

Concordia Theological Monthly



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The United Testimony on Faith and Life

The A. L. C., the E. L. C., and the U. E. L. C. at their respective synodical convention in 1951 passed identical resolutions establishing a joint committee to explore the possibilities of closer organic union among these three synods. This step seemed to jeopardize the continued existence of the American Lutheran Conference and the degree of unity believed to have been achieved in this organization during the more than twenty years of its existence. The other two synods of the American Lutheran Conference, namely, the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Free Church, accepted the invitation to join the members of the committee appointed by the three synods in preparing a joint confession. On February 13, 1952, the Joint Union Committee of forty-five — each of the five synods were represented by nine men on this committee — adopted the *United Testimony on Faith and Life*. However, it must also be borne in mind that according to the Preface of the *United Testimony* "due consideration be given to the *Minneapolis Theses*, with the eight paragraphs of the *Chicago Theses* properly incorporated under Section IV, as a correct summary of faith and practice." In view of the present status of the fellowship question this new doctrinal statement will undoubtedly prove to be of great relevance. In order that all our pastors may have an opportunity to study this document, we are submitting it *in toto*. F. E. M.

CONCERNING FAITH

PREAMBLE

The Lutheran Church bodies making up the American Lutheran Conference have now walked and worked together for a period of more than twenty years. They have learned to know one another both as to doctrine and as to manner of life. They have been associated as brethren serving the Lord. Coming out of varying backgrounds as to national origin and as to distinctive trends in church life and practice, they have learned to cherish one another's contributions to the fulness of the Church's life in Christ. Through closer acquaintance and deepening fellowship they have found that the common roots of their faith, in the Holy Scriptures and in the Lutheran Confessions, have given them a common life in communion with the One Lord and Savior.

Their loyalty to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, their Lutheran heritage, and the desperate need of the world seem to call for further exploration of the possibilities of closer fellowship, greater understanding, and closer organizational co-operation or union. They hold the basic prerequisite of all such attempts to be an adequate unity and witness with regard to the essential realities of the Christian faith. Their life and experience together these past two decades lead them to believe that such an essential unity exists among them.

As an expression of their common Christian faith and a witness to their understanding of the historic Lutheran confessions and to the theological agreement which has been found to exist among them, they join in this united testimony to our time and situation.

I. GOD

We believe in the one and only God who has revealed Himself to us as the God of our salvation. In His work of creation, redemption, and sanctification He has designated and manifested Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We therefore confess our faith in the Triune God, three distinct Persons in the one Godhead.

We believe in God the Father, the Creator and Preserver of the world, who in His divine majesty is infinitely exalted above His creatures, and who in fatherly compassion seeks the eternal welfare of man, whom He made in His own image but who has fallen into sin and lives in the bondage of sin.

We believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, begotten of the Father from eternity, "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary."

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, "the Lord and giver of life," through whose work alone men can be brought into fellowship with God and made heirs of everlasting life.

We believe that the personal distinctions of the Godhead cannot be denied or obscured without impairing the truth and power of the Christian Gospel. We worship the Triune God.

II. ATONEMENT

We believe that Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, in fulfillment of the eternal counsel of God, came into the world to be the Redeemer of mankind. By becoming one with man in the incarnation, Christ entered into decisive conflict on man's behalf with sin and Satan, which defeat men and bring them under the righteous judgment of God. By His holy life He perfectly fulfilled the Divine Law for us. By His innocent sufferings and death in our stead He made propitiation for our sins and delivered us from the wrath of God and from the power of the devil. By His resurrection He released us from the dominion of sin and death and demonstrated and proclaimed the fulness of the victory which He has won in our behalf.

Christ "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification"; God "laid on him the iniquity of us all" and "with his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53). "The blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). "God was in Christ, recon-

ciling the world unto himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses" (II Cor. 5:19). God "made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21, AV). "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 15:57).

Christ entered into death in order to bring men, held in the bondage of sin, death, and Satan, unto life with Himself. In His victory over death and the devil He frees us to "be His own, live under Him in His Kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John 14:19).

III. THE MEANS OF GRACE

God has willed that the knowledge and benefit of Christ's redemption be brought to man through His Means of Grace, namely, through the Gospel in the Word and in the Sacraments. Through these Means of Grace He not only offers, but actually bestows, His grace in Christ unto forgiveness of sins and a life of everlasting fellowship with Him.

The Word

We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the purpose of man's salvation. Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit informs and convinces us that His Word is true, that He will keep all His promises to us, and testifies in our hearts that our faith in Christ is not in vain. "Sanctify them through thy truth: Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17, AV).

We bear witness that the Bible is our only authentic and infallible source of God's revelation to us and all men, and that it is the only inerrant and completely adequate source and norm of Christian doctrine and life. We hold that the Bible, as a whole and in all its parts, is the Word of God under all circumstances, regardless of man's attitude toward it. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim. 3:16, 17, AV).

The Bible is the Word of God, given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit through human personalities in the course of human history. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Peter 1:21, AV). We acknowledge with humble gratitude the condescending love of God in speaking to men through the agency of human language. We

reject all rationalizing processes which would explain away either the divine or the human factor in the Bible.

The Holy Scriptures contain both Law and Gospel, but the primary content of the Holy Scriptures is the Gospel. The Law is brought into the service of the Gospel by working in man a realization of his sinfulness and of his need of redemption, by awaking in him the terrors of conscience since he stands under the wrath of God, and by revealing to him God's holy will. The Gospel brings to the penitent sinner the assurance of God's pardon and the promise of victory over sin.

We hold it basic to the right use of the Bible as the authoritative revelation of God to man that it must be its own interpreter. All interpretation of Scripture must be in the light of Scripture itself with its central theme: God's loving purpose to save men in Christ.

The Sacraments

In and with His Word Christ has instituted for His Church two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which bear His seal and promise.

Baptism. In the Sacrament of Baptism, which is the "washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," we are born again of water and the Spirit, receiving the Holy Ghost and the forgiveness of sin, and are made members of Christ's Body and citizens of His Kingdom. In receiving Baptism we are made partakers of Christ's death and resurrection.

We believe that it is Christ's will and command that infants be baptized and that they be nurtured and instructed in the Christian faith. Such baptism is the establishment of the covenant of grace, which has everlasting validity unless it is rejected in unbelief, and it is a clear proclamation of the Gospel of grace for all men.

When baptism is administered later in life as a Sacrament and Means of Grace, it admits the baptized person into fellowship with Christ and His Church, and through faith assures the believer of his full status as a child of God.

The benefits of baptism are not dependent upon the mode in which the water is administered but only upon the Word and Promise of Christ.

The Lord's Supper. In the Lord's Supper Christ gives us His body offered up for us and His blood shed for us, to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins, the strengthening of our faith, and the increase in holiness of life. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (I Cor. 10:16, AV).

By virtue of Christ's promise, we hold that all communicants receive the body and blood of Him who is present not only in the congregation observing the Sacrament but in the Sacrament itself. Faith in Christ as the Savior from sin and faith in His promise in the words of institution, together with repentance, are necessary for a worthy participation in this Sacrament. The Church therefore has the duty to withhold this Sacrament from openly ungodly and unbelieving sinners, since Christ's promise of forgiveness is rejected by them. Faith does not make or unmake the Sacrament, but is required for the salutary use of the Sacrament.

We believe that we receive Christ's body and blood in Holy Communion, and the basis of this faith is our Lord's promise and assurance, not an ability conferred on a priest to change bread and wine into the Lord's body and blood by reciting the words of institution, nor the intention of a congregation to partake of the body and blood of the Savior. The Lord is personally present during the celebration of the Holy Communion to give sacramentally what He promises in His Word.

IV. JUSTIFICATION

We believe that Christ is "the propitiation . . . for the sins of the whole world," hence forgiveness of sins has been provided by God for all men.

We believe that man, who by nature is "dead in trespasses and sins," is utterly unable to save himself, or to contribute anything of merit or virtue toward his own salvation, and can be saved only by God's grace and power. (See *Minneapolis Theses* on Conversion and Election.)

We believe that God, out of pure grace, for the sake of the righteousness of Christ, "who was delivered for our offences and was raised for our justification," passes upon the guilt-burdened sinner the judgment of acquittal, regards him in Christ as if he had never sinned, and makes him a child of God and a joint-heir with Christ.

We believe that this forgiveness is received only by those who through the grace offered and bestowed through the Gospel accept it in repentance and faith. This faith in the Gospel, the reliance upon the work of Christ for forgiveness and salvation, is wrought in sinful man by the Holy Spirit.

We believe that this scriptural doctrine of justification by grace alone and through faith alone is in a very significant sense "the doctrine whereby the Church stands or falls." We therefore purpose to guard it carefully and proclaim it earnestly. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11).

V. SANCTIFICATION

We believe and bear witness that by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in his heart the justified sinner has been given power to overcome sin and to walk in newness of life. Day by day the believer's life is transformed from within by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, through the Means of Grace. By this renewal every earthly relationship is sanctified through fellowship with God, every honorable vocation is holy when dedicated to the service of God, and all of life is a stewardship for which the believer is accountable to God.

This new life of faith and love is not the product of man's own efforts but is the grateful response of the regenerate soul to the love of God shed abroad in his heart through the Holy Spirit.

Because the old sinful nature continues to inhere also in the believer as long as he remains in this world, there is constant need for repentance and faith as the condition of growth toward that fulness of life in God which shall be his in the world to come.

We believe that the Lord of the Church summons every believer to a more earnest striving for holiness and to a more complete dedication of all that he is and has, and we call upon all the people of our Churches to present themselves anew as "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."

VI. THE CHURCH

The Church's Life and Work

We believe that there is One, Holy, Universal, and Apostolic Church, consisting of all those in every age who have been united with Jesus Christ through faith in Him, have been baptized into His name, and live in fellowship with Him. "The Church is the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments rightly administered. And to the true unity of the Church, it is enough 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 everywhere alike" (Augsburg Confession, Art. VII.). Consistent with this historic Lutheran position we acknowledge with joy the presence of redeemed children of God in all the Churches where the revealed Word of God and the Sacraments are used with such fidelity to their God-given purposes that sinners can be saved thereby. We rejoice in our spiritual fellowship with all fellow believers in the One Church, the Communion of Saints.

We believe that the Church has its unity in Christ through the Holy Spirit. No church organization should assume that it is the only manifestation of the Communion of Saints. All separatism which ignores the

existence of other Christian Churches, as well as all attempts to reduce the unity of the Church to outer organizational forms, lead to a denial of the true nature of the Church and to confusion and frustration in the attainment of its objectives. We seek to promote the organizational growth and unity of the Church wherever this may serve the purposes of the Gospel.

We believe that the Christian congregation has all the spiritual gifts necessary for the nourishment of the life in Christ and the extension of God's Kingdom on the earth through the Means of Grace.

We believe that all members of the Church are royal priests, enjoying full and free access to the throne of grace with no mediator save Jesus Christ. In calling a pastor to preach the Word of God and to administer the Sacraments in their midst and on their behalf, the members of a congregation exercise their royal priesthood and in no sense surrender it. The privilege and responsibility of ministering to the saints of God, of proclaiming His glory to all men, and of living victoriously in all the relationships of life, remain the privilege and responsibility of all the members of the Church.

We believe that in this world of sin and strife, where the forces of evil are threatening to destroy both the Church and society, the Lord of the Church is summoning His people to dedicate themselves, their possessions, and all their powers anew to the accomplishment of His saving purposes for mankind. Following the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Church seeks and works for the complete well-being of all men.

All men must be made to recognize the authority of God's Law to which they are responsible and by which they are judged. Those in authority in all areas of life must govern according to God's Law, which is ordained for the ordering of human society and the welfare of all. So governing, they are instruments of God and servants of the common good. Failing to do so, they bring God's judgment upon themselves and destruction and disaster to the society which they govern.

We recognize that if the Church is to be a witnessing and an evangelizing force in the world, there must be a constant quickening of the spiritual life in our congregations, whereby those who are dead may be brought to newness of life, those who are slumbering may be awakened, and those who are vacillating may become steadfast in faith.

As the Good Shepherd, Christ guides and guards the Church through perils and assaults in a hostile world, and the Holy Spirit as the Chief Builder of the Church cleanses and sanctifies the Church as the Habitation of God. Through the Gospel in Word and Sacraments, He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth

and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith, and thus directs and equips it to do the will of God. Where the Means of Grace are in use, there God builds His Church.

The Church's Hope and Triumph

The Church in all its activities remembers that its life is from everlasting to everlasting. The fact that the Church exists, that men believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, is due ultimately to God's eternal purpose "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." God calls men to faith through Word and Sacrament and keeps them in that faith unto the end. Remaining humbly and gratefully conscious of its origin, the Church is preserved from the fatal delusion that it is self-caused and self-sustaining. And since it knows that Christ will come again as Judge, the Church's life is marked by an alert and responsible expectancy, measuring all its actions by the inescapable and just judgment of Christ upon them.

The Church's expectancy of the Lord's return is also a joyous hope. "Our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). This joyful hope frees the Church from an inordinate anxiety in things temporal. Even while earnestly devoting itself to God's purposes in this world, it looks for the "new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness," and for the full deliverance of creation "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Filled with serene courage, the Church therefore waits and works, knowing that Jesus Christ both is and shall be Lord and King forever.

CONCERNING LIFE AND PRACTICE

Though heirs of a common Reformation heritage, the Churches constituting the American Lutheran Conference have sprung from different nationalistic backgrounds and have been led through diverse experiences in arriving at the juncture where they seriously consider organic merger. According to the freedom inherent in the Gospel each has developed its distinctive church life and established its own practices. As they contemplate losing their individual identity in organic union, it seems good to set forth clearly certain matters pertaining to Christian life, forms of worship and churchly practice concerning which misunderstandings might possibly arise.

I. LITURGICAL TRENDS

While the ceremonial law of the Old Testament prescribed in rather minute detail the order of service, vestments, and other appointments, the New Testament Church had no divinely prescribed liturgy.

In accord with sound New Testament teaching, the Lutheran Church has confessed that for the true unity of the Church it is sufficient to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, and that it is not necessary that human traditions, rites or ceremonies, instituted by man, should be everywhere alike.

This evangelical freedom, however, has traditionally been conditioned by such cautionary teachings of the New Testament as St. Paul's statements.* (I Cor. 14:40; I Cor. 10:23; I Thess. 5:11.)

Inasmuch as every public order of worship should implement a sinner's encounter with the living God, it follows that every part of the service should relate the sound theology of Law and Gospel to the worshipper.

In the historical Lutheranism this has tended toward a continued liturgical emphasis, in which certain fixed forms have followed a rather uniform pattern as a guide for man's true worship of God. Quite naturally, a church with a oneness of confessional witness will manifest this oneness, even in external forms. A rampant heterogeneity in forms can readily militate against a common confessional witness. We commend, therefore, the current concern manifested in the American Lutheran family for uniformity in liturgical practices. On the other hand, we express warning against the peril of equating form with faith. Within the true faith, ample variety of outward expression must be allowed, and the right of each congregation to determine its form of worship must be recognized. The faith itself, with its pulsating life seeking an ever richer form of expression, may be stultified and lost by an inordinate passion for form.

II. LAY ACTIVITIES IN THE CHURCH

The Church Bodies signatory to these presentations declare adherence to the following principles in relation to Lay Activities in the Church.

1. The ministry of reconciliation, which is the gift of God, is the glory of the Christian Church. (II Cor. 5:18-19.)
2. Christ, the Redeemer, ascended into heaven, gave to His Church diversity of gifts for its edification. (Eph. 4:11-12; I Cor. 12:4-7.)
3. The immediate recipient and the responsible custodian of these gifts is the local church, the individual congregation. (I Cor. 3:21b-23.)
4. The Church is a fellowship of believers and therefore a spiritual priesthood. (I Peter 2:5 and 9.)

* In the official copy all Scriptural references are printed in full. To conserve space, we have listed only the references.

5. The local congregation is under obligation to seek out and to utilize the abilities and the gifts resident within it, and is responsible that their use shall build up the Church. The same obligations and responsibilities obtain with reference to the church body and its minor subdivisions and auxiliaries. (I Cor. 12:18-21; II Tim. 2:15-18.)
6. The means of grace have been given to the congregation, and, for the purpose of administering Word and Sacrament, God has instituted the public office of the ministry, which, by the official call of the congregation, is committed to one or more qualified persons. (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:28; I Tim. 5:22 a, RSV.)
7. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers gives the individual member no right to assume any of the functions which belong to the public ministries of the congregation. (Augsburg Confession, Article XIV.)
8. The establishment of the public office of the ministry by a local fellowship of believers does not absolve the individual believer from his responsibility as a spiritual priest, or in any way excuse a congregation from utilizing the spiritual gifts which it possesses. (I Thess. 5:11.)
9. Since God in His Word reminds His children, "Ye are the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13), "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14), "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8), "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32), the Church will not restrain but will rather encourage all its members to private study of the Word of God; to bear Christian witness in word and in deed; to seek opportunities for mutual edification; to share in the teaching ministry, locally and in the Church at large, when requested through regular channels, and to accept the responsibility of public proclamation of the Word when appointed to do so by the properly constituted authority of the congregation or of the church body. (Rom. 12:6-8a; I Peter 5:1-2a.)

III. ELEMENTS IN THE EUCHARIST

Christ's use of wine and unleavened bread in the Passover meal has fixed for the Christian Church through the centuries the use of these elements in the Eucharist. Exegetical attempts to invalidate this have not been successful and exceptions within our Lutheran circles have not changed the practice of the Lutheran Church in general in its use of wine and unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper.

IV. CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

In the conviction that this liberty (John 8:36) is a basic part of our Christian heritage, re-emphasized in the Lutheran Reformation, we exhort all Christians to know this freedom in fullness of experience. (Gal. 5:1.)

Standing fast in this liberty wherewith Christ has made him free, the Christian subjects himself in love to Christ and to his brethren. As a child of God, being led by His Spirit (Rom. 8:14), he walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, resisting the desires of the flesh, aspiring to the fruits of the Spirit, seeking to give no occasion for stumbling to weaker brethren. (Gal. 5:13-26; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 5:18; I Peter 1:2-11; I Cor. 8:9-13; I Cor. 10:31, 32; Phil. 1:9-11.)

The church bodies signatory to these presentations expect that all member congregations shall give free course to the Word of God as it teaches us how to live as the children of God.

The church bodies signatory to these presentations know and confess "that the Law is holy, and the commandments holy, and righteous, and good" (Rom. 7:12) and that Jesus had laid the Law with all its implications on the hearts and minds of all His disciples.

They also know there are issues not specifically covered by clear statements of the written Word of God (e.g., establishing borderlines in relation to amusements, dress, food, and beverages), and they expect the ministry of teaching in each constituent part to guide toward clarity of thought and sensitiveness of conscience to the end that "every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. 14:5, AV) and that each and all live up to their expressed convictions.

In this connection they also expect an understanding of the fact that compulsions lying upon the individual in response to God's grace toward him are not to be made laws for the control of the lives of others. (Rom. 14:3, 4; Gal. 2:5; Phil. 3:15.)

V. CONCERNING EVANGELISM

By the term Evangelism we designate the work of applying the Evangel (Gospel) to the souls of men: to win the unsaved for Christ, to keep the believer in Christ, and to recall the backslider to Christ. It is the essential and continuous task of the whole Church.

The congregation must never cease its efforts to deepen the spiritual life of its members and to call to repentance and faith the straying.

Those within the fold must ever seek to bring the "other sheep" to the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls.

It is recognized that some Christians, both laymen and pastors, have

received greater gifts than others to declare the Word to the unconverted or unchurched. (Eph. 4:11 — "God gave some . . . evangelists . . .") The local congregation may agree to engage such an evangelist to supplement the ministry of its pastor for a stipulated period of time.

It is likewise recognized that, in addition to the regular church services, there is value in special public gatherings for the purpose of calling to repentance and faith the unsaved and the carnally secure. Caution must be exercised, however, not to substitute mass hysteria for the sound working of the Holy Spirit through the regular preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. The congregation will make certain that its whole program shall be permeated with the spirit of Scriptural Evangelism.

VI. SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP

(1) Christian faith *is* fellowship: fellowship with Christ, the Head, and fellowship with all believers, who are the members of His body, the Church. It is called into being by action of the Holy Spirit as He begets children of God. (John 15:5a; John 17:21; Eph. 2:19, AV; Augsburg Confession, VII.)

(2) Christian faith *seeks* fellowship, that is, the discovery and the practice of this spiritual fellowship with other Christians. It laments isolation; it yearns for communion. Christian faith seeks fellowship in prayer, in corporate worship, in the Holy Eucharist, in doing the Lord's work, and even in suffering for the faith. The Holy Scriptures speak approvingly of agreeing in petition (Matt. 18:19), of being assembled together for worship (Heb. 10:25), of provoking one another unto love and good works (Heb. 10:24), and of experiencing the fellowship of suffering (Phil. 3:10 and Rev. 1:9).

(3) The Scriptures also make it clear, however, that for the true unity of the Church, and therefore for the full realization of spiritual fellowship of believers one with another, it is essential that there be agreement concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments.

The Holy Scriptures bid us to continue in Christ's words (John 8:31), to beware of the leaven of Pharisees (Matt. 16:6), to be on guard against false prophets (Matt. 7:15), to discern those who make a pretense of piety (Matt. 7:21), to mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine (Rom. 16:17), to avoid being unequally yoked with unbelievers (II Cor. 6:14), to regard as accursed the preacher of "another gospel" (Gal. 1:8). It is our solemn duty to

try the spirits whether they are of God (I John 4:1), to continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42), to do nothing against the truth, but be faithful witnesses for the truth (II Cor. 13:8). These oft repeated warnings and admonitions can be ignored by the Church only at great peril to its own spiritual life.

(4) It is admitted that a problem of serious proportions arises from the fact that there are erring brethren. They are brethren, because with us they share justifying faith. They are erring in so far as they depart from the truth as revealed in the Scriptures or from the life demanded by the regenerating Gospel. We feel the urge to confess our common faith, but we realize the danger of condoning error, and thereby confusing the Church. There is no easy solution to this problem. As we acknowledge the measure of unity that exists, we must at the same time bear witness against error as we see it, humbly re-examining our understanding of the truth in the light of the revealed Word, and diligently seeking for the mind of Christ in our attitudes towards these erring brethren. Lovingly, Aquila and Priscilla remedied the deficiency of Apollos (Acts 18:24-28). Undauntedly, Paul withstood the erring Peter (Gal. 2:11).

So long as witness can be borne to the truth as we see it in Christ, a measure of outward fellowship may be enjoyed even with such as differ with us in the apprehension of certain aspects of the truth.

(5) There is room for a large measure of co-operation in externals which need not involve the principles of spiritual fellowship.

So long as there is no compromise of divine truth such co-operation in external matters may be practiced with secular groups or with other churches.

(6) Article III, Church Fellowship, The Minneapolis Theses, has been formulated as a result of century-long experience of the Lutheran Church, has been accepted by our church bodies in 1930, and furnishes the correct guiding principles on fellowship for our churches. It is recognized that, in the application of these principles, situations calling for exceptions will arise. The individual Christian, the conscientious pastor, the local congregation, and the church bodies, in determining their attitudes in such situations, must earnestly seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the instruction of the inspired Word.