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THE SYMBOLISM OF THE LUTHERAN CULTUS.*

Divine worship in the Christian Church is not an *adiaphoron*. The Lord expressly commands that His Word be heard, John 8, 47. He has only severe censure for those who forsake the Christian assemblies, Heb. 10, 25. He expressly enjoins public prayer, 1 Tim. 2, 1. 2. 8. He graciously promises His divine presence at such assemblies, Matt. 18, 20. He records with approval the public services of the early Christians, Acts 2, 42—47.

But though He has prescribed the *general* content of public worship, though He is present in the sacramental acts of divine service, declaring and appropriating to the believers the means of grace, and though He graciously receives the sacrificial acts of the assembled congregation, in confession and prayer and offerings, He has not commanded a definite form or order of divine service. It is a matter of Christian liberty whether a congregation wishes one or many prayers, one or several

* In addition to the *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, the following books were consulted: Alt, H., *Christlicher Kultus*. Berlin, 1851. Cooper, F. E.; Keever, E. F.; Seegers, J. C.; Stump, J., *An Explanation of the Common Service*. Philadelphia, 1912. Daniel, H., *Codex liturgicus ecclesiae universae*. Lipsiae, 1847—1853. Fuerbringer, L., *Leitfaden fuer Vorlesungen, Liturgik*. St. Louis, 1915. Gueranger, L. P., *The Liturgical Year*. Vol. I. Worcester-London, 1895. Horn, E. T., *Outlines of Liturgics*. Second Edition. Philadelphia, 1912. Kliefoth, Th., *Liturgische Abhandlungen I*. Schwerin und Rostock, 1854. Kliefoth, Th., *Die urspruengliche Gottesdienstordnung*. Bd. 5. Schwerin, 1801. Lochner, F., *Der Hauptgottesdienst der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche*. St. Louis, 1895. Synodalbericht, Nebraska, 1898, 1903. THEOL. QUART., I, VII.

EARLY ATTITUDE OF AMERICAN LUTHERAN SYNODS TOWARD THE GENERAL COUNCIL.

In his *Documentary History of the General Council* Dr. Ochsenford has embodied a sketch of the sentiments toward this new body which prevailed at the time of the General Council's First Convention at Fort Wayne among other Lutheran Synods of America. Because of its comprehensive character, and in view of the present movement towards union with the General Synod, from which the General Council separated at the time of its organization, we submit this sketch here to invite reflection. Naturally every Lutheran who has the consistent upbuilding of his Church in our country on the basis of our Confessions at heart takes a deep interest in the present movement to consolidate, in some practical manner, the various parts of the American Lutheran Church. The question which engages the attention of earnest men in our Church most is, whether this unification can be accomplished without spiritual loss. We believe that the method suggested at the time by the Missouri Synod was the correct one, and if adopted, might have brought results. — Dr. Ochsenford says:

TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS.

The business before this newly organized body was, first, to ascertain the action of the several Synods in reference to the adoption of the Fundamental Principles and the Proposed Constitution. It is to be remembered that all the delegates of the various Synods that had participated in the Reading Convention the previous year had unanimously adopted these "Principles"; but they were instructed, at the time, to take them to their respective Synods, in order to have their action ratified by the Synods. So also the Constitution, the preparation of which they had authorized and the fundamental principles of which the delegates had adopted, was sent to the District Synods for examination and adoption. It had been agreed that if the Synods would ratify the action of their delegates and adopt the Constitution, they should be regarded as integral members of the general body thus provisionally organized. It was ascertained, at this first regular convention, that the Principles of Faith and

Church Polity had been ratified and adopted by the requisite number of Synods, and that the Proposed Constitution had also, in part, been adopted, though, in reference to the latter, a number of suggestions and proposed amendments were to be submitted in connection with the consideration and final adoption of the Constitution.

The Joint Synod of Ohio, except the English District, did not adopt the Constitution, for reasons which seemed satisfactory to that body, and therefore did not formally and fully unite with the Council, preferring to occupy, for the time being, the position prescribed in the Constitution. The German Iowa Synod subsequently assumed the same position because certain decisions of the Council were not satisfactory to the delegates. The Missouri Synod did not adopt the Constitution, and sent no delegates to this convention nor to any subsequent convention. Nor was the Norwegian Synod represented. It seems hardly possible that Synods whose representatives had so heartily and unanimously taken part in the adoption of the Fundamental Principles could hesitate to enter fully into this union of Synods, which they had so unanimously approved, on account of alleged irregular practises of individual Synods or of individuals within District Synods, into whose alleged irregularities the General Council had as yet had no opportunity or authority to inquire. Besides, one of the avowed objects of this new organization was to remove and prevent, as far as possible, all unscriptural doctrines and un-Lutheran practises, and to bring about, in all the Synods connected with it, true unity in doctrine and life. This ideal of true unity could not, however, be expected to be attained at once, but must necessarily be the work of years, especially in the older Synods, which, in their previous history, had been compelled to pass through trials and struggles and meet conditions with which the more recently organized Synods had had little or nothing to do.

The principal business of the convention, thus organized, was the important work of considering and adopting the proposed Constitution, which, beginning with the second session, occupied a large part of the time of this convention.

The delegation of each Synod represented was instructed to complete the committees on the English Church Book and the German Hymn Book, so that each District Synod would have a representative on each of the two committees.

The Executive Committee was instructed to report at the next regular convention, constitutions for both congregations and Synods to be recommended to such bodies as might in future be formed in harmony with the General Council. Provision was also made for the

preparation and presentation to the Council, at its next convention, an "Order of Business" and "Rules of Order," by the appointment of the following committee: Revs. J. A. Seiss, D. D., G. F. Krotel, D. D., and R. Adelberg, and Messrs. S. Gross Fry and Henry Lehman. Two additional officers were provided for, and the following were elected: Rev. B. M. Schmucker, English Corresponding Secretary; Rev. R. Adelberg, German Corresponding Secretary.

The basis of the representation of Synods in the General Council was fixed, and the ratio of representation incorporated in the Constitution.

The Committee on the English Church Book reported concerning the work done in cooperation with the Committee of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, and presented the conclusions reached as to the contents of the Church Book to be published for the use of congregations. A similar report was presented in reference to the German Hymn Book.

The Committee on Missions proposed a provisional plan for the prosecution of this important work of the General Council. Inasmuch as it is proposed to present these matters more in detail in subsequent chapters, they are merely mentioned here as items of business at this convention.

DIFFICULTIES CONFRONTING THE COUNCIL.

Notwithstanding the harmonious action of the Reading Convention in the adoption of the Fundamental Principles and an Outline Constitution, in which all the Synods represented at that convention heartily united, difficulties were presented at the very first convention, in reference to the practical application of those principles, which seriously interfered with the complete realization of the original plan of the founders of the General Council, and which for years proved a serious hindrance in the development and growth of the body. Although the discussions to which these difficulties led had the effect of causing the General Council to devote much time and attention to the great and fundamental principles of church unity on the basis of the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions, so that it is safe to say "that in no other Lutheran Body of the Old or New World has the question on the great principles of true church unity received such attention and been treated in such a thorough and comprehensive manner as within the General Council. And it seems to be a wonderful Providence that, on the very question in the treatment of which the differences of nationality and language frequently threatened to assume an undue prominence,

it was an English-speaking Lutheran who gave us the fullest and deepest utterances, and who dealt with the whole problem from the very center and foundation of the Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Confession." 1)

In view of the relation which the Missouri Synod claimed it sustained towards different members of the General Council "in reference to doctrine and churchly practise," that body was led to keep aloof from the whole movement, and even the invitation to a free conference was declined. In the accompanying documents can be noted the contentions of the Joint Synod of Ohio and of the German Iowa Synods on various points concerning which these Synods were not entirely satisfied. Both Synods sent representatives to the first convention of the Council, but the former declined to unite with the body, and its delegates assumed only the privilege of the floor, whilst the latter at first occupied a place in the convention as an integral part of the body, but afterwards receded to the same position as that held by the Joint Synod of Ohio. This latter Synod, after the first convention, declined to have any connection with the Council, whilst the German Iowa Synod still maintains its connection with the body, which entitles its delegates to the privileges of the floor. The Joint Synod, through its delegates, laid before the convention the questions concerning the famous "Four Points," as will be seen from the accompanying document, which for years held a prominent place in the discussions of the General Council. The German Iowa Synod also asked for a specific declaration on three of the four points presented by the Joint Synod of Ohio, and because the Council's reply was not wholly satisfactory, the Synod could not see its way clear to become an integral part of the body. Following is the communication from the Joint Synod of Ohio,²⁾ presented by one of its delegates, the Rev. F. A. Herzberger, on the

"FOUR POINTS."

To the Venerable General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of North America.

The undersigned, delegates of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and adjacent States, present the following to the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of (jn) North

1) Dr. Spaeth, *The General Council*, Philadelphia, 1885, p. 27. The reference is to Dr. Krauth.

2) *Minutes of General Council*, Fort Wayne, 1867, pp. 11. 12.

America, in order that the Synod which they represent, as may be seen from the minutes of its last session, held in Hamilton, O., A. D., 1867, heartily desires a union of Lutheran Synods on the doctrinal basis as recommended by the General Council, and therefore sends its delegates to this Convention, in order to offer it the hand toward a true union.

But Synod saw practical difficulties in the way, on account of which, as well as for the want of a copy of the Constitution of the General Council, it could not yet instruct its delegates to consummate its connection with this body at its present session, nevertheless, in the meantime, cherishes the hope that, the Lord will enable it, in the future, perhaps, to unite with other Synods to carry on the glorious work.

Under the above-mentioned difficulties, the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and adjacent States understands "un-Lutheran doctrine and practise, which, as experience teaches, despite the reception of the Confession, or 'Doctrinal Basis,' nevertheless is found to exist in some Synods."

The delegates of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio would therefore respectfully request the venerable General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America to favor us with information on the following points:—

1. What relation will this venerable body in future sustain to Chiliasm?
2. Mixed Communions?
3. The exchanging of pulpits with sectarians?
4. Secret or unchurchly societies?

Especially would we earnestly desire a decided answer with regard to the last item, inasmuch as the Joint Synod, for years already, in view of certain relations in one of its District Synods, has had difficulties in consequence of four pastors belonging to secret societies, and would not, therefore, again burden its conscience.

We pray that the Lord may overrule all to the glory of His holy name, and to the welfare of His Zion.

Respectfully, G. Cronenwett, F. A. Herzberger, G. Baughman.

THE COUNCIL'S DECLARATION.

This document, together with other papers handed in for consideration was referred to a committee, consisting of Revs. C. W. Schaeffer, D. D., C. P. Krauth, D. D., Prof. G. Fritschel, and A. Hoe-

necke, and Messrs. Thomas H. Lane, Fred Dauer, and Ed Roessler, which reported in the seventh session as follows, and whose report was adopted as here given:—³⁾

The Committee appointed to take action upon certain documents received, one from the Joint Synod of Ohio and one from the four District Synods of the Missouri Synod, respectfully report: That we have been impressed with the fraternal sentiments so freely conveyed in the said documents, and, after careful consideration of them, propose the following action:—

1. That the General Council rejoices that the Joint Synod of Ohio regards union with this body as an object of cherished hope, and regrets that the failure to receive our Constitution, with other difficulties, has prevented their union with us at this time.

2. That this Council is aware of nothing in its "Fundamental Principles of Faith and Church Polity" and Constitution, nor in the relation it sustains to the four questions raised, which justifies a doubt whether its decisions on them all, when they are brought up in the manner prescribed in the Constitution, will be in harmony with Holy Scripture and the Confessions of the Church.

3. That so soon as official evidence shall be presented to this body, in the manner prescribed by the Constitution, that un-Lutheran doctrines or practises are authorized by the action of any of its Synods, or by their refusal to act, it will weigh that evidence, and, if it finds they exist, use all its constitutional power to convince the minds of men in regard to them, and as speedily as possible to remove them.

4. That inasmuch as the Synod of Iowa has offered a constitutional amendment, involving most of these same questions, we refer our beloved brethren of the Joint Synod of Ohio to the action which the Council has taken in their case, as their present answer in regard to these points.

In reply to the four District Synods of Missouri, we would recommend the following action:—

Resolved, That we hereby reciprocate the kindly expressions of the Synod of Missouri; that we sincerely respect the honest preferences of our brethren in regard to the best means of uniting our Church, and that we are willing to set apart a time, during the future sessions of this body, when it will meet them simply as a Free Conference.

3) *Minutes of General Council, Fort Wayne, 1867, pp. 16. 17.*

In the report of the committee, as just presented, reference is made to the following official document, referred to also by the President in his Report, from

FOUR DISTRICT SYNODS OF THE MISSOURI SYNOD.⁴⁾

To the President of the Evangelical Lutheran General Council in North America.

The members of the undersigned Synod, during its convention in Chicago, Ill., in May of the present year (1867), received a communication to the effect that the delegates of Evangelical Lutheran Synods, in the United States and Canada, assembled in Reading, Pa., have, among other matters, passed the following resolution: "That the Synods represented in this Convention which prefer a Free Conference to an immediate organization be and hereby are invited to send representatives to the next meeting, with the understanding that they have in it all the privileges of debate and a fraternal comparison of views."

We are, by no means, unmindful of the value of the privilege herein accorded to us by said Reverend Body, and the good intention which prompted this cordial invitation. But after having considered what position our delegates would occupy at the sessions of the Evangelical Lutheran General Church Council, we have arrived at the conviction that we dare not avail ourselves of so honorable a proposal. In view of the relation we sustain toward different members of the Church Council, in reference to doctrine and churchly practise, we must be apprehensive that the consideration and discussion of differences still existing in the Convention of the Church Council might give rise to the reflection that we intended to interrupt the bringing about of a unity, and are therefore fearful lest our participation, instead of leading to an agreement, might be productive of greater alienation.

Even at the risk of appearing capricious in the eyes of the Reverend Body, and less diligent in our efforts for churchly unity, we beg leave to declare it again as our conviction that Free Conferences, such as are separated from officially organized conventions of ecclesiastical bodies, on the basis of the Symbols of our Church, as contained in the Form of Concord, of 1580, are the only proper means for an exchange of such convictions as are still divergent, and which, by the grace of God, may lead to a unity on the basis of our beloved Confession.

4) *Minutes of General Council, Chicago, 1869*, pp. 29. 30.

Hoping that our explanation may be received in the same sense in which it is given, and in the sincerity of our hearts, expressing our fervent wish that the Reverend Church Council may attain the object contemplated, and prove a blessing and consolation to the entire Evangelical Lutheran Church in this country, we look for a favorable reply to our renewed proposal.

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and
Other States, the Western District, and in their name.

J. F. BUENGER, *Pres.*; G. S. LOESER, *Secy.*

Chicago, Ill., May, 1867.

In the name of the Northern District,

O. FUERBRINGER, *Pres.*; M. GUENTHER, *Secy.*

Adrian, Mich., June 26, 1867.

According to resolution and in the name of the Middle
District,

H. C. SCHWAN, *Pres. pro tem.*; TH. WICHMANN, *Secy.*

Indianapolis, Ind., August 13, 1867.

In the name of the Eastern District,

E. G. W. KEYL, *Pres.*

Johannesburg, N. Y., August 24, 1867.

MISSOURI'S REPLY.

The resolution, which precedes this document in the present record, was communicated to the Missouri Synod. When the Council met at Pittsburgh, Pa., the following year (1868), no answer had been received. The secretaries were therefore specially instructed to bring this action of the General Council again to the attention of the Missouri Synod,⁵) in the hope that a conference with that body might be brought about, in accordance with what was understood to be its preference and wish. In answer to this action, an official communication was addressed to the President of the General Council, dated La Porte, Ind., October 12, 1869, in the following words:—

“To the worthy President of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Rev. C. W. Schaeffer, D. D., Germantown, Pa.

“Reverend Sir:—Whereas, the Venerable General Council has issued an invitation to the Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States,

5) *Minutes of General Council, Pittsburgh, 1868, p. 26.*

the latter has resolved, at its late session in September last, in Fort Wayne, to return the following reply:—

“The Synod of Missouri, etc., thanks the Venerable General Council for the said invitation, and is happy to see in this that the General Council is still anxious to come to a harmonious understanding with those Synods not in connection with it.

“At the same time, the Synod of Missouri allows itself to remark that it was not its desire to deal with the General Council, as such, and during the sessions of the same; and for this reason, that we entertained, and still entertain, the fear that, by such a side-dealing with the matter, justice would not be done it; but that we desire a Free Conference, such as was proposed by us already before the venerable General Council was organized, and which we still regard as the proper means to reach the end contemplated.

“Nevertheless, should such a Free Conference be held, to which all Lutherans, who without reservation confess the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, may be admitted, we, on our part, would without doubt largely attend the same, not as representatives, but as individuals.

“Respectfully, in the name and by the authority of the Synod of Missouri, etc.,

“GEO. KUECHLE, *Secretary.*”

REPORT OF COMMITTEE.

The committee to whom this communication was given reported in these words:—⁶⁾

Your Committee is impressed with the respectful and courteous style of this document, and gather from it that,

1. The Missouri Synod received and considered the proposal made to it by this General Council.

2. The Missouri Synod has declined to accept said proposal.

3. The Missouri Synod is averse to any official dealing with the General Council in the premises, and even to any unofficial dealing with the members of the Council, in connection with the regular meetings of this Body.

4. The Missouri Synod does not regard the General Council as such, or any use of it as an official body, as a proper means for uniting the Lutherans of this country.

5. The Missouri Synod believes that many of its members would attend a Free Conference of Lutherans for effecting greater unity of doctrine and practise, if such a Conference should be called.

6) *Minutes of General Council, Chicago, 1869, pp. 31. 32.*

6. The Missouri Synod declines to take part even in such a Free Conference of unreserved adherents to the Augsburg Confession in any official way, and declares that any of its members who may attend such a Conference will do it "not as representatives," but simply as "individuals,"

In view of these particulars, your Committee proposes the following resolutions:—

1. That, in the proposal made by the General Council to the Synod of Missouri, "to set apart a time, during the sessions of this Body when it will meet them simply as a Free Conference," it was believed that we were conforming to the wishes and views of our brethren of Missouri as previously expressed, and that it was our purpose to devote all necessary and reasonable attention to the topics in question, and to do full justice to the same, with an earnest desire to come to a mutual and right solution of all the difficulties hindering an organic union between this Body and the Synod of Missouri.

2. That we sincerely regret that the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, etc., has not been able to see its way clear to accept the proposal so heartily made to that Body, and that it has seen fit to decline all official dealing with this General Council, and even all non-official dealing with it in connection with its regular Conventions.

3. Although the Missouri Synod has thus decided to have no official correspondence with the General Council, still, in full confidence in the Scripturalness and the Lutheran character of the principles on which this Body is founded, that we hold ourselves in readiness to receive and entertain any proposals, in accord with our Basis, either from the venerable Synod of Missouri, or any others, looking to the much to be desired organic union of all true Lutherans in this country.

With this communication the Missouri Synod ceased all official intercourse with the General Council. The answer given by the Council to this communication from the Missouri Synod belongs properly to the transactions of a meeting subsequent to the convention of which we are treating in this chapter; yet for the purpose of presenting all these documents in a connected order, it is given in connection with the transactions of the first convention, especially in view of the fact that no other official relations between the two bodies are to be noted in the history of the General Council.

The German Iowa Synod also expressed dissatisfaction with

the answer given to the Joint Synod of Ohio, and, being requested to state its case in writing, presented to the General Council, at this convention, the following document, in which it states its case from its own point of view:—

PAPER FROM THE IOWA SYNOD.

In order to effect a union of the Church, and that we may all truly agree in the principles of practise as well as of faith, without conditions, the delegates of the Synod of Iowa propose, in accordance with the instructions of their Synod, that the General Council shall expressly acknowledge what is according to the understanding of the delegates of said Synod virtually acknowledged in the "Fundamental Principles of Faith and Church Polity" adopted by this body, *viz.*:

1. That according to the Confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church there must be, and is, condemned all church-fellowship with such as are not Lutheran; for example, ministers serving congregations such as are mixed and not purely Lutheran, receiving such congregations and their pastors into synodical connection, the admittance of those of a different faith to the privilege of communion, the permission of those not Lutheran to occupy our pulpits, etc.

2. According to the Word of God, church-discipline be exercised, especially at the celebration of the Holy Communion, and be likewise exercised towards those who are members of secret societies.

3. That resolutions of church government by Synods in general and the General Council in particular, shall not be regarded as legislative, but only as advisory in their power over congregations represented in such Synods or General Council, inasmuch as these bodies can only have so much power as is delegated to them by the congregations.⁷⁾

This document was referred to a committee, composed of one delegate from each of the twelve Synods represented on the floor of the Council, which, in the eighth session, reported, "That the General Council is not prepared to endorse the declaration of the Synod of Iowa as a correct logical deduction and application of the negative part of our Confessional Books, and that we refer the matter to the District Synods, until such time as, by the blessings of God's Holy Spirit and the leadings of His Providence, we shall be enabled throughout the whole General Council and all its Churches, to see eye to eye in all the details of practise and usage, towards the con-

7) *Minutes of General Council, Fort Wayne, 1867, pp. 17. 18.*

summation of which we will direct our unceasing prayers." 8) The report was adopted, though five members of the Council received permission to record their names against its adoption, to wit: Revs. C. F. Welden, C. F. Hoyer, John Bading, A. Hoenecke, and A. Martin. To this action the Iowa Synod replied through its representatives as follows:—9)

STATEMENT OF THE IOWA SYNOD.

In reply to the decision of the General Council upon the application of the Synod of Iowa for the explicit avowal of certain principles of ecclesiastical practise, the undersigned delegation of the said Synod beg leave, respectfully, to present to the reverend Council the following explanation:—

In accordance with our deep and sincere conviction, which is at the same time that of the Synod we represent, we must declare it to be a necessary precedent condition of an official ecclesiastical connection between synodical bodies that there should be a complete and hearty agreement, not only in the principles of faith and confession, but also in an ecclesiastical practise accordant with such faith and confession, as set forth especially in the first of the propositions presented by us. Our Synod has therefore affirmed, in an official declaration presented to the reverend Council, that it enters into connection with the General Council only upon the presupposition that this principle, to the recognition of which it is bound by a sacred obligation of conscience, is officially acknowledged by all the Synods represented therein. It believes itself warranted in this presupposition by the Fundamental Principles of Faith and Church Polity proposed at Reading, because, in its understanding of the same, they really embrace the principle in question. But the declaration of the General Council, that it is not prepared at once to accept this principle, shows this presupposition to have been incorrect, and at the same time renders incomplete the contemplated

8) *Minutes of General Council, Fort Wayne, 1867, p. 19.* The report was signed by all the members of the committee, as follows: G. F. Krotel, for the Ministerium of Pennsylvania; C. F. E. Stohlman, New York Ministerium; John A. Roof, English Synod of Ohio; W. A. Passavant, Pittsburgh Synod; A. Hoenecke, Wisconsin Synod; S. Fritschel, Iowa Synod; D. Worley, English District Synod of Ohio; S. Klingman, Michigan Synod; T. N. Hasselquist, Augustana Synod; G. Fachtman, Minnesota Synod; C. F. W. Rechenberg, Canada Synod; S. L. Harkey, Illinois Synod.

9) *Minutes of General Council, Fort Wayne, 1867, pp. 33. 34.*

connection of the Synod of Iowa. In this position of affairs the Delegates of the Synod of Iowa are constrained to forego the privilege of a vote in the General Council, and to withdraw to the position provided for in Article I, Section 2, of the Constitution. We do this with painful regret that it is not yet permitted to our Synod to labor together in the work of the General Council, in the union of a membership in the same, but at the same time with a joyful determination, within the prescribed limits, to walk and labor together with our esteemed and beloved brethren, as God may give grace, power, and opportunity. And we entertain the confident assurance that the day is not far distant when, by the grace and mercy of our God, the last hindrance to a complete union will have been removed. The principle maintained by us has not been rejected by the General Council, but acknowledged and confessed by many members, and even by some entire delegations. He who hath begun to bring us together in the unity of the truth will perform it. To Him and His good Spirit we commend the General Council, and the great work which lies before it. His blessing and His peace be with us all.

Signed by G. Grossmann, Sigm. Fritschel, Gottfried Fritschel.

ATTITUDE OF VARIOUS SYNODS.

On motion, this paper was received, the fraternal sentiments expressed most heartily reciprocated, and the hope expressed that the Council would have the pleasure of meeting, from time to time, in Free Conference, with the brethren of the Iowa Synod. The fact that the Iowa Synod felt compelled to assume this position was regretted by many members of the Council.

Whilst, on the one hand, the position assumed by the Iowa Synod, as well as by the Joint Synod of Ohio, in the declarations and statements presented in the preceding pages was not at variance with the principles adopted by the Council, it was, on the other hand, not well taken at the time, and it need not surprise any one that the General Council was "not prepared to endorse the declaration of the Synod [of Iowa] as the correct logical deduction and application of the negative part of our Confessional Books." An analysis of the reply made by the Council calls attention to the fact that the body was holding its first regular convention, and had not yet had time to inquire into, or regulate, all the practises and usages of the Synods represented on its floor at that time. The Synods should have been willing to allow time for proper and careful inquiry into the difficulties which they presented, and should have been

willing to cooperate with the Council in correcting such abuses as might be found to exist. Their complaints were made only in a general way, and were therefore vague and uncertain. If they had fully united with the Council and cooperated with it, they could have assisted in laying bare the abuses of which they complained, and then, and then only, had they a right to insist on their correction. In the light of nearly half a century after the formation of the General Council, it appears that these complaining Synods were hasty in their demands for something to be done immediately which could and, no doubt, would have been done in the process of time.

The Council was right in declaring itself unable to endorse the declaration as a correct logical deduction and application of the negative part of the Lutheran Confessions. The Lutheran Confessions condemn error wherever found, in or outside of the Lutheran Church; and they teach that "to the true unity of the Church it is sufficient to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by men, should be alike everywhere." (Augsburg Confession, Article VII.) Where men err, they are to be admonished, their mistakes are to be corrected, if possible, and only when errorists and evil persons refuse to hear the Church are they to be separated from the Church. The difficulty lay in the fact that some Synods demanded that that should be done at once, regardless of consequences, which others felt could be done with much better results by following an educational method, leading in the process of time all the Synods and congregations, among many of which in certain portions of the Church there existed peculiar difficulties, to the same lofty eminence of purity in doctrine and in practise, and so to true unity in both. The older Synods had difficulties in this respect, of which the more recently formed Synods had no true conception. These difficulties could not be eradicated at once and by the fiat of any organization; but as they had grown up gradually, so they must be removed by a process of education.

The discriminating statement of Dr. Spaeth, in reference to the whole situation, deserves a place here. He says, in his pamphlet on the *General Council*: "There appeared at this point a wide difference, especially between the Eastern and Western Synods, which was in the first place the natural result of the historical development, through which those various sections of the Church had passed which now endeavored to form an organic union. The Lutheran Church in the Eastern part of our country, having been founded about one hundred and fifty years ago, had passed through all the

different stages of church life, suffering, and death by which the history of the Church and Theology of the German Fatherland was characterized in that period. We need not be surprised to find that during this time many things had crept in which were in conflict with the spirit and confession of our Church. Over against those things the renewed appreciation of the Lutheran Confession and the honest return to the same was of comparatively recent date. It was therefore not to be expected that there should have been on all sides at the very outset a thorough insight into all the consequences and obligations of a decided and consistent adoption of the Lutheran Confession. On the other hand, most of the Lutheran Synods of the West had been founded at a much more favorable season. Out of the very fulness and freshness of the revived Confession, partly even in the martyr-spirit of a persecuted Church, have their foundations been laid and their structures raised. Accordingly, their whole congregational life could much more easily and more consistently be organized on the principles established in the Confession, and many evils could be excluded which in other places had taken root and had been growing for nearly a century."

It must not be forgotten, however, that the General Council, recognizing these and other difficulties, had made provision in its Constitution for the discussion and adjustment of all matters that might arise from diversity of views on the part of any of the Synods or individual members of the body. The Council offered full organic union to those who should be ready to adopt the Constitution and unite on its Fundamental Principles. At the same time those Synods that desired further discussions of doctrinal and practical questions, in order to attain a fuller agreement before finally uniting with it, were to be given an opportunity to remain in the nearest possible relation with it on constitutional ground and with constitutional privileges. The German Iowa Synod availed itself of this privilege, and has met, more or less regularly, with the Council since the formation of the latter body. The history of the past shows "that the General Council has always made the most liberal use of this power, thus giving even to those that were not yet organically united with it almost unlimited liberty to make themselves heard in its discussions, and to throw their influence into the scale wherever the votes were rather to be weighed than counted. The General Council could well afford to grant such liberty without grudging. For in this manner it only gave expression to its confident hope that upon the good foundation which had been laid a solid structure might safely, though slowly, be built, and that the pure confession

of the Fathers, having once been honestly and unreservedly adopted, would virtually prove itself the power of molding the whole life of the Church, whenever its principles should be fully understood and faithfully carried out."¹⁰⁾

A glance at the history of the years immediately preceding and following the formation of the General Council shows this to have been a period of more than ordinary interest and importance to the Lutheran Church in America. It points first to a series of events that led to considerable shiftings in synodical and congregational relations. The withdrawal of the Pennsylvania Ministerium and other Synods from the General Synod in 1866 and the organization of the General Council in 1866 and 1867 were the cause of a disintegration of Synods and congregations, which resulted in a readjustment of both synodical and congregational relations in the course of a number of years. When the New York Ministerium withdrew from the General Synod, a number of pastors and congregations left the Ministerium and formed the New York Synod, which, in turn, joined the General Synod. A minority of the Illinois Synod organized the Central Illinois Synod, and united with the General Synod. In 1867 ten ministers and seven laymen withdrew from the Pittsburgh Synod, on the ground that in adopting the Principles of the General Council the Synod had violated its Constitution, and the seceding party claimed the name of the Synod, and as such was recognized by the General Synod. The Pennsylvania Ministerium also lost some of its pastors and congregations, which united with the East Pennsylvania Synod, a member of the General Synod. A similar statement applies also to the Central Pennsylvania Synod, which received a few Pennsylvania Ministerium congregations.

On the other hand, pastors and congregations in Philadelphia and the neighborhood, hitherto belonging to the East Pennsylvania Synod, united with the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, the English Church at Fort Wayne, in which the battle of 1866 had been fought, entered the Pittsburgh Synod of the General Council, and others in various parts of the country readjusted their synodical relations by uniting with synods of the Council. In other portions of the country, congregations were divided, one portion uniting with Synods of the General Council, and others with those of the General Synod, while troublesome and expensive lawsuits were carried on by rival claimants for the property.¹¹⁾ This was the beginning of readjust-

10) Dr. Spaeth's *General Council*. Philadelphia, 1885, p. 25.

11) *History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States*, by the Rev. Dr. H. E. Jacobs, New York, 1893, p. 467.

ment in synodical relations and operations. The result within the General Synod was the weakening of the synodical and the strengthening of the general organization. "From that time,"¹²⁾ says Dr. Jacobs, "the District Synods have little significance, and the interest is almost entirely centered in the General Synod. When compared with the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, the General Synod is one synod, the District Synods corresponding to the conferences of the mother-synod. The difference of theory as to the relations of the General Synod to its districts also involves a different conception of the relations of the Synods to the congregations. The doctrinal differences with respect to the relation to the Augsburg Confession bore a very important relation to the controversy. But this issue was not separated from that pertaining to church-government, and the mingling of the two questions seriously affected the result." From the point of view of the General Synod, the Ministerium of Pennsylvania had been guilty of insubordination in refusing to recognize the higher authority of the general body. At Fort Wayne the majority stood for a centralization of power in the General Synod, whose decision, as the ultimate court of appeal, was to be final, and to this decision the District Synods were to submit.

The General Council, on the other hand, was organized on a less centralized basis, allowing its District Synods larger freedom in their individual spheres of activity. The sphere of the general body was conceived to be rather that of unifying all the particular parts of the body in the doctrines of the Church, providing a common form of service for all the congregations, and engaging in such general operations as the Synods might delegate to it, especially in the sphere of missions.

From the account in this and the preceding chapter it is evident that the plan of a general union of Lutherans, who held to a strict interpretation of the Augsburg Confession and accepted all the Lutheran Confessions, was still far from being realized. With the large Missouri and Norwegian Synods, both of which were represented at the Reading Convention, standing wholly aloof from the Council, the withdrawal of the Joint Synod of Ohio at the first convention, and the German Iowa Synod assuming a semi-official relation to the body, the prospects, at this first convention, for a general union of Synods, such as had been hoped for at the inception of the movement, were anything but bright. Besides, the questions thrust upon the Council by the Ohio and Iowa Synods led to conten-

12) *History, etc.*, p. 469.

tions within the body, which at times threatened to disrupt the organization. But the result of the protracted discussion of these questions was that the Synods of the Council learned to understand each other better, and enabled them to work together in greater harmony. Although the Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and Michigan Synods, in the course of years, withdrew from the Council on account of the questions involved in these discussions, the General Council made rapid progress. The result of its varied activities has been a normal growth, so that at present the General Council is the second largest of the general bodies of the Lutheran Church in North America.

D.