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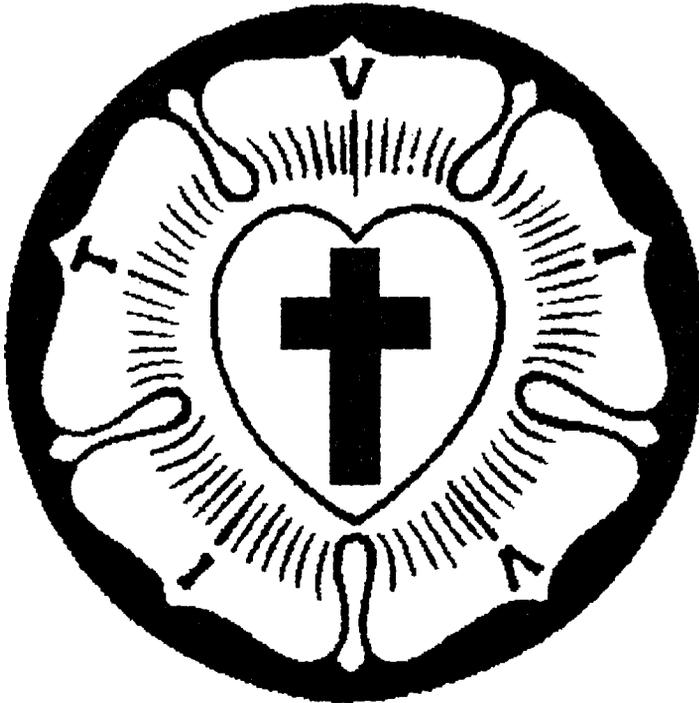
THE LEPROSY OF UNIONISM

(A Voice From the Past)

A CLOSER LOOK FOR THOSE

WHO ARE CONCERNED

(The Deceptiveness of Compromise)



2097

THE LEPROSY OF UNIONISM

By Dr. Theodore Graebner

- 1918 -

(See "NOTE" at end of article)

In all the catalog of diseases there is no more awful scourge than leprosy. True leprosy is incurable. In Bible-times the lepers were considered, in a special sense, unclean. They were shut out from the temple, the synagogues, and to a large extent from the social life of their fellow-beings. Their lot was truly pitiable. The tubercular blotches on the skin, soon covering the cheeks, the nose, the lips, and the forehead; then the ulcers in the mouth, followed soon by the tubercles on the face, encrusted with discharge; the falling out of the eyebrows, the ulceration of feet and hands, the progressive loss of fingers and toes, then of arms and limbs made leprosy the most dreaded of all diseases. It ended usually by the onset of tuberculosis, or led to mental decay, idiocy, coma, and death.

There is a spiritual leprosy. We commonly call it *unionism*. Unionism is a diseased condition of the church. And it is a fatal disease. It ends in spiritual tuberculosis or a state of coma, the precursor of spiritual death. . . Moreover, and this makes the present subject so vital - we all have within us the germs of unionism.(NOTE: Unionism is church fellowship without unity in doctrine and practice.)

I. THE GERMS

". . . In my flesh dwelleth no good thing," (Romans 7:18) is the confession of Paul and of every Christian who knows his own heart. Pride, love of applause, and their counterparts, unwillingness to bear shame and reproach, these are the germs of unionism. And they are found in every human heart.

When we confess Christ, we must bear reproach. And we can confess Christ in no other way than by confessing the truth as He taught it. But confession of the truth by word of mouth is

inseparable from confession by deed and practice. Even if there were no single text in Scripture which commands us to separate ourselves from those who deny any part of the truth, we should still, by inner necessity, if we are faithful disciples, bear witness against error through the testimony of withdrawal from false teachers and their followers. Jesus says that He has come not to bring peace, but division. (Luke 12:51) The Word divides those who are faithful from those who are unfaithful. And when Scripture says: "Be ye separate," (2 Corinthians 6:17), "Avoid them," (Romans 16:17), these commands find a ready response in the attitude of the believer's heart. The Christian knows that false doctrine is sin.

But here our spirit is put to a sore test. Separation from those who teach falsely will inevitably expose us to slurs and bitter reproach: "Pharisees!" "Holier - than - thou Christians!" is hurled at us. "A loveless Christianity!" "Proud aloofness!" "Unchristian intolerance!" These are bitter words, and our flesh is weak; we are tempted to look for some means of escape from such reproach. And that is the entering wedge of unionism!

Satan sees his opportunity. "Yea, hath God said?" (Genesis 3:1) Doubts arise: "Is it really necessary to stand so uncompromisingly on details of doctrine? Are not some doctrines difficult to understand? Is it not reasonable to suppose that Christians may 'honestly differ,' because the Word of God 'has left some things obscure?' Why then be separate from those who at least hold the 'great essentials' of Christianity in common with us?"

We recognize the serpent's hiss and strike down the tempter with the Sword of the Spirit: "It is written!" (Matthew 4) The teachings of the Word of God are not a vague, luminous mist, but a clear, steady light. We re-examine the Scriptures and confess that in all its teachings the Bible is indeed, as Luther called it, "The clearest book ever written." No, we cannot yield.

The simple words of Scripture are too powerful; the Truth is ours, and those who deny it depart from the evident sense of the inspired

Word. There can be no compromise. "Get thee behind me, Satan!" (Matthew 16:23) Thus we can escape the infection.

II. THE EPIDEMIC

Without question, there is an epidemic of unionism raging in the body of Protestantism. There is an impatient demand: "Away with creeds; away with doctrine!" "The denominational wall must fall." "Christianity has no room for sects." This is the cry of so-called Christianity of our day.

Our Synodical Conference, of which the Missouri Synod is part, has so far stood four-square against unionism. Will it continue to stand? Will it resist the tremendous pressure exerted by those who plead for unity, regardless of doctrinal agreement. . . (Will it continue) to offset the inroads of unbelief, and to oppose aggression of Romanism? Will it remain 100% Lutheran? . . . *(COMMENTARY: This article was written in 1918. Unfortunately, the questions must be answered in the negative. The Synodical Conference officially dissolved in 1967. It had succumbed to unionism!)*

III. THE RAVAGES OF UNIONISM

Once we admit that the Word of God has not clearly spoken on points of Christian doctrine, and "the lid is off," faith disintegrates, and rationalism rules. . . Unionism works just like leprosy. First the disfigurement - the entrance of unscriptural views and practices, then the decay of doctrinal preaching, followed by the sloughing off of one teaching after another, until the church-body is a walking death.

Behold the final state of such a church: Because they tolerated error in their midst and permitted their faithful churches and pastors to remain in fellowship with unfaithful churches and pastors, the representatives of the so-called conservative element of the Reformed Churches round about are helpless over against the inroads of unbelief. The official publishing house of the

Methodists is publishing Sunday School literature which is absolutely unchristian. . . . Everywhere sectarian preachers are openly denying the very fundamentals of Christian doctrine. Churches are rapidly degenerating into agencies of political reform, and in many cases have given up even the pretense to a spiritual mission. Such churches are dying of spiritual tuberculosis, the final stage of spiritual leprosy - unionism.

IV. THE CURE

Unionism is a disease which is 100% fatal. The outward organization sometimes continued to exist after the spiritual life had flown, but Christ, the Life of the Church, was no longer there. His Spirit had fled the polluted sanctuary. In the days of Isaiah, the Jews had arrived at this stage. . .

True Christians there will always be where there are Bible-readers; but the organism dies. A church may be re-born, reformed, built up anew out of the debris of its former self, but that has ever been the case only after unionism had worked its final result, spiritual death. The place for unionistic Christianity is not the sanitarium, but the morgue.

V. PREVENTION

The Lutheran Church in the United States has not been immune to unionism in the past, and it is not immune today.

No one believes that any Missouri Synod man would dare to propose at this time (1918) official synodical collaboration with the Reformed sects in church-work. That is a late development at which one does not arrive at a jump. On the other hand, the danger is ever present that on the specious plea of advancing the cause of "Lutheranism," we be tempted to enter into fellowship with members of synods Lutheran in name, but only partly Lutheran in doctrine and practice. There is danger that we get a taste of applause and flattery; that we become eager for "recognition" as a great church-body; that we compromise our doctrinal stand for the

purpose of meeting emergencies. And the time to become aware of that danger is NOW.

It is a bad sign when hearers become angry at their pastor for "preaching against other churches." It is a worse sign when pastors, bowing to such disapproval, begin to withhold instructions concerning the errors of the sects. It is a most alarming symptom when pastors and parishoners fraternize. . . with those who represent a different conception of Lutheranism. It becomes denial of the Truth when they associate with such for the purpose of "making church-work more effective" or "keeping the Lutheran Church on the map."

As we love our church, let us so teach our people so that they will fear the contagion of error as they would fear to breathe the air of a small-pox hospital. Let us exhibit to them the damnableness of false doctrine. Let us preach Luther on this point, who saw only the work of Satan in every deviation from the truth of Scripture. If our people learn to recognize every false doctrine as a snare of the devil, spread to catch victims for hell, they will not need to be held with a rein lest they stampede into unionism. . .

Let it be understood that any undertaking or activity which is, in effect, the doing of religious work jointly with those from whom we ought, according to Scripture to separate, is unionism. Here, if ever, the old sayings must apply: "Nip the evil in the bud." Our first duty is that of watchfulness. There is no higher duty now because there is no greater danger.

NOTE:

Dr. Theo Graebner, the author of this essay, was for many years a professor at Concordia Lutheran Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri. He was a prolific writer and the author of many excellent books and treatises in which he clearly and boldly set forth the truth of Scripture on a variety of subjects. He proved himself a staunch defender of sound, conservative Lutheranism.

This is evident also from this essay which appeared in the LUTHERAN WITNESS, the official organ of the Missouri Synod, in 1918.

We regret that Dr. Graebner did not continue in this same firm position in the later years of his life. This, however does not affect the soundness of his former testimony, including also the fine witness he bears in the above article.

[Please note that all underlined sections for emphasis are ours.]

[This article was originally reproduced by the now sainted Rev. Waldemar Schuetze, pastor at the time in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. The undersigned retyped it and has added the Scripture references.]

Daniel Fleischer - 1995

ADDENDUM: "The more things change, the more they stay the same." Unionism has infected just about every church today, including Lutheran Churches. It is a continual threat to our own! It is essential for each of us to study and know the Bible, and its teachings. For unless we know what we believe we cannot speak. Unless we believe what we teach, we will not have the will to stand up for it. We are called upon to proclaim the Truth in love. Conversely, it is not love if we do not speak the Truth.

The heart of all that the Lord has commissioned us to preach is the Gospel. The principle of fellowship set forth in Scripture is serves the cause of the Gospel. Christians will practice the principle out of love for God and His Word. It is practiced for the sake of our children to whom we have a responsibility to pass on the Truth of God. It is practiced out of love for the neighbor to whom we are to witness in word and deed. - - - DF

A CLOSER LOOK FOR THOSE WHO ARE CONCERNED

(Compiled by Rev. Arvid Gullerud, ret. Spokane, Washington)

(Updated and edited by Rev. Daniel Fleischer, 1995)

[As indicated above, the original preparation of this historical information was done by Rev. Arvid Gullerud, who at the time was pastor of Bethel Lutheran Church in Spring, Texas. It has been updated and edited by Rev. Daniel Fleischer, pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Fridley, Minnesota. Both pastors are members of the Church of the Lutheran Confession. The Word of God is clear concerning the errors of unionism. Therefore, for instruction and strength we go to the Word. However, it is helpful for us to consider the history, so that we might be reminded of the insidiousness of compromise. "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12)]

We believe that there is much to be learned from the history of Christianity - the failures as well as the triumphs. One glaring failure has been indifference to Scriptural doctrine, which leads to religious unionism. Unionism is the practice of church-fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine. Union between churches where there is not complete agreement in doctrine is forbidden by God. (Romans 16:17, 2 John 9,10) Unionism involves the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely. (2 Timothy 2:17-21) [Cf. BRIEF STATEMENT of the Missouri Synod, 1932]

Our Lord and Savior has taught us to pray in the 1st Petition: "Hallowed be Thy name." How is this done? Luther's explanation explains: "When the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity and we as the children of God lead a holy life according to it." Only when God's name is hallowed can we with a good conscience and with His blessing pray, "Thy kingdom come." Yes, all of God's doctrines are important. Paul writes to the young minister, Timothy: "TAKE HEED to yourself and TO THE DOCTRINE. Continue in them, for in doing this you will both save yourself and

those who hear you." (1 Timothy 4:16) Again: "If any man loves Me, he will keep my Words." (John 14:23) ". . .charge some that they teach NO OTHER DOCTRINE." (1 Timothy 1:3) The smallest error is to be rejected, for even the smallest error dilutes what God wants us to teach. "A little leaven leavens the whole lump." (Galatians 5:9)

NOT A RECENT DEVELOPMENT: THE LEAVEN AT WORK ALREADY IN 1938

Many a concerned Lutheran had become deeply disturbed by the events and official resolutions that had been passed in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The breakdown in doctrinal discipline was not an abrupt one. It had been developing steadily. In 1872 the Synodical Conference was organized. It was made up of the LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD (LC-MS, 1847), the WISCONSIN SYNOD (1850), [Now the WISCONSIN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD - WELS], SLOVAK SYNOD (1902), and the NORWEGIAN SYNOD (1860-1917), [Now the EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD - ELS]. These synods worshiped and worked together in unity of doctrine and practice. Controversial issues were quickly settled on the basis of Scripture, in a brotherly manner. Truly this federation was a creation of the Holy Ghost, Who joined hearts, souls and minds together in the same judgment. (1 Corinthians 1:10) In all things the authority was the Word of God.

In 1938 a change became noticeable. In that year the LC-MS declared that the " 'BRIEF STATEMENT' of the Missouri Synod together with the 'DECLARATION' of the American Lutheran Church (ALC) and the provisions of this entire report of (the) Committee now being read and with synod's actions thereupon be regarded as the doctrinal basis for future fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran church." That same year, the American Lutheran Church also resolved that, "We declare the 'BRIEF STATEMENT' of the Missouri Synod, together with the 'DECLARATION' of our Commission, a sufficient basis for fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the ALC...(and)

that we are firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines."

In 1969 the LC-MS declared fellowship with the ALC. Concerned Lutherans stood in awe and amazement that the LC-MS, a once staunch confessional church, had so quickly degenerated to one that had to be recognized as heterodox. It stood condemned by its own "BRIEF STATEMENT." (The LC-MS officially severed the fellowship arrangement with the ALC in 1981.)

CHICAGO THESES - 1919

For a number of years prior to 1929, efforts had been made to bring about a union of the many synods of the Lutheran Church. An inter-synodical committee had been chosen from the Synods of Iowa, Ohio, Buffalo, Missouri, and Wisconsin. The sole object was to establish "fully (sic) agreement upon the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confession." This committee drew up a document which became known as the "CHICAGO THESES." This document was laid before the several synods for action.

BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH- MISSOURI SYNOD - 1932

The Missouri Synod took action in 1929. Its examining committee reported: "Your committee finds itself compelled to advise synod to reject the theses as a possible basis for union with the Synods of Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo, since all chapters and a number of paragraphs are inadequate. At times they do not touch upon the points of controversy; at times they incline more to the position of the opponents than to our own. . . Your committee considers it a hopeless undertaking to make these theses unobjectionable from the view of pure doctrine." The same committee also recommended: "It now seems to your committee a matter of wisdom to desist from inter-synodical conferences. . ."

Thereupon the Missouri Synod rejected the "CHICAGO THESES." It elected a committee to formulate a document beginning with the

points at issue in order to simply and clearly present the doctrines of the Scriptures. Thus the "BRIEF STATEMENT" came into being. At it's 1932 convention the LC-MS adopted it. From then on the "BRIEF STATEMENT" was to serve as the doctrinal basis in all future efforts to bring about an honest and Scriptural agreement with the ALC, or all others who wanted union on the basis of Truth alone.

"DECLARATION" OF ALC - 1938

The ALC did not accept the "BRIEF STATEMENT." Its committee found it necessary to "supplement" the doctrinal presentation in order to "emphasize" the points which seemed essential to them. The ALC added its own "DECLARATION."

Although the LC-MS did not at this time enter into fellowship with the ALC, it nevertheless declared its own "BRIEF STATEMENT" together with the "DECLARATION" of the ALC an acceptable doctrinal basis for future fellowship. It submitted this conclusion to the other synods of the Synodical Conference for approval.

THE LEAVEN GROWS

The Norwegian Synod, (now known as the Evangelical Lutheran Synod-ELS), and the WELS protested publicly against the "DECLARATION." To yoke it with the "BRIEF STATEMENT" was too much like the forbidden plowing "with an ox and an ass together." (Deuteronomy 22:10) Conservatives in the LC-MS likewise protested. In the meantime, the ALC made it very clear that it was going to join hands with other liberal Lutherans just as it pleased, while at the same time enticing the LC-MS under the liberal tent. In 1939, the "PITTSBURGH AGREEMENT" linked the ALC with the modernistic United Lutheran Church (ULC).

THE LEAVEN CONTINUES TO GROW

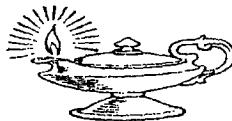
In 1944 a new union document came forth known as the "DOCTRINAL AFFIRMATION." This document was again a

compromise agreement. Its purpose was to adjust the differences between the "BRIEF STATEMENT" and the "DECLARATION." It met with opposition from the two sister synods and from many conservatives of the LC-MS.

The liberal trend of the LC-MS leadership became manifest also in other matters at the 1944 convention. LC-MS adopted a definition of "prayer-fellowship" contrary to all its earlier pronouncements. This opened the door for a wide range of unionistic practices. The 1944 convention also adopted a resolution with regard to the work-righteous Boy Scout movement. It was a resolution contrary to its earlier stand. It adopted this resolution in the face of opposition from the Wisconsin Synod and the ELS who pointed out the naturalistic and unionistic practices in the scouting movement. It split with the two sister synods also over the matter of the military service chaplaincies, although the LC-MS had Scripturally and traditionally opposed them as undue mixing of church and state. (See Pieper's dogmatics, Vol. II, page 416)

THE "LEFT-WING" OF MISSOURI SPEAKS OUT PUBLICLY

In 1945, the liberal "left-wing" element of the LC-MS felt itself strong enough to publish a manifesto called the "CHICAGO STATEMENT." It was signed by 44 leading pastors and professors. The statement openly rejected the old LC-MS stand on church unity and related matters. Although there was wide opposition to the false doctrines expressed in the statement, nothing effective was done to discipline the errorists. In fact, many of the "signees" - there were eventually several hundred pastors and professors who subscribed to the statement - were rewarded with more influential offices in the church than they had held before. Thus, instead of driving out error, the errorist and his error was given honor.



THE "COMMON CONFESSION"

In 1950, the "COMMON CONFESSION" was formulated as another attempt to join the LC-MS and the ALC. In 1951 it was submitted to the other synods of the Synodical Conference. The Wisconsin Synod and the ELS again objected that past differences were not in fact settled. Instead of repudiating the "COMMON CONFESSION," the LC-MS in 1953 reaffirmed its stand and proposed part II which was supposed to answer the objections. In August, and again in October of 1953, the Wisconsin Synod reviewed the developments of the last 15 years. Since pleas and admonitions so far had gone unheeded, and since objections to the "COMMON CONFESSION" and to LC-MS unionistic practices had been ignored, the Wisconsin Synod found it necessary to declare the existence of the "present break in relations that was now threatening the existence of the Synodical Conference and the continuance of our affiliation with the sister synod."

COOPERATION IN EXTERNALS

Even though fellowship had not yet been officially established between the LC-MS and the ALC, cooperative spiritual work with the ALC was condoned during these years under the name of "Cooperation in Externals." This cooperation went on with the ALC, with the World Federation and with the National Lutheran Council. The leaven had begun to affect the whole body. God's Word stands forever true: "A LITTLE LEAVEN LEAVENS THE WHOLE LUMP." (Galatians 5:9)

THE LEAVEN GROWS IN THE WISCONSIN SYNOD AND THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

In 1953, the WELS in convention in Watertown, and Milwaukee spelled out the issue that had been under debate between the LC-MS and the WELS. The issue was religious unionism. Unionism is the sin of worshiping together and doing spiritual (church) work with those whom there is not agreement in doctrine and practice,

with such as are guilty of preaching or teaching, as well as tolerating, false doctrine. The WELS declared that the LC-MS had broken the link that once bound the two synods together, by departing from the scriptural position it once had held. ". . . We declare that the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod by its persistent adherence to its unionistic practices, has brought about the present break in relations. . ." (1953 Proceedings of the WELS, p. 14)

Although the words of the resolution indicate that the convention had "marked" in the sense of Romans 16:17, the convention applied Galatians 6:1, 2 and Romans 15:5, 6 to the situation. These passages, especially the Galatians passages, speak of the proper attitude and action of a Christian over against a "weak brother" who has been "overtaken in a fault."

In 1955, the ELS "suspended relations with the Missouri Synod" but did not terminate its fellowship. It continued membership and financial support in joint efforts with the LC-MS. Many protested this half-step measure. Others again said that the ELS should wait until the WELS had acted. It seemed as though God's Word did not decide the matter! When to terminate fellowship with an erring church body now became the point of controversy within the ELS and the WELS.

The 1955 Saginaw convention of the WELS, heard the president clearly report: " We have reached the conviction that through these differences, divisions and offenses have been caused contrary to the doctrine which we have learned. And when that is the case, the Lord our God has a definite command for us: 'Avoid them!' For those of us who have been closest to these problems it appears quite definite that we must obey the Lord's Word in Romans 16: 17." (Proceedings, page 13)

But then the president of the WELS introduced a phase that was destined to dominate the thinking, much talking, and lack of action of the next half dozen years - "ray of hope." That elusive, phantom "ray of hope" dulled the thinking and paralyzed the will of the synod. The arguments at the conventions of 1956, '57, '59, and '61

went like this: The Missouri Synod is an heterodox church-body, but even though one personally avoids the Missouri Synod for conscience sake, do we not still have an unpaid debt of love to those whose fellowship we cherished for so many years? (Proceedings 1955, page 14) The factor of human judgment came into the picture - that it was a matter of human judgment when to terminate fellowship with a church-body that had been declared heterodox. This suggested that God's Word left one in a dilemma, and that Scripture had nothing to say about such a situation or, at least, was unclear.

In order to justify its failure to "avoid them" as Romans 16:17,18 clearly and simply states, and even though the WELS had "marked them," (the LC-MS) as a church-body teaching "contrary to the doctrine which we have learned," passages were introduced describing the proper dealing with a sinning brother. (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-6) These passages were placed in juxtaposition to the problem posed by false teachers. Accordingly, the WELS argued that the LC-MS was to be avoided only after it was determined that "admonition is of no further avail." The determination for terminating fellowship was therefore made on the basis of human judgment [the course of admonition] rather than on the established fact that the LC-MS was guilty of false teaching and practice, a fact already recognized and declared by the WELS.

By thus applying the procedure which is prescribed for dealing with a brother whose sin is weakness, the WELS not only violated the directives of Romans 16:17, but defended a teaching and practice which defeats the purpose of that passage, namely, that causers of divisions and offenses are to be avoided, "lest by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple." (Romans 16:18)

Thus, contrary to all the elements of this basic passage, an unscriptural position was crystallized in the presentation "Church Fellowship" and by the synod's (i.e. WELS) acceptance of this document. Moreover, the error had become evident in the synod's

dealing with the LC-MS in the years 1955-61, as well as previous years. Here the WELS was faced, not simply with weak brethren, but with errorists who taught contrary to the Word of God, persisted in their error over a period of years, made propaganda for it and thus caused divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which "you have learned." A synod must deal with another synod as a body, not with individuals of that synod. A church is judged by its public doctrine. (Cf. "BRIEF STATEMENT," para. 28) The WELS knew this and passed judgment on Missouri's public doctrine as early as 1953. Yet it continued with what, for want of a better expression, we have come to call "the weak brother approach." (Taken from the 1968 proceedings of the 8th convention of the Church of the Lutheran Confession.)

CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION

In 1959 a number of pastors, professors and laymen confronted the WELS convention with a "Call for Decision." They called for the synod to meet the issue head-on and to follow Romans 16:17,18 without injecting human reason into it. This "Call for Decision" was answered on page 194 of the 1959 proceedings. The answer stated that the WELS felt that admonition was still of avail.

The false principle of church fellowship of the WELS had also infiltrated the ELS and began to be used by it as a justification for not terminating fellowship. Although the two synods eventually terminated fellowship with the LC-MS, nevertheless, these historical developments plus official proceedings and statements promoted a false principle. It is a false principle that they have not been willing to reject clearly and unequivocally. It is the very same false principle that the LC-MS entertained when false teachers reared their heads in its fellowship in the forties. History repeats itself, and we have no assurance that false teachers will not again arise in the church militant. So then we are confronted with a choice. We can follow the false principle and go on and on with false teachers on the basis of misapplied Scripture passages, or we can do what God's Word teaches us to do for our own protection

and for the preservation of His truth! The choice is not difficult, if we desire to remain true to the Word of God.

Since the WELS and the ELS and the LC-MS no longer followed their own historic position established upon Romans 16:17,18; pastors, teachers, and professors as well as lay people withdrew from their respective synods. They did so in a final attempt to make their testimony heard. But they did so especially in order that they might be obedient to God's Word. *The Gospel and the confidence of salvation was at stake. Every departure from God's Truth undermines the Gospel and the confidence of salvation!* Many of those who left their respective synods did so at the cost of their ministry, their churches, their schools. They regrouped to begin again in the struggle that has always faced the remnant that is faithful to the Truth. They desired to hold to all that the synods of the Synodical Conference had here-to-for taught and practiced in accord with Scripture.

This remnant formed the **CHURCH OF THE LUTHERAN CONFESSION (CLC)**. In its official church paper, "THE LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN" this name was explained: "We call ourselves CHURCH because we are gathered together in Christ's name. We call ourselves LUTHERAN because we are continuing as children of the Reformation. We take seriously our heritage: *Scripture alone, Faith alone, Grace alone.* We say CONFESSION because our faith must be a living faith, unashamed of its God. We want to confess its Author and Preserver before friend and foe, that His name be hallowed in the hearts and lives of all."

The "LUTHERAN WITNESS" (Official organ of the LC-MS) in years gone by had on its masthead the following quotation from the "BOOK OF CONCORD": "It is, in truth, no easy matter to be separate from so many people and to teach a different doctrine, BUT THERE IS GOD'S COMMAND, instructing everyone to beware of joining hands with those who teach error." We are in the CLC only because we have taken that admonition to heart, and because we wish to be obedient to the Word of God, so that we by God's grace may be preserved from the unionistic spirit that has

now infected the synods of the formal Synodical Conference. The existence of the CLC is a continuing admonition to those with whom we were once united in the Synodical Conference. Only as we remain faithful to the Word of God, also in the exercise of fellowship, can we effectively bring the Truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a world of lost and condemned sinners. Only if we remain true to the Word of God will we be fit instruments through which the Spirit of God, working through the Gospel, will build Christ's Church. Only then can we be suited to bring the Word to others so that they might know the Truth that makes men free. (John 8:31,32)

LORD, KEEP US STEADFAST IN THY WORD!

THE RELATION OF REASON TO FAITH

One of the most dangerous opponents of the Word of God is human reason. Our mind and reason is indeed a grand endowment with which the Creator has equipped us. But because of sin, reason was corrupted and now is proud and conceited, unwilling to bow before the authority of the Scriptures. "The carnal mind [that is, the natural mind] is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be." (Romans 8:7) On the one hand, we could not learn and understand what God says in the Scriptures if we had no reason. On the other hand, we are in constant danger of rejecting God's teaching because our natural reason arrogates to itself the authority of deciding what is right and what is wrong in the revelation of God. Natural reason wishes to cancel every doctrine it cannot grasp, or with which it disagrees. That we have so many church-bodies, or denominations, is chiefly due to the unwillingness of human reason to be captive to the Word of God. Scripture clearly teaches us that we must not be influenced by the negative, criticizing, unfavorable judgments of our reason. Rather, we are in all simplicity to cling to the Scriptures. (John 8:31,32; 20:29; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Luke 11:28) From these passages of Scripture it is clear that the Word of God

must be the higher authority. Reason is to humble itself before the Word of God. Reason is to be an INSTRUMENT, but NOT THE MASTER, when we are studying the Word of God (e.g. the doctrine of the Trinity, the virgin birth, etc.). So also when Scripture tells us that when we have "marked" or ascertained that an individual or a church-body is a causer of "division and offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have learned," we are to "avoid them." Reason and emotion must then be taken captive to the Word of God. They are blessed who, with the Psalmist, confess before God, "THY WORD is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105)



