-fellowship.

While the Missouri Synod teaches on the basis of the Scriptures that we are not to look forward to a universal conversion of all Jews before the end of the world, your Committee finds that the Synodical fathers have declared that such deviation in this doctrine need not be regarded as a cause of division (Lehre u. Wehre, Vol. 14, 1868, p. 252) .

3. A third non-fundamental doctrine on which the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives report is the “assumption of a physical resurrection of the martyrs.” The Declaration does not state that this is the doctrine of the American Lutheran Church. It merely declares that if anyone teaches this physical resurrection, the American Lutheran Church is not ready to deny church-fellowship on that account.

In regard to this assumption of a physical resurrection of the martyrs before Judgment Day, the Missouri Synod teaches that this is a misinterpretation of Rev. 20, 4, since, according to the statements of the Scriptures and the Confessional Writings, there will be only one resurrection and that on Judgment Day. Your committee finds that the Synodical fathers have declared that this erroneous assumption need not be divisive of church-fellowship (Lehre u. Wehre, Vol. 19, 1873, page 74ff.)

4. The fourth point in the teachings concerning the Last Things, on which the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives reports is the “thousand years” of Rev. 20. This Declaration is willing to leave the time of the fulfillment of these prophecies (whether in the past or in the future) undecided. It demands of those who place the thousand years in the future that they profess the truth that the Church on earth, until the return of Christ for Judgment, will continue to be a kingdom of the cross, and that all Christians should be prepared for the coming of Christ at any moment.

In regard to the fulfillment of these “thousand years” in Rev. 20 and the question as to whether they lie in the past or the future-Synod has allowed the right of different interpretation of this passage, provided such interpretation is not out of harmony with the analogy of faith, and no chiliastic associations are involved.

In all other parts of our teachings concerning the last times, the American Lutheran Church representatives agree with us. Their declaration repudiates Chiliasm by emphasizing that the Church will continue to be a kingdom of the cross until the end and by asserting that “Christians must at all times be ready for the return of Christ.”

- c. In the fundamental doctrines discussed in the Declaration of the Representatives of the American Lutheran Church, we note in connection with the doctrine of the Church that they declare it permissible to speak of “a visible side of the Church,” when defining its essence “if by this Visible side nothing else is meant than the use of the means of grace.” While the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives, in accepting the Brief Statement, also accepts the doctrine of the Church as the invisible communion of the saints, it has been felt

- by some that if this expression, “the visible side of the Church,” were permitted to remain unexplained it might give occasion for the fostering of false doctrine, such as the Romanizing teaching which represents the Church as an external religious or social institution. Your Committee finds that our synodical fathers conceded that the Word and the Sacraments may in a certain sense be considered as belonging to the essence of the Church. Therefore a difference in this point need not be divisive of Church-fellowship, when this expression, “the visible side of the Church” is understood in the light of our Synod’s pronouncement by Dr. Walther, *Das Buffaloer Colloquium*, 1866, page 9.
- d. In regard to all other fundamental doctrines the Committee found itself in accord with the teachings of the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives. While the phraseology employed was sometimes not that which we use, we feel, especially in view of the explanations by our Committee on Lutheran Union, that these statements contain the truth as expressed in the Scriptures and our Lutheran confessional writings. We have accepted these statements as the sincere expression of the American Lutheran Church representatives.

After conducting many meetings and a number of public hearings, after reading various communications sent us in connection with Overture 513, and being confronted with the duty of recommending resolutions to Synod concerning the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives, your Committee submits the following resolutions:

RESOLVED, 1. That we raise our grateful hearts and voices to the Triune God, thanking His mercy for the guidance of the Holy Spirit by which the points of agreement have been reached and imploring His further guidance toward the consummation of the efforts to bring about church-fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church, even though we believe that under the most favorable circumstances much time and effort may be required before any union may be reached.

2. That Synod declare that the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod together with the Declaration of the representatives of the American Lutheran Church and the provisions of this entire report of Committee No. 16 now being read and with Synod’s action thereupon be regarded

- as the doctrinal basis for future church-fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.
3. That in regard to the points of non-fundamental doctrines mentioned in the Declaration of the American Lutheran Church representatives, (Anti-Christ, the conversion of the Jews, the physical resurrection of the martyrs, the fulfillment of the “thousand years,”) we endeavor to establish full agreement; and that our Committee on Lutheran union be instructed to devise ways and means of reaching this end.
  4. That in regard to the propriety of speaking of “the visible side of the Church” we ask our Committee on Lutheran Union to work to this end that uniform and Scripturally acceptable terminology and teaching be attained.
  5. That since for true unity we need not only this doctrinal agreement, but also agreement in practice, we state with our synodical fathers that according to the Scriptures and the Lutheran confessional writings, Christian practice must harmonize with Christian doctrine; and that where there is a divergence from biblical, confessional practice, strenuous efforts must be made to correct such deviation. We refer particularly to the attitude toward the anti-Christian lodge, anti-scriptural pulpit and altar fellowship, and all other forms of unionism.
  6. That regarding the establishment of church-fellowship between the two bodies on this basis, Synod recognize the following points which embody and augment the four recommendations of Synod’s Committee on Lutheran Union.
    - a. The establishing of church-fellowship between the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod will depend on the action taken by each body with reference to the Brief Statement, the Declaration of the representatives of the American Lutheran Church, and the Report of this Committee as adopted by Synod.
    - b. The establishing of church-fellowship between the American Lutheran Church and the Missouri Synod will depend also on the establishing on the part of the American Lutheran Church of doctrinal agreement with those church bodies with which the American Lutheran Church is in fellowship.
    - c. As far as the Missouri Synod is concerned, this whole matter must be submitted for approval to the other Synods constituting the Synodical



Conference.

- d. Until church-fellowship has been officially established, the pastors of both church-bodies are encouraged to meet in smaller circles wherever and as often as possible in order to discuss both the doctrinal basis for union and the questions of church practice.
7. That if by the grace of God fellowship can be established, this fact is to be announced officially by the President of the Synod. Until then no action is to be taken by any of our pastors or congregations which would overlook the fact that we are not yet united.
8. That for the purposes herein stated we recommend to Synod that the Committee on Lutheran Union be continued.
9. That we express our sincere gratitude to the, members of the Committee for Lutheran Union for their diligent, painstaking and conscientious work and bespeak for them continued divine blessing."

The 1938 convention of the American Lutheran Church adopted unanimously the following resolutions relative to fellowship with the Synod of Missouri, to-wit (see 1938 Convention Minutes, Pages 255 and 256, III. Fellowship A):

"Since our Fellowship Commission and the Commission of the Synod of Missouri have arrived at a doctrinal agreement and since the Synod of Missouri, assembled in convention at St. Louis, has unanimously accepted this doctrinal agreement, be it

RESOLVED, 1. That we raise our grateful hearts and voices to the Triune God, thanking His mercy for the guidance of the Holy Spirit by which the points of agreement have been reached.

2. That we declare the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod, together with the Declaration of our Commission, a sufficient doctrinal basis for Church fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.
3. That, according to our conviction and the resolution of the Synod of Missouri, passed at its convention in St. Louis, the aforementioned doctrinal agreement is the sufficient doctrinal basis for Church-fellowship, and that we are firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines. Nevertheless, we

- are willing to continue the negotiations concerning the points termed in our Declaration as “not divisive of Church-fellowship,” and recognized as such by the Missouri Synod’s resolutions, and instruct our Commission on Fellowship accordingly.
4. That we understand why the Missouri Synod is for the time being not yet ready to draw the logical conclusion and immediately establish church-fellowship with our church. We, however, expect that henceforth by both sides the erection of opposition altars shall be carefully avoided and that just coordination of mission work shall earnestly be sought.
  5. That we believe that the Brief Statement viewed in the light of our Declaration is not in contradiction to the Minneapolis Theses which are the basis of our membership in the American Lutheran Conference. We are not willing to give up this membership. However, we are ready to submit the aforementioned doctrinal agreement to the other members of the American Lutheran Conference for their official approval and acceptance.
  6. That, until church-fellowship has been officially established, we encourage the pastors of both church bodies to meet in smaller groups in order to discuss both the doctrinal basis for union and the question of church practice.
  7. That we humbly pray to the Lord of the Church that He might guide the course of both church bodies so that we may be lead to the establishment of full fellowship as an important contribution to the unity of our dear Lutheran Church in America.
  8. That we commend our Commission for its painstaking, and thorough work and hereby accept and ratify the report with sincere appreciation and thanks."

---

The foregoing material may seem to be an unnecessarily prolonged introduction to the lectures that follow it. It has been included here solely because numerous requests for the official documents reprinted here, and many inquiries about their contents and meaning, which have come to the undersigned, have convinced him that this material should be made generally available. It will also be conducive to a better understanding and evalu-

ation of the lectures. [Unionism and What is Scripture and How Can We Be Certain of its Divine Origin?]

# Copyright Notice

This book was published 2020 by The Lutheran Library Publishing Ministry [LutheranLibrary.org](http://LutheranLibrary.org). Some (hopefully unobtrusive) updates to spelling, punctuation, and paragraph divisions have been made. Unabridged.

Originally published 1939 as the first essay in “In the Interest of Lutheran Unity” by The Buffalo, Iowa, and Ohio Synods which were known at that time as the American Lutheran Church, as distinct from the ALC which was formed in 1960.

Cover image “U2 Concert photo from Vertigo Tour”, uploaded to wikimedia by photographer in Italy on Sep 22, 2009 and released under Creative Commons CC0 1.0 Universal Public Domain Dedication.

Image on imprint page is *Still Life With Bible* by Vincent Van Gogh.

This LutheranLibrary.org book is released under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) license, which means you may freely use, share, copy, or translate it as long as you provide attribution to LutheranLibrary.org, and place on it no further restrictions.

The text and artwork within are believed to be in the U.S. public domain.

580 – v5

ISBN: TBD (paperback)

# How Can You Find Peace With God?

The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

Read your Bible steadily. God works His power in human beings through His Word. Where the Word is, God the Holy Spirit is always present.

Suggested Reading: [New Testament Conversions by Pastor George Gerberding](#)

## Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

# More Than 100 Good Christian Books For You To Download And Enjoy

*The Book of Concord*. Edited by Henry Eyster Jacobs and Charles Krauth.

Henry Eyster Jacobs. *Summary of the Christian Faith*

Theodore Schmauk. *The Confessional Principle and The Confessions of The Lutheran Church As Embodying The Evangelical Confession of The Christian Church*

George Gerberding. *Life and Letters of William Passavant*

Joseph Stump. *Life of Philip Melancthon*

John Morris. *Life Reminiscences of An Old Lutheran Minister*

Matthias Loy. *The Doctrine of Justification*

Matthias Loy. *The Story of My Life*

William Dau. *Luther Examined and Reexamined*

Simon Peter Long. *The Great Gospel*

George Schodde *et al.* *Walther and the Predestination Controversy. The Error of Modern Missouri*

John Sander. *Devotional Readings from Luther's Works*

A full catalog of all 100+ downloadable titles is available at [LutheranLibrary.org](http://LutheranLibrary.org) .