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A Reader of LCMS Church Fathers (esp. C.F.W. Walther)
On Avoidance of Unionism and Syncretism

By

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(Synopsis: This series of articles sketches the formative years of the LCMS with respect to her emergence from sectarian Stephanism to a repentant return to a Lutheran, Biblical ecclesiology and practice. Unionism is addressed under a Waltherian definition, as doctrinal indifference as he also describes its appeal. The LCMS fathers address this tendency in American Lutheranism as a reason that forming a new synod was necessary. American Lutheran doctrinal indifference (self identified with Evangelicalism) was accompanied by rhetoric against ancient Lutheran practice. The LCMS fathers appealed to both history and the doctrine of Christian Freedom to defend themselves against charges made by the American Lutherans (General Synod) of being “Old Lutherans.” This doctrine, in its necessary connection with the central doctrine of justification, guided the fathers to oppose both the legalistic answer of Grabau to the unionizing indifference to doctrine encountered as well as the Reformed legalisms that attacked true doctrine by requiring rites (in areas of adiaphora) employed to inculcate their false doctrine. The practice of penance (an adiaphoron) was raised as a banner in the original constitution to point out an important instance of how surrendering a good church tradition had resulted in abandonment of a Biblical practice of the church (tied to the doctrine of justification, the chief doctrine); that is, by abolishing the practice of individual penance (an adiaphoron), Biblically mandated individual absolution and mandated stewardship of administration of the LORD’S Supper could be lost through this lack of care. The attack in the area of adiaphora, then, would become the source of the unionizing doctrinal indifference evident in American Lutheranism of Walther’s day and the practice of open communion which exposes publicly the heart of unionism)

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On Avoidance of Unionism and Syncretism

I. While Emerging from Stephanism

Unionism and rationalism were movements that helped lead to promote the false ecclesiology that is branded by the name “Stephanism.” While toleration and systematic inclusion of false and anti-Confessional doctrine was being introduced into the Saxon Church by government authority, orthodox Lutherans were banding together under the powerful personal leadership of Martin Stephan who, as Pr. E.G.W. Keyl writes in his *Public Confessions of a Stephanite*, fained praise of Luther and the Confessions only to undermine many of the essential doctrines attendant to the Gospel, especially in connection with the doctrine of the church. Keyl couches the condition of the Church in Germany in his day in the following rhetoric apparently used by all the Stephanites to promote a supposed divine necessity for leaving Europe for the sake of the existence of the true church of Christ:

Whoever wants to be saved must not only have the Word of God itself, but also the public, pure preaching of the same, and not merely the legitimate Baptism, but also the church's absolution and the pure and unfalsified holy LORD's Supper. Since now the Lutheran Church in the midst of the invisible church is the only one that has the Word of God and the holy Sacraments pure and unfalsified, everyone who knows this true church must also retain it, if it is in any way possible to do so. The Lutheran Church in Saxony now, indeed, still has retained the symbolical books in name, but, in fact, most of the Churches and schools manifestly and blatantly teach against the doctrine they have pledged to teach in the symbolic books. The Sacrament is falsified in many places. Those teachers who still hold fast to the symbolic books may be forced, for that reason, to subject themselves to public accusation and legitimately fear that, persisting in holding fast, harsh charges will be leveled against them, and they may well be expelled from their office. Now, more than that, there have been many sorts of declarations and wishes, even in public, **that the idolatry of symbolic books be abolished and, thereby, the dividing wall between Lutherans and the Reformed be removed and, along those lines, so-called contemporary (*zeitgemässe*) adjustments be made in agendas, hymnals and school books.** In these circumstances, and the almost universal enmity against God's Word, there is no longer any hope for the Lutheran Church, and she will no longer be able to maintain herself. But her preservation is our duty to bear for the sake of ourselves and our descendants. This can be accomplished in no other way than if we, since we are the last remnant of the true Lutheran Church, would transplant that remnant from out of Europe to America and would seek to once again bring forth her pristine purity in doctrine, constitution and life, where also the introduction of a strict church discipline and an episcopal constitution (*der bischöflichen Verfassung*), following the model of the Swedish Lutheran Church, and the establishment of institutions for Christian education and formation should serve her. Along with this blossoming of the Church, the temporal benefits were more and more developed and, in all these glorious presentations, every hope was placed upon America.¹

The section emphasized above points out the intrusion of unionism by every means that was forcing Lutherans, desiring to be orthodox, but misled, into a state of despair over the possibility the Christ's church existing in Germany. While Keyl is here repenting of this, he is not shamed out of the truth about seemingly intolerable conditions in Germany, but repents of his lack of faith and improper response to those spiritual dangers. While Stephanism shrouded all things in deepest secrecy, being caught up in personalities, part of Keyl's repentance is his not having publicly spoken out against these dangers:

¹Keyl, Ernst Gerhard, Wilhelm, trans. Baseley, Joel R. “Public Confessions of a Stephanite,” *Missouri Synod in Formation (1844-’47): Essays of the Founding Fathers*. (Mark V Publications. Dearborn, Michigan. 2012) p. 10

Further, in my behavior towards others, and especially toward members of my congregation, I appropriated much from Stephan that is worthy of rebuke. In my converse with others I often proved myself to be most unwelcoming, harsh, and standoffish, impatient and loveless. I more and more avoided the company of my congregational members who did not think as I did, not even receiving the sick with the appropriate concern and compassion. I didn't pursue the erring with appropriate faithfulness and merciful love. I was not careful enough to avoid every evil appearance and too seldom took into consideration the advice of others and public opinion. **I never launched a defense against innuendos in the public papers, which I had still been required to do for the sake of the truth and my office.**²

In the wake of this general admission of the plethora of errors committed in the name of Stephanism, the good ground of repentant Saxon hearts was fertile soil for the grace that God gives sinners. While never avoiding an opportunity to admit their error after coming to America, lest their repentance would be revealed false, they thankfully embraced the forgiveness bestowed upon every sinner by Jesus in his Gospel. Repudiating their errors revealed by God's Word they prayed and strived to be bound and submissive to God's Word, that had restored the Church in the Reformation and would also be the means God would use to sanctify and restore his Saxon emigrant Church in America. They proved their faith true, as this correction was not an oppression set upon false thoughts they sought to harbor, but meant freedom for them; freedom especially by the LORD's instructing them on the nature of the church, retaining proper use of the means of Grace, the proper way of confronting error, proper lines of authority in the church of God.

It was in this rediscovered freedom that C.F.W. Walther was urged to engage publicly, before friend and foe, and especially to benefit those confused on the doctrine of the church, the nature of Lutheranism, the true nature of the Christian Church, which are not two things, but one. In issue one of volume 1 of *Der Lutheraner*, (*DL*) Walther introduces his paper. He is anxious to share the Lutheran doctrine because of the freedom he's found in it. He immediately engages many of the same challenges encountered back in Saxony. But these challenges were now no longer supported by government might. He was free to confront these challenges with the true weapon of God, his Word. In this first year he confronts the Roman Catholic voice of *Wahrheitsfreund* (published by ex-Lutheran Pastor Maximilian Oertel), the voice of a Missouri (ex-Lutheran pastor and) proponent of rationalistic Biblical criticism who writes in the *Anti-Pfaffen*, Friedrich Muensch, as well as a local St. Louis area Evangelical pastor, Louis Nollau, who was in the midst of founding the Evangelical (union) Church in America (and would become the founder of Eden Seminary, St. Louis).

II. Confronting Unionism (Evangelicalism) in 1844 America

Walther's first issue of *DL* leads with a wonderful four part serial *On the Name "Lutheran,"* which serves as his apology for the necessity of the existence of the Lutheran Church, the catholicity of the Lutheran Church, and the reasons that other visible Churches cannot be an option for a true, orthodox Christian. With respect to the issue of unionism, his section on Evangelicalism reveals his diagnosis of its error, that is, what is unique to the confession of Evangelicalism, and the slippery slope it rests upon:

²Op. Cit. p. 6

So what – now perhaps many others will say – what can you have against the name “Evangelical?” Couldn’t you and shouldn’t you fairly replace Lutheran with that name? With that name isn’t it true that you need not feel compelled to receive any doctrine you regard as false? Don’t you know that the Evangelicals are the fellowship composed of those who, in each of the articles that divide the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, grant each and every member complete freedom and leave it to each person’s conscience as to what he wants to preach as Christ’s true meaning? – Of course we know that. But just that is the reason we can no longer call ourselves Evangelical. Of course the name itself is certainly glorious and precious. Yes, the Lutheran Church is just the Church that was, for quite some time, the only one called Evangelical. Two or three hundred years ago, whoever said: I am an Evangelical, was thereby confessing, as all the world knew, that he was a Lutheran. Luther was certainly the one through whom God had again placed his Gospel into everyone’s hands. But the winds of time were blowing, and with them the culture and the name. Whoever now says: “I am an Evangelical” is confessing that he is a Christian of whom it cannot be known what he believes about a number of chief tenets of the Christian faith. So tell me, whoever regards what he preaches as really being true, and who does not want to shackle the truth but wants to confess completely, can that person confess it (what he regards as the truth, whatever it might be) in a church that relies on two confessional writings that cancel each other out, that is, where the one flatly rejects the other? Or to a church that thus publicly has no confessional writings, yes in which the two sorts of faith are approved, and thus, the truth and the lie? (For two contradicting doctrines still cannot both be true!) Wouldn’t you think that it would be impossible for people who regard the whole Bible as true could have come up with the thought that this new so-called “united” or Evangelical Church, established by a Prussian queen, this church of tyrannized churches, compelled against their will, smuggled in through all sorts of scheming, demanded by the most nationalistic zeal, is the last bloom of the kingdom of God in the world, the vestibule of the glorious temple of a thousand year kingdom of Christ upon earth (expected only by enthusiasts)? Isn’t this church much rather the herald of another age of a Babylonian confusion of languages? Is the pinnacle of the true unity of faith and Spirit of the Christian church an externally binding ceremonial unification of believers with different faiths? **Through this new Evangelical Church will not the confusion over the points of contention between the Lutherans and Reformed be elevated to an article of faith, and the surrender of the truth made into a condition for this new supposed “orthodoxy”?** **Isn’t this new Evangelical church through this confession she is putting into practice, that various versions of this or that doctrine will be allowed to be taught, also paving the way so that finally all that is clearly declared in God’s Word must be professed to be uncertain and unclear so that the exposition of Scripture must fall prey to the whims of every charismatic and rationalist?** Is this not reason to fear that when a congregation is first constituted as evangelical, without the stability of a decisive confession, that quickly a rationalistic preacher will follow that evangelical pastor? Won’t that necessarily be the next step? Won’t it be considered unjust to deny another person his rights? If the Evangelical is permitted to say: “The explanation of these passages about the sacraments, about election, etc., is left to the conscience of each individual, and no one should call another a heretic in these points over differences,” can’t the rationalist then be granted this right of freedom in the explanation on many other points, and must he not be given permission? – In a short time, the present so-called Evangelical Church, lacking a confession of the truth in the most important articles of the Christian doctrine, can declare the same as unimportant, non-essential and apparently indifferent, and Christ’s Word uncertain. **Therefore she can be seen as nothing other than the fellowship of indifference, which means, of people who evaluate true and false doctrine as the same. That is why we Lutherans cannot possibly call ourselves Evangelical nor do so any longer, in order that we not become changed into the latter and thus deny our faith.** We must much rather cry out to all the Lutherans who have deluded themselves with that beautiful name, “Evangelical,” and have let themselves be drawn into the net of this false union: “How long will you hang between two opinions? If the LORD is your God follow him. But if it is Baal, follow him.” (1 Kings 18.)³

In the midst of his apology, Walther weaves in a bit of Luther’s counsel, admonishing that toleration of error with respect to God’s Word finds no justification under a banner of ‘love:’

³ Op. Cit. pp. 32 f from DL. Vol. 1 p.10f

A (so-called) good hearted person might say: So what's the harm if God's Word is retained and if all these other things or even just a few of them, as would be reasonable, (referring to the papal abuses) are allowed to remain as well? I answer: Such people might be called 'good hearted' but they are people with hearts that err and are seduced. For you have heard that it is impossible to teach other things next to God's Word, to serve such other things next to God, to light another lamp next to the Light that God has placed in the darkness. It is certainly false and erroneous if even a single item is permitted, for the church neither should nor can teach lies or errors not even a single one. If she taught a single lie, everything would become false, as Christ says in Luke 11.35: "See to it that the light in you is not darkness, now if your body is full of light, that there is no darkness remaining, so it will be full of light." That means that it must be full of light with no darkness. The church must teach the pure Word of the truth of God and no error or lies. Also, how could it be any other way? Because the church's mouth is God's mouth and, then again, since God cannot lie, the church can't lie.

It's certainly true when speaking of life the holy church is not without sins, as she confesses in the Lord's Prayer: "forgive us our trespasses," and 1 John 1.3.: "so if we say we have no sin we lie and we make God a liar," who chides us all as sinners, Romans 3.23. Ps.14.3; 51.7. But the doctrine must not be sinful nor subject to rebuke, and it is not part of the Lord's Prayer, where we say, "forgive us our trespasses," for this is not our doing, but it's the Word of God himself, who cannot sin or act in injustice. So a preacher must not pray the Our Father, nor seek forgiveness of sins whenever he has preached (if he is a legitimate preacher), but must say and boast with Jeremiah (17.16) "LORD, you know that what has proceeded from my mouth is right and pleasing to you." Yes, with Paul, with all the apostles and prophets, he must say defiantly: *Heac dixit domino*, this is what God himself is saying. And again: I have become an apostle and prophet of JESUS Christ in this sermon. It is not necessary in this to ask for forgiveness of sins and it's not even good as if it were not rightly taught. For it is God's Word, not mine, for which God should not nor can he forgive me, but rather must affirm, praise, crown it and say: You have taught rightly, for I myself have spoken through you, and that Word is mine. Whoever cannot boast like that about his preaching should leave the preaching to someone else, for he certainly lies and blasphemes God.

If the Word should be sinful and wrong, how would or could life be guided? There certainly one blind person would be leading another, and both would fall into the ditch, Mt. 15.14. If the plumb line or the square is wrong or bent, what will or can the master builder hope to accomplish? There one error will lead to another without end or measure. Even also here, life can certainly be sinful and unrighteous, yes, unfortunately it is all too unrighteous, but the doctrine must be exactly right and certain with no sin. So in the church nothing should be preached but only the certain, pure, one and only Word of God. Where that doesn't happen, it's no longer the church, but the synagogue of Satan.

Now all that is said above is that the church must teach God's Word alone and be certain of this. By that she builds upon the foundation and pillars of truth and upon the rock, she is called holy and unassailable, that is, as it is justly and rightly said: The Church cannot err, for God's Word, which she teaches cannot err. But whatever else is taught or is doubtful, even if it might be God's Word, that cannot be doctrine in the church, but must be doctrine, lies and idolatry of the devil. For the devil can't say (because he is a liar and the father of lies): Thus says God. Rather, as JESUS says in John 8.44, *ex propriis*, he can only speak from and of himself, that is, lie. That is also how all his children must be. Without God's Word, they speak from out of themselves, that is, they lie. See Luther's Works, Halle, XVII. P. 1684.⁴

Upon this theological basis, when Walther reads of the establishment of the Union Church in St. Louis, Walther sets forth a rather comprehensive attack and defense against the Union Church based both upon Scriptures and the Confessions, elaborating on the basis of that Church being doctrinal indifference, especially with respect to the means of grace, and how such denial of Christ and his grace in his means of grace destroys fellowship in the true church while it is the very basis of fellowship in the unionist Church. This article is lengthy but artful:

⁴Op. Cit. p. 42f from *DL* Vol. 1 p.8

“The Evangelical Church in North America”

by C.F.W. Walther

Vol. 1 pp. 42f, 45f, 50f, 56f

Under this title, in the *“Theophilus”*, a religious newspaper appearing in Zanesville, Ohio, (in the 11th issue of the same) it is reported that the “German Evangelical Church Union of the West,” established in 1840, has held its seventh convention in October of this past year in the Gravois Settlement, near St. Louis, Mo., and that 6 ordained pastors and 3 candidates attended. The pastors named as officers of the union for the coming year are: Garlichs in Femme Osage, Mo., Nollau in Gravois Settlement, Mo., and Riess in Centerville, Illinois. Also reported are the adapted statutes, in 16 paragraphs, as they have been adapted and ratified at the 1843 Convention (a summary of conditions). The attributes of the Church, whose growth is the goal of this association, is stated in the sixth, as the only unalterable paragraph of the statutes, which is, of course, quoted as follows: “The members of this association acknowledge the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God and the only norm of faith, and confess with it the expositions of the Scriptures which are stated in the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran and the Evangelical Reformed churches of Germany, insofar as these agree with the same.”

This confession states, as clear as day, that the members of this association have made an attempt to form a pathway to create, here also, the union or unification of Lutheran and Reformed Churches into one so-called Evangelical Church, as it has been forced by officials in most of the territories of Germany since 1817 (especially in Prussia, Nassau, in the province of Hanau in electoral Hessen, in Rhenesh Bavaria, Waldeck and Pymont, Baden, Hessen-Darmstadt, Anhalt-Bernburg). Now if this union were the sort of church unification which was founded upon the same faith and upon the mutual acceptance of the truth, it would thereby be a powerful evidence that those who previously were in error had finally confessed their errors, renounced them and received the truth, then obviously anyone who is a Christian would, with all his heart, wish for the best outcome for these men in their good plans, and who should not be prepared to join with them and to most joyfully sacrifice wealth and health if necessary for their most holy goal. Yes, woe to the hand that would not dare to lift a finger for such a God pleasing work(!) to give God his glory for this and not begrudge salvation for souls bought at such a great price. We on our part can, in truth, assure you that we are deeply saddened by the divisions in Christianity, that we take no pleasure in strife and discord, and daily plead the LORD that he would curb the divisions amongst Christians that daily increase and unite all the divisions in truth and peace.

But from the paragraph quoted above we see that the evangelical union in today’s West has a completely different goal and character. It has no desire to establish the kind of union between Lutherans and the Reformed that is based upon their becoming united in faith but rather they look upon people as members in one and the same church as they hold completely different beliefs in the most significant articles of Christian doctrine.

We could never condone that kind of union with a good conscience but must, much rather, as much as is possible, loudly and decisively protest against it and especially sound a serious warning to our brothers in the Lutheran faith against it. Far be it from us to condemn the whole Reformed Church for the sake of the error that we see steadfastly held within her, – we are much rather firmly convinced that even this Church has many precious children of God in her midst. Therefore we are glad to and want to accompany her, at her side, but to stand with her in churchly fellowship, so long as she defends the errors of her church, is against our conscience, since it is against God’s Word. The command of the LORD which he has given his church through the apostle in 1 Cor. 1.10 is clear: “But I admonish you, dear brothers, by the Name of our LORD JESUS, that you always speak as one, and let there be no divisions among you, but rather hold fast to one another, in one mind and with one thought.” Here we have an irrefutable divine Commandment, that in the one true Christian church not different views, but one thought over the doctrine clearly revealed by God must rule, yes, that the members of the true church should not only be one in the faith of their hearts, but that they also should reveal her unity in the spirit and faith through the same words, by which they confess their doctrine. The same apostle says further: “But I admonish you, dear brothers, that you take note of those who cause division and offenses beside the doctrine you have learned and separate from them.” Romans 16.17. Here we hear that the division about which God especially warns above all

others, is division through another false doctrine, but that it is legitimate and commanded by God to separate from them, or to externally avoid them, as they are already separated from us by the other doctrine in their hearts. A Reformed Christian who regards God's Word as true and nevertheless regards his church's doctrine as true, can therefore enter into churchly union with a Lutheran no more than a rightly believing Lutheran with the Reformed. If a Lutheran unites with those whom he regards as erring, he thus breaks his baptismal bond a thousand times over, so by his act he denies the faith in which he had solemnly taken an oath at his Confirmation, and falls away from his church as one who has perjured himself.

In strict keeping with the entire Word of God it therefore says in the Symbolic Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church: "It is difficult that so many countries and peoples are divided and want to employ different doctrines, but here (Mt. 7.15; Titus 3.10; 2 Cor. 6.14) is written God's Command that everyone should be on guard and not give assent to those who teach illegitimate doctrine." (*Smalcald Articles*. App. 155.) Further, the Tenth Article of the *Formula of Concord* teaches that you cannot unite with the opponents of our faith even in external ceremonies and adiaphora without denying the truth, if they have not "yet united in doctrine" with us. Therefore it even says, among other things: "If such ceremonies make it seem as if they're being required or accepted so that by and through that both contending religions are the same and have become one *Corpus* (a whole), or it's done to take steps again towards the papacy and to retreat from the pure doctrine of the Gospel and pure religion, or that it should result in a relaxing of those concerns, in this case what Paul writes in 2 Cor. 6.: can and must apply: 'Do not be yoked with an outsider. What fellowship has light with the darkness? Therefore depart from him and separate yourself, says the LORD.'" (Declaration Art. 10.f. 316. a.) From this passage the Christian reader sees in the public confession of faith of our Church, that our Church has decisively rejected that sort of union long ago, purely at God's command, by which no opposing Churches should be melded together into one *Corpus* or body, before they have become united in true doctrine.

So we regard it as our duty to bear witness with due diligence against this intention to extend, even here, the unionizing, so-called Evangelical Church, especially for two reasons. Our first reason is that this Church must assemble these Churches here, for the most part, at the expense of the Lutheran Church. It is our precious fellow believers who, above all, must be won and brought to fall away from their faith and their Church in order to found new Evangelical Churches. We must, therefore, see them as dangerous opponents, as we do the German Methodists, who live just by the plundering of other churches and by splitting off their members. The Evangelical Church neither walks peaceably by our side nor does she strike out against us in open conflict like other Churches, but she lays her nets and snares in our camp, often robs our churches of her best sons and daughters, makes them indifferent to false doctrine, strangles the spirit of confession in them, and renders them unfit for the united battle we so need to fight now for the gem of the pure truth.

The second reason that forces us not to keep silent just at this point, but rather to publicly raise our weak voice, is the conviction that **the union, even as small as it is at its inception, still threatens to be overwhelmingly destructive for our Church's very existence, especially here in the West.** Therefore we believe it is our responsibility towards our present Lutheran brothers in faith to admonish them that they not consider their emergence as insignificant, but that they should wake up and remember that we must someday, on the last day, be held accountable if through our fleshly security, laziness, and drowsiness the precious deposit of pure doctrine is lost here, which our pious fathers, steadfast in faith, have won and passed on to us in so many difficult battles, often costing them their property and life.

We know full well that the evangelicals here are just as devoid of all external means of support as we Lutherans, but may we overlook how so many in that Church claim a benefit for her extension when just by giving ground in doctrines disturbing to man's reason and heart, they smooth them over just to make them pleasing to men? – We must, dear brothers, bear this in mind so we aren't indifferent or heedless as we look on as this Church commences her construction here by trying to blunt those sharp stones of offense.

The first thing that the union church of all times promotes, and what assures her rapacious progress, is the natural mind of every man. Every man, of course, according to his natural mind places little value on the divine truth, all precision of doctrine, all strict adherence to the Word of God, all decisive rejection of human wisdom and its inventions, all conflicts, especially over a specific article of faith. To every man, as he is formed at birth, this is all despicable. "Do what is right and believe whatever you want" is the principle we all bear in our hearts as we enter this world. This innate

indifference of fallen man against the truth is expressed as the dominant principle, therefore, in the unionist Church, as it is now being established. If an unbeliever praises nothing else about it, he still can praise their conceding those doctrines conflicting with reason and say: At least its reasonable.

This also has come about because those last times have come when the holy Scriptures predict that people “would not receive a love for the truth.” (2 Thess. 2.10.) It is undeniable. We live in a time when either crass unbelief dominates or a certain holiness of life is most highly emphasized, but truly holding fast to the written Word of God is seen as a miserable, dead letter Christianity. Now whoever receives and confesses only a few important Christian truths is considered a believer, but whoever is not satisfied with that, whoever demands a person’s complete submission under God’s holy Word, and will not let himself find fault with and does not want to contradict or skip over a single letter (Mt. 5.18.) of the Word of God entrusted to him, but rather battles over it with all faithfulness, he is regarded as a loveless contender over words and heaps upon himself the hatred and the persecution of so-called believers and unbelievers alike. In such times a unionizing Church is obviously “contemporary” in which people find peace over doctrines in contention, and everyone is allowed to believe what seems good to him. But in such times it is also, obviously, no wonder when whole hosts stream into the new Evangelical Churches, since they make the narrow gates so wide that even those out for a pleasant stroll can come in through the same, who have no desire to bow their heads before the cross of Christ, which is an offense to the self righteous Jews and foolishness to the heathen who are wise in themselves. This same sort of church union has now been pursued for 300 years in many variations of shade but every attempt until now has been inconsequential – until the dawn of the nineteenth century. – Why? – Because until then there had been many faithful servants of God, who did not see themselves as lords over the Word of God who could pick and choose from it what they wanted, but as servants of the Word (Luke 1.2.) who had no authority to concede or ignore even the least portion of it, not even a tittle (Mt. 5.18). This was Luther’s thinking. Just he, that incorruptible witness of the truth, was obviously often accused of being stubborn because he stood so immovably fast in the doctrine of the holy LORD’s Supper, but good for him! – he shall not have his reward taken from him here. God has reserved for himself alone the honor of crowning this faithful warrior for the truth. Let’s let Luther himself say what moved him not to retreat when he writes in 1524: “I would acknowledge that five years ago if Dr. Carlstadt or someone else would have perhaps told me that nothing but bread and wine were in the Sacrament, I would have thought he was doing me a great service. I have certainly had great pains and had struggled and been wounded by the fact that it was obvious to me that I could have delivered the greatest blow to the papacy by asserting that . . . Yes even to this day should someone be able to prove on solid grounds that plain bread and wine were there, you wouldn’t have seen me frowning much. Unfortunately I’m all too prone to put up with that so far as my old Adam goes. . . But I am captive and cannot escape: The text is too powerful here and will not let itself be plucked from my thoughts by other words.” (XV. 2448.) Luther writes further to Bucer, who was Reformed-minded at the time: “Please believe me, I would be willing to lose my life three times over, I so wish to settle and silence this discord. For I have seen how necessary your association is for us, what an impediment this (the division) has caused the Gospel until now and will still bring, which I am certain that all of the gates of hell, the entire papacy, all the Turks, the whole world, all flesh and whatever evil is anywhere, would not have been able to accomplish, were we united. . . The LORD JESUS enlighten us and make us completely one! I pray for, I long for, I sigh after this.” (XVII, 2396) – and that was the thinking of all the pious and steadfast confessors of the pure Gospel who were the treasure of our church and whom even our opponents must bear witness that they served not themselves but Christ and with all their writings they bequeathed this imperishable treasure of doctrine and edification to Christianity, like a Chemnitz, a Brenz, a Johann Gerhard, and others.

But the age of our faithful fathers in faith is over. All the guardians upon the walls of our Lutheran Zion, whom none of the threatening dangers to the flock eluded, have now closed their eyes. The mouths are closed of those who would not allow anything to silence them when it was necessary to speak so that the doctrine of the Gospel would be defended. Already long ago they have been laid to rest from their labors in their graves. So it’s no wonder when people can confidently step up now and can pursue their work unimpeded, single mindedly immediately freeing people of one doctrine after another, since for them there is nothing sacrosanct about doctrine. Indeed, the ancient heroes of faith are dead. The enemies no longer have to fear any sort of zeal for God by which those people who trust them may be warned against their false doctrine and syncretism. **Now even young, inexperienced men can raise themselves up unhindered above their enlightened fathers, and**

create a more beautiful, open-minded Church according to their own plans. With condescending derision they look down upon those little Lutherans who, according to their thinking, are so confined, so isolationist, so prejudiced, who want to remain in their ancient shackles. They feel so empowered – for the indifference and the ruin of the whole human race now living stand in solidarity with them. – . . .

In the last issue of our paper we had presented the reasons from God's Word forcing us to take a stand to renounce any churchly union that claims to be united in faith and in doctrine but that, as in this case, after having reached only a few important points of doctrinal agreement, deems it acceptable that other doctrines can at the same time be overlooked and ignored (so that in these doctrines part of the new Church can still believe and teach contrary to God's Word). Now since the members of the "Evangelical Church Union of the West" have even presented this as their basis in the 'Statutes of the Christian Church' which they published, and because, additionally, they will spare no effort to establish this union, we regard it our duty to also speak out about it and explain why our conscience is disturbed by the reasons these men have given for their union. The first one being:

"In consideration of the promise of the Lord that a time should come when there would be only one flock under one Shepherd."

This initial statue, we must admit, has amazed us greatly. For isn't it hard to believe that the people establishing this union could play so fast and loose with Scriptures by taking this reckless first step as their lead-in to establishing this union, that could be for the benefit or harm of so many souls, in plain sight of the whole Christian church and especially the church here in the West? Isn't it hard to accept that men to whom the holy preaching office is entrusted should not have first carefully considered whether the Words of our most beloved LORD and Savior, JESUS Christ, really mean what they are alleging that they mean in this statute? – Yet it's quite obvious that the members of this union consistently give a meaning to these Words of our LORD contrary to their real meaning and, thus, only misuse them to their own ends. Now far be it from us to judge the hearts of the members of the union. As Christians we much rather have only the best hopes for them. But obviously we can't deny the truth for love's sake! – We must consider the passage in its context. We quote directly from John 10.16 as follows: "And I have still other sheep that are not of this fold. And I must lead them here and they will hear my voice and they will be one flock with one Shepherd." It is certainly nothing new for us to see these Words being rallied by those who hope for a future thousand year kingdom on earth where Christ will rule without opposition with his believers to support their peculiar ideas. We know full well that all who support unionism see this passage as their iron wall, just as Zwingli used those Words: "the flesh avails nothing."⁵ – but we ask the impartial reader: Is this legitimate? Does the Savior even hint that he intends to say anything like that with these Words? In no way. In the first place, Christ is speaking to the Jews about other sheep that were not from this flock (the Jewish Church). Most obviously Christ has in mind here those who are not Jews, but Gentiles. Now he goes on to say of them that he must bring them, that they will also hear his voice, that is, they would receive his Word and, finally, the division would be removed so one flock would be established under one Shepherd. So what is this one flock under one Shepherd? It is nothing other than Christianity, gathered in the New Testament from Jews and Gentiles. So already from the moment that the former dividing wall fell between the Jews and Gentiles and the apostles with their Gospel turned also to the Gentiles, even right then the promise of one flock under one Shepherd was being fulfilled. St. Paul clearly interprets this prophecy of Christ that way when he writes this to the Ephesians and others who had been converted, having been Gentiles: "Remember that you had formerly been Gentiles according to the flesh – that you up till that time had been without Christ, foreigners and apart from the citizens of Israel, – but now you who were formally apart are in Christ, now you have drawn near through the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who has made one (one flock) out of the two and has broken down the dividing wall. – So now you are no longer guests and foreigners, but citizens with the saints

⁵That is, Zwingli asserted that the Words: "The flesh avails nothing" (John 6.63.), should refer to JESUS' flesh in order to attack the LORD's Supper, which is obviously a horrible blasphemy, which must still occasionally be heard. Christ says of his flesh, "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (John 6.51.) And should that flesh, then, be so useless?

and part of the household of God.” (Eph. 2.11-19.) The holy apostle expresses the same thing in Romans 10.12: “There is no distinction between Jew and Greek (Gentile), for there is one Lord (Shepherd) of all.”

Therefore when the members of the Evangelical Union say, according to the promise of the LORD, that first now the time “shall come when collective Christianity will be only one flock under one Shepherd,” as they do in their founding principle, they err in this. For the time should not first come now since it’s already come. Even now there is only one Shepherd of Christians, JESUS Christ, and only one flock, that is the holy Christian church that is scattered over the face of the whole world, the invisible communion of saints. So that means that the church is one body and one Spirit and has one hope, one LORD, one faith, one Baptism and one God and Father, who is there over all his members, and through them all and in all. (Eph. 4.4-6.) This one flock has existed now for 1800 years and even now maintains her unity, but the fleshly eyes of spiritually blind men can see nothing in the church but a house of discord, when it sees such great division among her teachers.”⁶ But whether or not it will ever come to pass that amongst all who call themselves Christians all discord and every divisive heresy would cease and a perfect outward peace would ensue, that’s a question these Words of Christ don’t address at all, for here he’s not even talking about what should take place amongst Christians, but rather: That Japheth would dwell in the tents of Shem (Gen. 9.27.), that is, that Christ would also call the Gentiles (Acts 2.39) and would make one flock of them and the people of the Old Covenant.

Must the Evangelicals themselves not admit, if they stick with the simple meaning of the Words of Christ, that by applying the same to some anticipated union of all Christian religious parties, that they must entangle themselves in insoluble difficulties? So whom do they want to call “other sheep” who “are not from this fold”, as Christ says? – Lutherans? – or the Reformed? So which of the two, in their way of thinking, do not belong to the true church? Which one of them have not heard the voice of Christ? Which of them do not yet have Christ as their Shepherd? By this application Evangelicals make of this passage, they obviously either reject one party or the other. So don’t they contradict themselves, since they claim they don’t want to do this in what they wrote? – Oh, how necessary it is still to first rightly and carefully consider the Words of JESUS Christ in their context before using them to prove one’s own preconceived notions! It’s just as dangerous to explain it by what he only seems to be saying, merely by one’s first impression! It’s obviously true that if a friend of that union only lets his hearers hear the words: “There should be one flock and one Shepherd,” he can count on the fact that many people are unfamiliar with its context in Scripture, and most of their hearers will heedlessly accept that false interpretation of the words he presents them. But God will demand an accounting from those who so misuse God’s Word and thereby lead the naive into error.

We see the hope that others invent, that in the latter days the church would once more be set in a glorious, flowering condition, when the whole world, Jews and Gentiles, would be converted and the church would consist of only saints, as an enthusiastic (*schwaermerische*) hope without any Scriptural foundation at all. For the Bible much rather describes Christ’s kingdom on earth for us as a kingdom of the cross. It describes the last days as the most horrid of times. It teaches Christians to anticipate the dawning of the last day every moment and consistently promises them peace some day, in heaven and in eternal life. Therefore, far from our making ourselves safe and secure with sweet thoughts about some future day when the kingdom of God would bloom, we should, therefore, not allow ourselves to be deceived by the “great luminaries” of this last and fallen age, so we much rather rightly pray to the LORD, that he would also now preserve his pure truth to us at a time when, were it possible, even the elect would be misled into heresy. However, we constantly bear in mind that a time will come when the LORD’s actions will explain why we do not take part in the (chiliastic) hopes of those who appear today in greater numbers, and yet confess they believe God’s Word. . .

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⁶This judgement on the ruinous state of the unity of the Christian church that a person must make when he lays eyes upon her can be appraised by the sad evidence given by Mr. Oertel in his last issue of *Friend of Truth*. There he makes the following conclusion: Because there are so many conflicts between their theologians, that church they confess then lacks true unity! Yet a man who can write that way has no concept of the true church, of true unity, of the real nature of the Kingdom of God on earth, etc.! Mt. 13.12.

We have illuminated the first reason given by Evangelicals for their cause here in the West, and, we hope, have conclusively proven that one flock under one Shepherd already has been established and that Christ's prophecy concerning it has been fulfilled, the Gentiles's being called into his kingdom and thereby it will daily continue to be fulfilled unto the last day. So now we come to the second reason the members of the forementioned association have given as justification for their plan. It is this:

"That according to the express admonition of the apostle: "Let there be no divisions amongst you," he states the responsibility of all Christians together, but especially for the teachers and representatives of the church, to reconcile the divisions arising in the same, in accord with the magnitude of the difference, and, in every way, to be on the path to a peaceful consensus, and to once more reunite what is divided."

If the Evangelicals are saying here that it is every Christian's duty to do his part to do what he is able to do, so true unity in truth would be established amongst all who were previously separated from one another through heresy, then, obviously, every reasonable person must only whole heartedly agree. But that's not what's being done here. The Evangelicals much rather want to prove here that the union, as they have established it, is even commanded by God himself by this Word of the apostle: "Let there not be divisions amongst you," and that therefore all those who dare to oppose their work are enemies of unity and destroyers of peace and tranquility. But unfortunately we must even here again also rebuke the Evangelicals for misusing God's Word. For even this apostolic admonition that they quote, if we consider it in context, in no way supports them, but is diametrically opposed to them, yes, it is truly a thundering word against all such false union mongers. For it says this, to quote it once more in its entirety for our readers: "But I admonish you, dear brothers, in the Name of our LORD, JESUS Christ, that you always use the same speech and do not allow divisions between you, but hold fast to each other in one mind and with one thought." (1 Cor. 1.10.) So is a union being commanded here which, as the evangelicals say, is brought about through man's "peaceful consensus"? No! But much rather it consists of using one way of talking and one meaning, that is not therefore "one" by fleeting concessions in the articles of faith, but is made "one" through strictly holding fast to the truth. Therefore if a Church is not gathered through the one faith, one doctrine and one confession of her members, and is not united upon this foundation, but upon man's compromise, then according to that passage such a Church, thus resting on an un-Christian foundation, is a human invention. It's like a company of soldiers who, indeed, all wear one and the same uniform, but who must be forced to fight against those on his own side. A visible Church is nothing but a gathering of people who have externally bound themselves together because they regard as truth one and the same doctrine in their hearts and confess it with their mouths. If that's not the case in just one article, a fellowship can no longer lay claim on the name "Church." She is then, in fact, an oxymoron (*Unding*), not a union, but only uniformity.

But does not even the apostle say clearly: "Let there be no divisions among you.?" – He's right to say this. Woe to those who ever despise this apostolic and, therefore, this divine admonition and introduce divisions and schisms in the Christian church! So woe to all who destroy true peace in God's house! But what does it mean, then, to introduce divisions? – According to God's Word this is done in two ways. First off, when one invents a new, false doctrine and thereby culls members of the rightly fashioned church away from the same (Rom. 16.17.), or, secondly, when out of lovelessness, personal hatred, pride, stubbornness, merely for the sake of external ceremonies, or because of deficiencies in life or the like, he separates himself from those in the church, with whom he is united in pure Christian doctrine. It says in the holy Scripture that the first is called a sect (heretical fellowship) and the second is merely called a split or division (schism) (1 Cor. 11.18 compare with 1.11-13.). The first is created by a heretic, the second by the schismatic.

So what sort of division presently exists between Lutherans and the Reformed? Obviously the first sort. For as all the world knows, this division has arisen for no other reason than through disunity in doctrine. It is obviously not enough merely to complain because this division has happened. It has now, for over 300 years, brought terrible, unnerving harm to the kingdom of God, but we ask everyone who is even a little acquainted with the history of the Reformation, who was the profane source of this split, and who must therefore be accountable for it before God? Not Luther, but Zwingli alone. For even though that destructive statue smasher, Carlstadt, had already attacked the doctrine of the universal Christian church of the LORD's Supper in public writings before Zwingli, yet that impious, enthusiastic spirit would not have been able to cause any division, if the most venerable Zwingli had not later taken up that same cause. Even the reformed Lavater writes in his history of the

sacramental controversy that the Council in Zurich, where Zwingli resided, being shocked at the new doctrine that originated in Carlstadt's books, had forbidden them to be sold. That is, in the first seven years, from 1517 - 1524, when Luther and Zwingli bore witness against the abominations of the papacy and established a true Reformation of the church through the proclamation of the pure doctrine of the Gospel, Luther and Zwingli were completely united in doctrine. Even honest Reformed Christians have conceded this. So among them F. A. Lanpe, a Reformed professor in Utrecht, writes in his church history (*Ed. Ultraj.* P. 332.): "As far as Zwingli's doctrine on the LORD's Supper is concerned, he affirmed that in the beginning he had been in agreement with Luther's thinking." We also find this affirmed in Zwingli's own writings. He even writes to Gerold Seggen on the 9th of October, 1523: "According to his LORD's Supper, Christ has distributed his body and his blood," and in the same year Zwingli writes in his clear explanation of this article that is in exact accord with the Words of the institution of the holy sacrament: "These Words are clear and familiar to all: This is my body. Is this not a pure, concise, sure Word from God? How could God have spoken more bluntly or precisely?" When he was attacked by being called a Lutheran, Zwingli struck back by saying: "Luther is such a skilled warrior of God as there has not been upon the earth in a thousand years, with such a valiant and immovable spirit whereby he has attacked the pope in Rome, as has never been so long as there has been a papacy. God be praised! Through him an innumerable greater world of nations will be led to God than by me or anyone else. That I, for all my days, have never written a single letter to him must make it obvious to all people that those of the Spirit of God speak unanimously, for though we live so far from each other, yet we teach the doctrine of Christ unanimously with no contention." That's how Zwingli was still writing in 1523. But by the end of the next year he suddenly radically changes his conviction about the LORD's Supper. He had come to the opinion that the Words: "This is my body," meant no more than: "This signifies my body." We find this opinion first enunciated by him in his letter to Pastor Alberus in Reutlingen from November 16, 1524, in which Zwingli still wanted his opinion kept secret, for he adds this to it: In the Name of JESUS Christ, I demand that you not share this letter with anyone, except for those whom you are sure are rightly fashioned in this faith, which is that of our LORD." So Zwingli was still tremulous that his opinion would be made public even to those who followed him, whose agreement he dared not yet hope for. He knew full well what a divisive, horrible disturbance would arise in the whole congregation thereby among those who had previously been pastured and edified by one and the same doctrine and had stood in the most glorious, most pleasing unity of the Spirit and Confession against the anti-Christian papacy, a portion of them from Zwingli and a portion from Luther. Yet Zwingli soon became too clever. Though Luther had not offended him by even a single word, Zwingli took the offensive in 1525 with his book *On the True and False Religion*, where he called all who believed in the substantial presence of the body and blood of Christ "flesh eaters, and a stupid (dumb headed) class of people whose doctrine is godless, foolish and monstrous, who should be numbered with cannibals (people who eat humans). (See: *Comment. De vera et f. rel.* p. 238.246.256.)

As, shortly after that, Zwingli published another book, called *Subsidium S. Coronis de Euchar.*, he now called the Lutheran faith the worship of idols and the Lutherans cannibals.⁷ Yes, as Luther then replies to defend himself, Zwingli writes this in his *Exegesis ad Lutherum*, p. 59.: "Bucer had said for the sake of peace one could think one way or the other in this matter without injuring his faith. I

⁷What had made Zwingli so sure of his heresy he himself relates in the aforementioned "*Sudsidium.*" *Lit. Diü.* That is, after he had reported therein that he had publicly disputed with a certain State Secretary in Zurich on April 11 about the Mass, he goes on to say: "But when April 13th arrived (and I am telling the truth and indeed it is so true that if I should be silent about it my conscience would force me to reveal what the LORD has granted me, even if I knew full well what scorn and ridicule I would be causing myself by it) as, I say, the 13th day of April dawned, I was dreaming that I was once again in heated debate against my opponent, the Secretary of State, and by doing so I had become so unable to speak that I could not spit out what I knew full well to be true, because my tongue refused its service. This impediment appeared to be beyond all comprehension, as dreams in the deceptive night sometimes play such games with us (for we explain what happens to us as no more than a dream even if it is nothing less than what we have learned through the dream by God's grace, to whose glory alone we are reporting this.). Then all at once, a Counselor appeared to me (whether he had been wearing black or white I cannot recall, for I am relating a dream). He said: You shrinking violet, why don't you answer him with what is written in Exodus 12: "it is the Passover" which signifies the exodus of the LORD? As soon as I received that epiphany I awoke and jumped out of bed. First now I considered the passage from the angle of how the Greek is translated and then I explained it as well as I was able before the whole assembly. My address dispelled every cloud for those who received it, who previously had been unsure about it, as now they knew that he was only speaking in parables thereby (that is, "is" was taken as "signifies")." – So that means Zwingli's doctrine is based on a dream.

am bound to disagree. Believing that eating the flesh of Christ could strengthen the conscience is bound to be injurious to faith.” –

So that being the case, shouldn't all those be ashamed in their hearts who henceforth write in everyone's plain sight that Luther bears responsibility for the split in the Protestant Church? According to that isn't it beyond dispute that Zwingli not only had distanced himself from the ancient Christian faith by a new doctrine that had been unheard of since the age of the apostles, but that he even launched a strenuous attack when people would not receive his new doctrine, whose faith they could then deny salvation? Yet that strategy of the enthusiast, imposing on others what they themselves invent and still daily invent, is as old as the hills. Even Luther found in his pamphlet: "That these Words, 'This is my Body,' Still Stand Fast" that he had to complain: "We are like the sheep who came with the wolf to drink from the water. The wolf steps into the water upstream from the sheep who's downstream. So the wolf accuses the sheep of muddying the water. The sheep says, how can I stir up the water? Since you are so much bigger than me, why do you imagine I'm doing it? In short, the sheep must be excused even if the wolf imagines the sheep muddied the water. So also my enthusiasts. They lit the fire, and they themselves revel in it, boasting it as a benefit, and now they want to shift the blame to us for destroying unity. Who says Dr. Carlstadt started this? Who says it was the writings of Zwingli or Oecolampadius? Aren't they doing it themselves? We would have gladly had peace, and even now, but they won't allow it. So it's our fault? – sure it is!" – But here many evangelicals might perhaps say: according to that we must obviously concede that Zwingli had been the culprit in this unwholesome sectarianism and not Luther, but was it not in Luther's power to restore peace if he had not so rigidly and stubbornly stood by the Words: "This is my body"? Didn't Zwingli later, in 1529, at Marburg, vainly ask with tears for Luther's fraternal hand, saying, "There are no other people on earth with whom we would rather be united than with those in Wittenberg"? (L. Works, Halle, XVI, 2825) Wasn't it loveless of Luther to refuse this and every other invitation to unite with the so-called Reformed with such iron clad obstinance? Evangelicals will go on to say: Hasn't it been just the Reformed for the last 300 years who have always been making new overtures to reconcile with the Lutherans, and whose efforts have routinely failed because of those rigid and contentious Lutheran theologians? So isn't it clear that, indeed, the Reformed initiated the split, but it's Lutherans who have perpetuated it? Aren't we most seriously and compellingly in all of Scripture admonished to love, peace and unity? So how will you Lutherans give account for yourselves to God for your having perpetuated this 300 year disunity amongst Protestants, as sons of your loveless father, and even now continue to maintain this offense in your papistic stubbornness? – We respond: Whenever a split occurs because of a dispute in doctrine, it's not caused by those who maintain the truth, but they are entirely to blame who maintain their heresy. So as long as it can be proven that it was the Reformed and not Lutherans who are in heresy in the points of contention, then the Reformed are and remain the destroyers of the peace and the tranquility from whom God will require the blood of all the souls who become offended or are lost because of these coarse and confusing dissensions.

But why won't you let love rule? We answer: We would gladly show the Reformed nothing but love, as we also love even all people from our hearts. We don't even now judge them so harshly as Luther must once have judged Zwingli. Further, we don't want to show ourselves as contentious, bitter, and condemnatory toward them, but we cannot unite ourselves with them in a churchly way and receive the holy LORD's Supper in her fellowship, much less could we entrust our sheep to their shepherds so long as they maintain their departure from the clear letter of God's Word, whether they might now follow after the misguided leadership of either a coarse Zwingli, or a fine, politically adept Calvin. By such a union we would be denying the truth, confessing a false doctrine that strengthens the heretical in their heresy, causing orthodox Christians to err, offending the weak, accusing our Church and opening the door and gate of religious indifference and unbelief (Rationalism, Naturalism, and Atheism) along with it.

We, as Christians, should certainly be fervent in love, but the Scriptures also say what constitutes true, God pleasing love. It says: "Let us speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4.15); love "rejoices in the truth" (1 Cor. 13.6). Scripture further says: "Love truth and peace" (Prov. 8.19.): "We can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth." (2 Cor. 13.8.) So what good does all this talk about love, peace and unity do if it's not considering legitimate love and legitimate peace? A love that is preferred above the truth is spiritual adultery, against which God's Word warns us in many places, and a peace that is not founded upon the truth is a false peace, which, as the LORD explains through Ezekiel, misleads his people and says: "Peace" when there is no peace. An author of such a union

is like an architect who offers the worthless hope of fixing cracks in the foundation of a building by painting it over with whitewash! But find and read for yourself, dear reader, what Scripture predicts about such master builders in Ezekiel 13.10 – 16.

So, according to that, there is no other way to establish a legitimate union than that the truth be preached! What will not allow itself to be bound by that bond of truth is not yet united, no matter how you want to patch, bandage or glue it. St. Paul says specifically: “There must be divisions among you, so the rightly fashioned will be revealed among you.” (1 Cor. 11.19.). Christ goes on to say: “I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” (Mt. 10. 34.). So Christ and his disciples are obviously not wanting to say that he wants to cause a disturbance, but that peace cannot remain amongst people when the truth of his Gospel is preached and it is held fast only by some of them. Therefore Luther says: “Now a few little wise guys are beginning to go to work, wanting to offer counsel and to boil the whole thing down to the necessity of both sides giving some ground and making some concessions. Of course, we’ll let them try and produce whatever they can, and wish them well in their efforts but if they are able to make the devil pious and to make him one with Christ, they will certainly be the first. But I regard it just as what Sirach 22 says about such patch work, as if they wanted to patch together shards of a shattered pot. And indeed there have already been many of these cobblers who tried to do this but ended up wasting their effort and losing both their needle and thread.” (Exp. of the 110th Ps.)

Yet we obviously have reason to fear that despite all of these clear explanations many will say, we can see very well that you only want to trouble Israel (1 Kings 18.17.), you have fleshly compulsions, your Christianity lies merely in head knowledge, yes in disputing and wrangling, and we won’t put up with it any longer. You and your congregations need to be converted, which is of prime importance, which you forget in all your wrangling. Such people, who through these types of judgements want love to be evidenced only in deeds, as they never stop saying these things, bring to mind an Arndt, Paul Gerhard and Spener. They will be hard pressed to include these men with those who pursue orthodoxy (rightly believing) in a fleshly way and at the expense of a Christianity in deeds! But we see what these men thought of the matter from the fact that first Arndt, in order to surrender nothing of the truth, in the year 1590, would rather have been put out of office, than even to gain the favor of those who approved of Reformation doctrine, who also wanted to allow the ceremony of exorcism (the incantation) at the baptism, even as it had been commanded him by his Duke, Georg of Anhalt. Arndt knew full well that the exorcism was an optional rite, but he feared if he would give in here, he would deny and endanger the Lutheran truth.

It is well known of that consecrated hymn writer Paul Gerhard that he also would have preferred being put out of his office, as Arch Deacon in Berlin in the year 1666, than obey the royal command to no longer name those who were Reformed as he opposed Calvinistic errors, at least from the pulpit. Thereby he also wanted nothing to do with even a hint of anything that would give the impression he agreed with false doctrine nor budge even an inch to please them. (Gal. 2.5). Along with this we see his heart’s confidence from his glorious hymn: “Commit Whatever Grieves Thee” etc, which he had written on his journey after he was banished to comfort his wife. Finally, even Spener, who had certainly never been seen by any party as a man who had placed less emphasis on living a Christian life than on pure doctrine, even this man, who otherwise had only been a man of conciliation, writes these words on the Christianity of the Reformed: “Even if I keep no churchly fellowship in Communion and public worship and the like with such people – for although for this person or that among them, I cannot hope they have faith, and with some I’m pretty sure they do have it, yet I can in no way justify their churches nor stand in complete fellowship in them – yet I can still boast of their kindness.” (*Bedenken* III, 203.) In another place he says the same thing: “So I gladly also acknowledge that we have to seek unity in every way possible. . . . I would even lay down my life if such unity (I will only say between us and the Reformed, and that much more so, if it would accomplish more), could be won that way, yes, I could not spend it in any better way. But I think we must give good attention in this unity and willingness for peace that such things not violate the truth, not even in a single aspect, and that we thus demonstrate in every way love and meekness to those erring in religion from the bottom of our souls, but along with that be very careful that by doing so we not become the reason for either our putting ourselves in the danger before God of ungratefully diminishing his truth, or dangerously retreating from it, or affirming the other side in their heresy, as those things would burden our conscience. So, as we would then be in the camp of those who cause offense, who are to be altogether avoided, and of those who are not in the household of faith, whom we should sooner do good things towards rather than causing them dangerous offense, and since we

at the same time would cause the kind of split amongst ourselves that we're trying to repair with the Reformed, we would be the cause of an even wider and deeper split." (*Letzte Bdk.* I, 434.) So witnesses Spener, whom even evangelicals see as a man who is one of their own.

Now if today many evangelicals and, with them, like minded neo-Lutherans talk about those who still remain standing upon a settled confession of the pure doctrine, as if those who do so are dead, unconverted, wranglers over words, then we ask them, must the theologians just mentioned also be seen as such people because of their conscience-bound confession?

The third reason the Evangelicals of our Western territory have stated for her brand of churchly fellowship is this:

"That this kind of pursuit has already been applied in a great portion of our German fatherland with such gloriously blessed results."

Even if, according to that, we also wanted to believe that the members in this association have good intentions in their establishing this union, to thereby extend the kingdom of God, we still cannot for that reason ever call their union a good thing. Our good intentions don't make our actions good, but acting according to the rule of God's Word. It is even written of the enemies of the Gospel that they would think that they were doing God a service by murdering the apostles (John 16.2). Even Saul was very sure as he imagined himself totally justified when he chose to present to the Lord what he was required to destroy, according to God's Word. But what did he have to hear from the prophet of the LORD because of that? The prophet said: "Do you think the Lord desires having an offering or burnt offering rather than obedience to the voice of the LORD? Behold, obedience is better than sacrifice, and attentiveness than the fat of rams. For disobedience is as the sin of witchcraft, and rebellion as idolatry and the worship of idols. So now, since you have rejected the Word of the LORD, he has also rejected you." (1 Sam. 15.) Therefore, though some people constantly dream that people can loosen up on strictly maintaining pure doctrine to thereby better enable the extension of the kingdom of Christ, then even here, one must not follow through on that good intention, but everyone must set his heart to oppose that and remain obedient to the LORD's Word. That is better than any self-chosen sacrifice. Whoever surrenders the least letter of the truth in order to benefit the church thereby shows he does not believe that it's God, but it's man who must preserve the church, and this closet unbelief is most assuredly also the true, the actual root of every false effort towards union. People despair of the power of the truth, and therefore they act on human counsel and cleverness. They regard flesh as their strength and thereby retreat in their hearts from God.

Now if we would also go on to concede that, as the Evangelicals assert, through the union in our homeland a few benefits have been attained, we still could not thereby be bribed into letting ourselves be part of it thereby, for God's Word clearly says that we must not say: "Let us do evil so that good may result." Romans 13.8. A good goal in no way sanctifies an evil means, as the Jesuits teach. God is obviously so gracious that he also grants the evil good things, but their evil is not made good thereby. The sons of Jacob were not justified because they betrayed their brother, Joseph, which had to be carried out in the hand of the LORD, who worked through all that to preserve the whole world. (Gen. 15.20.) That act of violence committed against Joseph was still a treacherous act. So heretics remain ravenous wolves (Acts 20.29), and preachers without a call remain reprehensibly self-deceived, even when they still preach a portion of God's Word amongst themselves so souls are converted, so this new union also remains a sinister organization that opposes God, even should a few benefits be extended thereby.

Yet we must admit that probably no more unfortunate example could be offered than the union that has now been established in Germany, for what is the nature of those "gloriously blessed results"? We do not deny that in the last three decades God has finally once more aroused many sleepers from their sleep of death and, against all hopes and expectations, has amazingly caused hopeful movements in the Lutheran as well as the Reformed Churches. But this has not taken place because of the union. The union has much rather come about as an unhealthy means of poisoning love for the divine truth that is arising again, to inhibit its germination and to whither her recent new blooms. Or has the union done anything to prevent Christians being put to death again? – We don't think so. Must we call it "Christian love" when the Evangelical Church in Prussia seized the property of Lutherans who wanted to remain faithful in their Churches, embroiled and imprisoned her shepherds and her children's teachers in expensive litigation, and plundered their Churches and

hunted them out of their lands, burdening their consciences through all kinds of threats? Or have the number of parties at all diminished through the Evangelical Church? – To the contrary, there are innumerable more. For the parties of Lutherans and the Reformed not only continue to exist, but new sects of Evangelicals have splintered off again, both in Germany and America, into a whole host of all kinds of churches who have nothing in common with each other except that they all promote and pursue indifference towards doctrinal purity, and they seek to defend that amongst themselves. But we must bring this to a conclusion. The last reason used by evangelicals here is this:

“That this kind of unification is not only highly desirable in and of itself, but also has already actually been established in many of our current congregations, and therefore it certainly seems to be high time that this unification also be publicly declared.”

If Evangelicals are saying here that there are many congregations here in the West whose members that assemble already belong to the union Church, then we would have to say that's doubtful. For it is our experience that the typical method used by Evangelicals to bring union to congregations is this; that for a long period of time they let Lutherans believe they are Lutheran preachers, and the Reformed that they are Reformed. But when they are brought into the light by rightly fashioned Lutherans, or if after a while they have seen to it that even those members of their congregations who at first were somewhat conscientious about clinging to their mother church had become indifferent to her, they then, finally, take off their mask and reveal that they are really neither Lutheran nor Reformed, but rather Evangelical. In just that way they act just as dishonestly and are as duplicitous as the Methodists who also start out setting their trap by pretending that they are actually real Lutherans.

But apart from that we do not deny that generally the Evangelicals find here no more promising a field than steadfast Lutherans. Germans here, especially in the wild country are, for the most part, so impoverished that when they want a preacher they are sorely tempted, for the sake of the help they need, to give in to this false union. Add to that the unbelievable dullness, laziness and ignorance towards true doctrine which we must bemoan as the fruits of rationalistic preachers in Germany amongst our dear fellow countrymen. Therefore a faithful Lutheran preacher here is in a most puzzling situation. The obstacles he has to combat with those whom he wants to gather and retain in a little congregation are unspeakable. Barely does he assume his office when he will be judged and rejected as a man who wants to be judgmental about everything and is closed minded. No one but the LORD sees his tears or hears his sighs over the peril he sees for those erring souls. So just because of his extreme conscientious faithfulness he is rejected as fleshly and stubborn. They resent his very presence. He has to look like nothing but a road block. He must set himself against the spirit of the times. In the eyes of the masses he can never brag of being “relevant,” as do evangelicals, and he would have to utterly despair if he did not have the comfort that the LORD knows his heart, who seeks nothing of a steward, but that he be found faithful.

We conclude with this fervent wish: That the Savior who rules hearts would add his blessing to this criticism of these statutes of the Evangelical Union in the West, which we have drafted from our love of the truth, that the members of this union not dismiss our poor declaration out of hand, but rather receive it meekly and therefore also test their work just one more time before God, according to the holy norm of his Word, which alone is true, to give God the glory and forsake it as something that does not pass the test. May many other readers also be awakened thereby so as not to become discouraged if they now must swim against the tide, but to retain the Word that is sure and can instruct (Tit. 1.9.), for God says: “If you remain with me, I will remain with you and you shall remain my preacher. And if you teach the pious and separate yourself from evil people, you shall thus be my teacher. And so you shall not give way to them, so they must defer to you. (Jer. 15.19.)”⁸

In observing the Lutheran side of the ink wars of the nineteenth century, the response by the opponents are not often evident. However, in the instance of Walther's rebuke of the Union Church forming by her leading proponent, Pr. Louis Nollau, his opponent's exhaustive response

⁸Baseley, Joel R., Editor and translator. *Missouri Synod in Formation (1844 - '47): Essays of the Founding Fathers*. (Mark V Publications. Dearborn, Michigan. 2012) pp. 110ff - From *DL* Vol. 1 as cited at the beginning of the quote.

is handled point by point by Walther. This lengthy article stretches well into the second year of *DL* and is carried through 9 (non-consecutive) issues. Walther's response is a model of how *ad hominum* attacks can and should be handled and is a model application of ecclesiology by one who is well acquainted enough with it to disarm his opponent and confess the Biblical truth unionism exerts every effort and means to suppress.

Reply to the Most Recent Defense of the Union

by C.F.W. Walther

Vol. 1 pp. 78f, 82f, 86f, 95f, 97f; Vol. 2, pp. 11f, 26f, 47f, 51f

Motto: "Only let them preach as confidently and briskly whatever they can and against whomever they want, for, as I've said, there must be divisions, 1 Cor. 11.19, and the Word of God must take the field and battle. That is also why the Evangelists are called a great company, Ps. 68.12, and Christ a King of armies in the prophets. If his spirit is legitimate, he will have nothing to fear from us and will remain safe. The spirits are allowed to meet and skirmish. If a few are misled by this, well, that's how it goes in the course of a battle. Where there is a battle and a slaughter a few must fall and be wounded, but whoever fights honestly will receive the crown."

Luther, On the Spirit of the Anabaptists.

A few days ago a pamphlet appeared here published by Weber & Olshausen under the title: "A Word for the Good Cause of the Union. A Defense of the Evangelical Church Against the Attack of *The Lutheran* by E.L. Nollau, Ev. Pastor in Gravois, near St. Louis."⁹ We are glad to be able to hereby give notice about this pamphlet, for we are firmly convinced that a good cause can only win the truth of its either stemming from or standing against the truth, if it is done out in the open. We have also wished for a long time now for the witness of these vocal leaders of today's Evangelical Church to place from their hands into the hands of others what they really believe. Our wish has been fulfilled. Whoever wants to be convinced by his own eyes what the spirit of the new Evangelical Church of the West is like, he now has the opportunity to do so.

The 67 page booklet is chiefly for readers of *The Lutheran* and "is aimed" quoting Mr. Nollau himself, "at nothing else than to point out the narrow-minded, unevangelical, and dubious bias which is being advocated and spread in *The Lutheran*." According to this we see it as our duty to reply in our paper, to either, if we are defeated, publicly retract, or, if we are standing against a false complaint, to vindicate ourselves. We are more than happy to fulfill this duty, as by doing so we are given opportunity to even more clearly enunciate a few articles of Christian doctrine, to prevent their being misunderstood and destroyed, and to place weapons into the hands of our truth-loving reader himself for the struggle at hand, whenever heresy steps in such arrogance into the territory of the truth.

We regret not being able to immediately wade into the chief matter, the doctrine. But Mr. N has not wanted to fight merely on that field of battle. He has also personally attacked us and, indeed, in such a way that he has intentionally brought up our most sensitive subject, where he was sure we would be most vulnerable. The proof of "the good cause of the union" appeared to Mr. Author from the beginning to have been so utterly presumed, that there was no other way of assuring his "good cause" a victory, than to first make his accusers blush in the presence of the whole world by reminding them of their own past offenses.

Indeed, Mr. N writes on p. 4: "Far be it from us to want to cast aspersions on those taking part in the offenses given at that time, and to cause them pain by bringing them up." But what can we say to this, when there can be no other purpose for Mr. N. doing this? We think this would have been treated more honorably if Mr. N. would have directly stated at the outset: You are our enemies, and so we must treat you as our enemies. That kind of honesty would have engendered our trusting Mr. N. But truly, it is not an easy task, yes it's impossible to believe the declarations of love by Mr. N. and his assurances that he judges us with Christian forbearance, when he at the same time directly attacks us, just as (now at least) only our foes from the distant past still do. It pains us to see Mr. N. fighting against us "in league" with those opponents.

Among other things, Mr. N. reproaches us for "pharisaical arrogance, to think that we are perfect Lutherans" (p. 28), that we render "malevolent explanations" (by doing so), that we would

⁹This pamphlet is available from Franksen & Wesselshoeft, St. Louis, Mo.

“rather let a Reformed person starve than to take an interest in him” (p. 2), that we are unscrupulous (41), that we observe a “dishonest conduct” (43), we are intolerant enemies of evangelicals and call them heretics (4), we “believe we are the rightful stem and seed of the Luth. Church in America” (70), we have only written our criticisms “in a feigned love for the truth” (64), we assert that “we alone have the truth” (70), we produce the occasional trespass of the Evangelical Church, only because “it is so much easier to thump our chests about being in the true church, to boast about our pure doctrine, and to lovelessly call those who think differently heretics, than to legitimately and foundationally be converted.” (65). Finally, Mr. N. produced that prophecy uttered around five years before by a certain Doctor Vehse, that was punctuated with that most meaningful exclamation mark: “More and more spiritual tyrants like Stephan will come!” (21)

We only relate all this to the reader as a test of “evangelical” love, truth and honesty and we ask now, how can this personal slander of our character be brought into harmony with what Mr. N nevertheless writes about us Lutherans on p. 67: “We in no way doubt their honest intentions to desire only Christ and his glory.” – Yeah, he thus scolds the evangelicals as our “brothers” on p. 69. – We, on our side, can conclude nothing from this contradiction but this: Mr. Nollau wants it both ways. He wants to retain the appearance that he is not so loveless as to deny us our Christianity and God’s grace but, at the same time, he still wants to convince us and our dear readers that an evil spirit is moving us. We say it again, it hurts us deeply that Mr. N. has crossed over to fight this battle upon the field of personal attack, while we still engage Mr. Evangelical only upon the field of doctrine, which often appears to be harsh, but yet always, as our readers will have to bear witness of us, is out in the open and honestly fought, which leaves the judgement of hearts to the One who knows the heart.

Since we have deferred defending ourselves as we have encountered the blame that was heaped and charged against us above, and want to leave this matter to the judgement of God and of the unprejudiced reader, so we now turn to this second charge against us by Mr. N. Mr. N. has, of course, as has already been pointed out, also brought up our most heinous trespass which we have had to shoulder as Stephanites, or as followers of the notorious Stephan.

We testify that this repeated reminder of that offense that we caused at that time in two continents of the world is, still, quite salutary for us, since it serves to deeply humble us in a wholesome way before God and men. We bear witness that in this matter our bitterest foes have been more useful to us than our friends, who wrap everything in love. We further testify with honest hearts that we are not at all angry with Mr. N because he renews this remembrance of our former erring ways, to our great disgrace before all the world, in a public newspaper. We must rather seize the opportunity anew to hereby publicly and humbly confess what a great burden of guilt we feel. We confess that we, while we were still followers of Stephan, placed our blind trust upon a poor, fallible man, and we let him lead us without diligently testing it according to God’s Word. We confess that we, the preachers, made ourselves rulers over the churches, mingled what is temporal and spiritual, bound the church to a visible fellowship, lovelessly judged Germany and many children of God in Germany, ruthlessly denied many who were erring their standing in grace and salvation, in fanatical blindness left our calling and fatherland without a pressing necessity and thereby severed the most holy bonds, took the symbols of our church into our mouths, but did not retain the doctrine contained therein with true faithfulness, called ourselves Lutheran, and yet in many ways did not teach and act as Lutherans, so that under the banner of true Lutheranism we let ourselves be dragged away where only erring religious delusions can lead so that, thereby, we were on our path to becoming a most destructive sect. But we also confess that all these great and heavy transgressions cause us great heartache, for we do not consider ourselves worthy to be called disciples and servants of Christ and Lutherans. Yes, as Luther says of himself of the time he was consecrated as a Mass - priest, “That the earth did not at that time swallow both of us up was an injustice (humanly speaking) and all too great an indulgence on God’s part,” so we must also speak of the time when Stephen was elevated to his high station among us since the ocean had not swallowed us up, especially us preachers and leaders of the emigration. Our hearts want to shatter when we bring to mind that we had severely offended and angered God and had occasioned the blasphemy of God by his enemies, that perhaps no small number of souls had been mortally offended because of us. The whole church of JESUS Christ was draped in a horrible stain of sin and all the believing children of God who had seen us taking our errant path had become deeply sickened and disturbed. Therefore we beg once more of all who were previously offended by us, that they would forgive our terrible transgressions for God’s sake, that they would not ascribe what we did in our blindness to the Word of God, nor to the Lutheran Church,

nor to our strict and rigid adherence to the Word of God, but rather solely to our depravity and unfaithfulness.

But as we are here publicly repeating this confession and this plea, we in no way want to deny by this the mercy of God, which has also befallen us. We have not been people who were stiff-necked and hardened in heresy. What we had done that was offensive in the presence of all the world, we committed in ignorance, with an erring conscience, with good, although sinful, intentions, in order to serve God thereby, in the fearful delusion that we had to do what we did in order not to deny the truth and not to lose our salvation. We did not take our errant path in order to win anything temporal, but rather we had been prepared to sacrifice possessions, honor, life and limb, and everything that is dear to men by nature, for what we falsely regarded as the cause of God. Our heart had then fervently sighed after truth, righteousness and salvation. So then God had mercy on us, has wondrously not only mightily opened our eyes to the one misleading us, but also blessed his Word in our hearts, so that we acknowledged our sins and errors in contrition, and by that have sought and found, along with grace, the One who seeks the lost and justifies the godless. Rom. 4.5. We know that our sins lie upon us no more. According to the Third Article, we not only believe in a “forgiveness of sins” in general, but are also sure about it for us, that we have received this forgiveness of sins, that Christ also bore the sins committed by us under Stephanism, reconciled them with his blood on the cross, and removed them, and now, as we trust in him, they have been cast to the bottom of the sea. As deeply as it disturbs us that Mr. Nollau has brought up our sins to us again as if they still lay upon us, yet that does not disturb nor confuse us. We know JESUS receives sinners, even the greatest and most deeply fallen, even those through whose offense others are lost, J E S U S e v e n r e c e i v e s u s a n d h a s r e c e i v e d u s , and will never again let us be plucked from his hand. If the world might deny us forgiveness (which the children of God would never do), we will say with David: “The LORD has promised it to you.” If our hearts may still often condemn us, and Satan with all his hellish host accuse us: Your sins are so great that they cannot be forgiven, they still remain written with living letters in God’s book of debts, then we will want to and will still confess: “Even if our sins have become so powerful, grace is that much more powerful. If they are crimson like blood, yet they shall be white as snow, even if they are red as roses, they shall be as wool. For it is that much more certainly true, and a Word that is worthy of trust, that JESUS Christ has come into the world to save sinners, amongst whom I am chief. But it is for this reason that we encountered mercy, so that JESUS Christ would reveal the outlandish measure of his patience towards us as an example to those who would come to faith in him.” So even if many might look askance at God’s having been so kind to us, they might complain because Christ also receives us sinners, we will gladly bear all that scandal and shame before the world, who blames us for our sins. But that will still not restrain us from crying out with David: “Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not his benefits that he has done for you, who forgives you all your sins and heals all your transgressions.”

If I've done what I should not
That brings sorrow on my part
Yet this pain is all my wont:
Christ's sweat and bleeding heart.
For that is God's own ransom
For my own transgression
To God's throne I plead his Son
His is my compassion.

I build on this foundation,
That JESUS and his blood
Alone are my salvation,
The true, eternal good.
Without Him all that pleases
Is valueless on earth;
The gifts I owe to JESUS
Alone my love are worth.

Perhaps now Mr. N. would like to repeat the allegation which he made against us in his pamphlet: But you have not yet publicly confessed your sins and heresies! (p. 3) We must reply here that Mr. N. is in error. We believe there are few who have strayed who have so often and completely performed penance before all the world for their straying than we have. My deceased brother had held forth a sermon of repentance in which our whole case had been presented truly and unconditionally, conceding its public nature. It's not only been published once, but also in periodicals throughout Germany and over an extended period of time, even right where Mr. N. used to be in

Germany. Pr. Keyl had a letter circulated throughout the world in which our departures in doctrine and life were delineated in a most humble confession, and in a duplicate effort Pr. Loeber circulated a systematic presentation of our errors in which we were previously captivated in America and Germany, that had even been signed by myself and most of the other participating pastors as their common confession. Pr. Brohm had done the same thing, in which he gave a historical presentation of our fall and resurrection and had it included in the Pittsburgh Lutheran paper. In a local issue of *Reporter to the West*, a little over two years ago, our present congregation and myself had composed a brief confession of her former fall from the Lutheran Church before their fellow citizens, and requested everyone to see for themselves if we now were honestly striving after the goal that is established for us in the Lutheran Church. Finally, the publisher of *The Lutheran* himself spoke privately, especially with Mr. N. himself, about our fall in a most humble confession. Mr. N. at that time himself encouraged and assured us that he had born witness in Germany to our repentance and that he would represent us in the best way, with all Christian charity. So we ask our readers, by what right can Mr. N. now accuse us that we are to be charged as not yet having publicly confessed our sins and, therefore, not being permitted to demand being treated by Christians as people forgiven their sins and covered by Christ's blood!

Yeah, Mr. N. says, "yes, it would have been more salutary..., if our opponent would have published a humble confession for the errors in their past in his paper instead of now accusing other parties of being heretical and declaring war." We reply that by all means we do not doubt that it would have been much more comforting and satisfying for Mr. N to see our sins confessed in every issue of "*The Lutheran*" than see a critique of the principles of the present Evangelical union. We would then, perhaps, not have such an ungracious judge. But it is not the main goal of our paper to give personal reports about ourselves. So we must ask: Can a man who really confesses from the heart the doctrine of the justification of sinners through grace demand that those who are fallen should never stop confessing their sins? Yes, to do nothing but always only appear with lamenting and sighing over their fall in the presence of the world and of Christianity? We answer: No. A man who is justified should, indeed, never forget his sins, much less try to demand silence about them and to, thus, take back his confession of his sins, but he should also finally loudly confess to the glory of the Friend of sinners: "We have received his mercy." And only self righteous people who do not seriously believe that there really is forgiveness in Christianity can be offended because of that.

So it is most certainly true. We, who at one time ourselves lay in many dangerous errors, and have been brought out of them again, now are to chasten others in error. Now Mr. N. regards that as a sign of our lack of repentance and a lack of a foundation of humility in our hearts. But then has he not read what Christ says to Peter, when he foretells his fall: "And when you have repented, strengthen your brothers"? Luke 22.32. Has Mr. N. not read what David says in Ps. 51 where he confesses his fall: "Comfort me again. . . , so I will teach transgressors your ways, that sinners be converted to you."? Where is the doctrine of justification which Mr. N. brags that he holds to so faithfully, when he chastens those who have fallen and are restored again by God's grace because they seek to proclaim with power that truth to which God has restored them, and to be militant against the errors that oppose it? In Mr. N.'s order of salvation doesn't this belong to the fruits of repentance, especially when previously a person has helped spread the error? According to Mr. N.'s conception of Christian church discipline it appears that he wants the fallen, even when he repents, to never again be able to be permitted a standing and voice in the Christian congregation. He seems to consign him to an eternal gag rule, and permit him only to speak his confession of his sins. But then again, where does that leave the doctrine of justification? If Mr. N. wants to be the final word (concluding judgement), then he must be in an overwhelming agreement with unbelievers that don't want to hear anything from any saint about his testimony to them of how he once was fallen. Yes, Mr. N. must necessarily be angered at the conversion and the resulting humbling of a David, Peter, Saul, etc., who also had fallen deeply, and yet after their repentance again confidently confessed the truth and freely attacked those in error. Oh, how annoyed Mr. N. has become as he feels so offended by our explaining why we see his Evangelical Church as errant! Out of all of this it is not hard for others to see, and, as a result of it, these readers will come to a clear realization that Mr. N. believes that our confession would have to consist in our surrendering our rigid adherence to Lutheran doctrine. But God in grace has protected us from that sort of repentance, to which Satan has sorely tempted us.

Before we conclude our reply to these attacks on our personal character, we have only one additional thing to report. Mr. Nollau impudently reports on p. 21: "The reported 'Declaration of Submission' was signed by all of the adults, men and women." Our opponent offers here sad proof

that his intention to disgrace our congregation whom he calls “worthy” of his honor (p. 5) before all the world is certainly not to be taken as his seriously and actually reporting the whole truth, for we can prove with witnesses that, for example, just we, I and the second pastor installed in our congregation, did not sign that “Declaration of Submission” and, indeed, I did not for the simple reason that already at that time I personally had lost my full trust in Stephan.

In the next issue we will plan, LORD willing, to delve into the most important matter this issue treats, that is, the doctrine that is in dispute between us. . . .

In the last issue of *The Lutheran* we asserted that Mr. Nollau has not yet woken up to the nature of the Christian church, and, moreover, he hasn’t grasped our presentation of the doctrine of the church much less, therefore, refuted it. But he has, unfortunately knocked down a straw man that exists nowhere but in his own mind. Now it’s up to us to prove our assertion.

On page 7 Mr. N. quotes these words from *The Lutheran*: “We do not agree that there are many true churches,” to which Mr. Nollau replies: “We don’t either. But the one true church of Christ is even the invisible host of believers, whom the LORD alone knows as his own, who are scattered all over throughout the whole earth. The other, the visible church, is all of Christianity.” – If Mr. N had really known what he was saying by this concession, that “there is only one true church,” this would necessarily have led him to quite a different conclusion than the one he actually reached. For what conclusion does Mr. N. draw from that principle? He says, “We would have to either accept that there is no true orthodox church, since even the Lutheran church does not have an absolute claim to the one legitimate interpretation of the holy Scripture, or we would have to agree that other churches can also boast of being orthodox.” p. 18-19. So Mr. N. goes on to say: When certain fellowships “may have taken something away or added something” (compare to Deut. 4.2; Rev. 22.18-19.), so, from the apostle in 1 Cor. 3.12, he designates “this thing or that” as some of that wood, hay and stubble which is built next to the gold, silver and jewels, upon the one foundation, JESUS Christ.” p. 27. According to p. 30 it can also not be denied therefore that the Reformed and all the others, “confess the faith roundly and purely.” And on p. 34 “the foundation of the church is Christ and his Gospel” is attributed to those and, therefore, also of heretical churches. On p. 25 and 26 Mr. N. (supported by quotes he takes from the words of a certain Mr. Stier) first speaks of the Christian church we confess we believe in the Third Article, and he says now of it that those belonging to her are “all who outwardly confess together their faith in the Triune God according to the revelation of JESUS Christ, etc., even if they fall short in doctrine, discipline and life. That’s why he goes on to say that we must therefore “not completely reject any fellowship that confesses even a part of the apostolic confession of faith.” Now following that, Mr. N., with Mr. Stier, distinguishes this “holy Christian church” from “the Communion of saints,” which he calls “the actual, legitimate church of the LORD.” – A long citation from the writing of a certain Mr. Saxer, in which Mr. N. wraps his own writing at its beginning, yields a deep look into Mr. N.’s view of the church. Saxer himself says there that the ultimate conclusion of his investigation of the development of the church is this: “that as far as the church was concerned it came to an end at the time of the Reformation,” (p. 9) while “until the time of the Reformation it had been developing ever more gloriously.” p. 8. From the age of the Reformation, Mr. N. goes on to say with Mr. Saxer: “Its condition, as a whole, was as if it had no constitution, but the church is a(n externally?) well ordered organism, in which all its members adhere one to another. The invisible church was then made manifest visibly in that manner, even though no true church is now established in its proper form.” p. 11. It is very clear in this that the view of the Reformed church itself is here being justified, that the separate sects would be only “different manifestations” of the true church.

We must confess that even if we make every effort to construct an agreeable model according to these airings of Mr. N.’s thoughts about the church, nothing becomes clearer to us than Mr. N.’s lack of clarity, out of which confusion this fellow has here made an extraordinary effort to publish a written statement. Mr. N. will no doubt excuse himself from this by appealing to the fact that he himself did not write about what he applies to this main topic, but quotes from the writings of respected people of our times. But Mr. N. doesn’t sound convinced himself of what he wants to prove by what he has actually published in his own words. If so he should at least have first tested to what degree that other source even agrees with the foundational principles he had initially firmly established. Mr. N. didn’t do that. So according to the opinions quoted above, his confession of the church goes on to say:

“According to the Third Article I believe in two churches, one visible and one invisible, that is 1. the holy Christian church, and 2. the communion of saints, for these may not be muddled

together. P. 6. The invisible church is the host of believers in the whole world who alone have the promise to retain the unfalsified doctrine of Christ. p. 27. The visible church is the assembly of all who outwardly confess the doctrine of Christ, even if they depart greatly from it. Indeed, this visible church, before the Reformation, had the true form of the church of Christ, especially as she was united in a great, organic whole in the fourth century of the Emperor Constantine, and later in the papacy, under such pleasing conditions as she ever more gloriously developed as the one great historical manifestation where Christ revealed himself and his glory to the world.” p. 8. But alas! At the time of the Reformation the church “would be robbed of all her glory and beauty from God’s righteous rule, and her high, noble form was destroyed. The church was no more! She was exterminated from the earth as Christ was exterminated back then.” (So far) The fault was – “the condition of being without a constitution” from which “the result was this: that ancient church would be shattered and divided into sects.” p. 11. Among all these sects the Roman Church “above all churchly parties continues to exemplify the character of the church.” p. 10. The other sects, indeed, depart more or less from the Word of God, yet it would be unjust not to honor them (as the pharisaical, proud Lutherans desire) all with the title of orthodox churches, since they are all institutions of God for salvation, founded upon Christ and his Gospel, and are only different manifestations of the true church, who, indeed, are not all alike to be fully respected, but nevertheless confess the faith as purely and roundly as does the Lutheran church, for true confession does not consist of the pure doctrine of the Gospel being confessed, but merely that Christ is confessed. p. 32. The best of all the churches I have investigated, as I have such a great selection of them, is ultimately the new Evangelical Church, “which has again taught the Gospel most purely,” yet even those who belong to her, unfortunately, “must strive to find ever more fully that first, legitimate foundation of the apostolic church.” p. 26. –

This is Mr. N.’s confession of his faith concerning the church. If our reader himself will open that book, he will find that we haven’t made this up but have only condensed what Mr. N.’s book stated here and there, so that what he had woven together about the form of the church would be somewhat perceptible and summarized. The reader sees from it, first, that Mr. N., contrary to God’s Word, creates two churches, in that he distinguishes the invisible church from the visible church, while, according to God’s Word there is only one true church, which has one Spirit, one faith, one Baptism, etc. and is made visible or public through nothing other than God’s Word, or the confession of the truth. Now certainly according to the holy Scripture, indeed, heretics and sects are also externally in the midst of the true church, in which, according to St. Paul, even the anti-Christ is seated, but, we say again, the sects are not for that reason, as Mr. N. concludes, the church. They do not for that reason belong to her at all and are not a part of the same! For Christ’s kingdom is a kingdom of light and truth, not of darkness and deception.

The reader notices, secondly, that through Mr. N.’s false distinction between the visible and the invisible church the heresy is insinuated that there is either no rightly believing church on earth, or that the boast of being such a church must be permitted to all parties in Christianity. That is also the reason, then, that Mr. N. does the latter and wants to acknowledge every sect as a part of the true Christian church. By this public confession Mr. N. must shoulder our accusation that the evangelicals whole-heartedly embrace indifference (religious indifferentism), that is, they are people who completely justify for themselves equating pure doctrine and false, as exactly the same. The only thing still missing would be that Mr. N. add to this that there is not even any difference between Christians, heathen, Jews and Turks, so long as they only “pursue holiness and do not back slide.” (p. 56.), so the cornerstone is prepared for the great unionistic temple being constructed throughout the world. The “Evangelical Protestants” (which now most plainly means those who protest against the Gospel) are now laying the groundwork for this construction.

So how does Mr. N. give answer to the following admonition: “I admonish you, dear brothers, that you mark those who cause division and offenses apart from the doctrine you have learned, and depart from them”? Rom. 16.17. “For I know that after my departure ravenous wolves will come among you, who will not spare the flock. Even from amongst you yourselves men will arise who speak perverted doctrine, drawing disciples to themselves. So be watchful”? Acts 20.29-30. Or when the LORD says: “Many false prophets will arise and many will be misled. So if anyone will say to you: Look, here is Christ or there he is, you must not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders so that were it possible, even the elect would be deceived”? Mt. 24.11,23,24. Why doesn’t Mr. N. answer these and similar passages that deal with the false church, and that we have quoted to him? Why does he pass them by as a fox does as he slinks by those places where he sniffs danger? Yes, yes! It is an utterly evil sign that Mr. N. doesn’t say a word

about this and directs his writing for the cause of the lords of the Evangelical Church, as if these warnings against false doctrine and the sects that are established thereby were as much as missing from his Bible! Just here is the very issue where Mr. N. must prove his point. He must show that either there can't possibly be any false churches or sects, or, at least, that Evangelicalism can't be one of them. But even if he were able to tip toe past these warnings against false prophets and their fellowships that are so abundantly prominent in the Bible, which were based upon easily understood principles, to try to hide them as much as possible from our readers' eyes, yet these warnings will remain bright lamps for us in this final, dark and horrible age.

But now what must we finally say about how Mr. N. and Mr. Saxer describe the church before and after the Reformation? To waste a word about this in the ears of a Protestant seems utterly superfluous. Their description is so offensive it makes us sick to repeat it. Mr. N. can only expect thanks for that from his holiness, the pope in Rome, for certainly! if any Protestant should have earned himself a cardinal's cap, at least, we know of no better way a Protestant could have earned himself such a thing. What Mr. N could gain for himself by calling his hero, Mr. Saxer, a respected Lutheran, and then to set before his readers the jibber jabber of his "development of church history" to document his being a respectable Lutheran is beyond us. But this much is clear to us. That Mr. Saxer's head and the head of all who justify his view, are thoroughly haunted by crude, fleshly, papistic concepts of the true form of the church. They present it under the form of a well organized church state and therefore state the unheard of principle that, "at the time of the Reformation (the new forming of the church) the church had come to an end!" p. 9. One might think when he reads such things in Mr. N.'s book that he is holding in his hands the *Friend of the Truth* from Cincinnati. Shame, shame that Mr. Nollau accuses us Lutherans of having an intentional inclination towards Rome, while he himself becomes a traitor to the Protestant church in favor of Romanists and gives weapons into the hands of Roman Catholics against us, inasmuch as he acknowledges that with the Reformation the true form of the church was destroyed and that the Romanists "above all the churchly parties continue to exemplify the character of the church!" p. 10. Shame, shame that a Protestant so disgraces and disparages the blessing of the Reformation, and can be so blind and not know that the public preaching of the pure Word, even by its being murdered on the pillary or in the dark torture chambers of the inquisition, gives the true form of the church, and she, this kingdom of the cross, is thus transfigured into a city high upon a hill, into a lighthouse that guides straying ships to the safe harbor! Shame shame, that for the sake of the externally impressive form by which the Roman Church can keep up her appearances before the world, a Protestant can still be so moved and look so enviously upon temporal power, opulence and glory and the militaristic order of the papacy! Obviously Mr. N. has never once noticed that the external means of artificially binding the pope's kingdom together, or, as he calls it, its "external organization" completely turns the order of the Christian church on its head. These presentations of the true form of the church, as live in the heart of Mr. N. and must be aroused in his readers by him, also give us the key as to why so many new converts now defect to the sect of Rome, while he hears nothing like this from us so-called Old Lutherans.¹⁰ The spirit of the false union necessarily leads to that. In the so-called Evangelical church one seeks to gather people together who have obvious antagonism against the great, organized, staid body of the papacy to gather together people who, of course, don't care whether people bear in their hearts one faith and therefore confess one doctrine. They rather let themselves be satisfied if the people are only pleased to belong to a new church that is wide and broad, in which there is enough room for people of different faiths. But how is that any different than the glorious and blessed unity of the Roman Church? Foundationally in consists in nothing further than that the bishop kneels under the pope, the priest under the bishop, the laity under the priest, and they all cry out at the top of their lungs: We belong to the Catholic Church and believe whatever she commands us to believe! – meanwhile the same doctrine is barely ever heard in any two pulpits.

In the next issue we plan to show what kind of doctrine and presentation of the church Mr. N. has falsely ascribed especially to the Lutherans, but how he has thereby revealed that he, at least

¹⁰Mr. N. will perhaps think he might be able to name Mr. Oertel as one of those old Lutherans who is a convert to the papacy, but he would be in error. Mr. Oertel is just as little impressed by the true doctrine of the Lutheran Church as all of us were formally, as Stephanites. It was not at all our staunchly holding fast to Lutheran doctrine that made us Stephanites, but rather completely, though not consciously, departing from Lutheran doctrine. It does Mr. N. and his Methodist brothers in faith no good at all to engage old Lutheranism in battle, if he won't talk about anything but our straying into Stephanism.

we hope, was not capable of grasping our clearly presented doctrine in his context, and by which, if that not be the case, we must fear that this man rejects our doctrine against his better knowledge and against his own conscience. . . .

If Mr. Nollau had really understood what was said in *The Lutheran* about the church and, especially about the Lutheran Church, then he would have had to have been a most wicked man to have taken his sanctuary in such crass lies to save himself from his having been exposed. Yet the reader has already seen in the previous two issues what astonishing confusion dominates the head of Mr. N. concerning his own depiction of the church. So we might, out of respect for Mr. N., suppose that an evil heart is not the real reason he has presented our doctrine of the church falsely and perversely, but rather his failure to understand it. We must find we were not wrong in that conclusion, among other reasons, because first thing in his “*Impression*,” Mr. N. describes how our attacks affected him. P. 5. Reading that, it seems Mr. N. has obviously felt a “greater impression” in his reading us than what he noted we said. What made the deepest impression on him was what he actually let himself read into our doctrinal presentation. Psychology (the study of the mind) even acknowledges what wondrous games our imagination plays under conditions when it’s excited. It tells us how, when a person travels alone at night and only thinks about robbers or murderers he might encounter, his mind stirs to action and behold! – he barely takes another step when he sees in the distance a huge, imposing man, who is obviously lurking on the path of the traveler with evil intent. The blood freezes in the traveler’s veins. He freezes in his tracks. With terror he is already planning his defense against the ambush that is threatening him. Yet – the moon shines through the breaking clouds – and there stands before him a harmless road marker. So innocently, we think, this may have happened with Mr. Nollau when we had pointed out what the Lutheran church is. So this poor man also really was thrown into great distress, p. 38, as he declares a dreadful concern that we would slaughter all of the evangelicals if we might suddenly be given the temporal authority to do so. In fact, we are deeply saddened that Mr. N. was thrown into such painful concerns as he read through *The Lutheran*. But that’s what happens when a person follows his “first impressions.”

But to the point. So what doctrine of the church does Mr. N. confess in his writing? He begins with the assertion: “Mr. Walther has persistently stated the opinion that the Lutheran Church is the single true, visible and invisible, saving church.” P. 5. The author also repeats the same on pages 6 and 7 and says: “From the very beginning it (*The Lutheran*) consistently merges the external, visible Christian church, with the actual, true and invisible church of Christ, so the Lutheran Church must be both.” But nevertheless Mr. N. says further that we “allow that millions of souls outside of the Lutheran Church still partake in Christ and eternal salvation.” p. 22. Mr. N. further inserts into our faith that where there has been a Lutheran Church people have laid “in spiritual death.” P. 27. Mr. N says further that we “have pledged our faith on the church and on the symbolical books.” P. 51. Finally, Mr. N. says of us: “They indeed seek to take refuge in their saying: the true Christians who are in other Churches are actually Lutheran’s at heart and really belong (without knowing it) to the Lutheran church, only that kind of clause is just a clever deception to get them out of the contradiction in which they have become tangled through their claim to be the one true church.” P. 68. Again, the description of the Lutheran church as it is given by that alleged Lutheran, Mr. Saxer, is stressed and therefore affirms this charge of Mr. N. against us by saying: “The foundation of the Lutheran church is the pure Word and Sacraments, as the law of the church. She has never asserted and also cannot assert that all her members have been actively inculcated in her confessions. She also does not immediately require it, and at times sets a greater value, if I may put it mildly, upon a proper acknowledgment of her constitution, than on the actual state of her various congregations. There are times when she has most wondrously progressed by this: If her confession would merely be acknowledged to the state and if, at some solemn occasions, her servants would subscribe to them, even with all kinds of *reservations mentales* (troubling reservations in their minds), yet the church did not suffer even a bit of harm by it in her nature and her truth.” p. 13.

That is the description of the Lutheran Church as Mr. N. would sell it to his unwary readers, as well as our own. This thereby ascribes to us the stupid opinion that the visible association of people who receive the symbolical books of the Lutheran Church and a Lutheran Church order as her constitution and have stood apart as a special party in the church, that those who affiliate with her are the true visible and invisible church of JESUS Christ on earth, which must save us, on which we must believe, and whose nature consists in her symbols being acknowledged merely outwardly by the state, and subscribed to by her servants, even if dishonestly, and that her peculiar external order

would defend the assertion of her peculiar form. So also Mr. N. silences the rejection of this that we're always screaming (the following notwithstanding), that we also recognize God's children outside of our supposed one true church of God.

Now we know full well that Mr. N. has imagined this sweet dream of his, that what we say is so ignorable and that we could not possibly have any other thoughts about our Lutheran Church. But we appeal to all reasonable readers of *The Lutheran* and ask them: Where in our paper have we crowded such nonsense with which Mr. N. saddled us? When did we ever say that the Lutheran Church was a visible institution that was confined to those who are called Lutherans? Quite to the contrary, have we not described (see especially issue 6 of *The Lutheran*) the church as always being like an invisible building that is built over the entire world? Have we not, among others, made the following confession: "We are in no way so fanatic and so confined in the knowledge of the invisible kingdom of Christ, that we think that it only consists of those who are called Lutherans. Oh, no! Even for that reason our church is so great and majestic to us, exactly because we cling to this tenet with our whole-hearted agreement, therefore we want, even in our poor part of her, to publicly take our vows for her, pray and battle for her and despite every disgrace that she still bears, remain with her to our last breath, because we know that this church is not confined to the borders of a human name, or a country, or a time, but rather embraces all the heirs of JESUS Christ!" Don't we then go on to say: "Everyone who without lying submits to the whole written Word of God and bears the true faith on our dear LORD JESUS Christ in his heart and confesses it before the world, to him we extend a hand, consider him a part of our family of faith, as our brother in Christ, as a member of our church, as a Lutheran, amongst whatever sect he may be hidden and may be taken prisoner"? See *The Lutheran* #2, p. 1. Didn't Mr. Nollau read that? Where is anything stated here that could even hint at the thought that we would believe that the historical appearance first noted 300 years ago of a certain limited churchly party, which was mockingly named Lutheran, is the whole Lutheran church to which we alone affiliate and outside of which no salvation or blessedness is to be found? How could Mr. N. have arrived at that thought with those explanations we ourselves have made, that we only out of "cunning" account Christians amongst the sects as Lutherans? Has he not learned acknowledging this is necessary and integral to our whole doctrine of the church, that if we forfeited this single part of the same, the entire doctrinal construct that we follow would have to collapse? It is beyond any doubt, Mr. N. considers the church an external organization, therefore he also seeks such a dream amongst us. Indeed, he at first concedes that there is only one true church, which is invisible, but then he forsakes those good thoughts again and speaks of a whole host of true visible churches, so he attributes this mish mash of thinking to us. Mr. N. does not affiliate with the one universal Christian church alone but, rather, out of all the so-called churches, he grants himself "the best one" according to his thoughts, that is, the new Evangelical Church, as the best coat that is most tastefully tailored in the clothing store. Therefore he expects of us this same idea, just as undiscerning and sectarian as his own.

So we further ask Mr. N., where was it ever written in *The Lutheran* that the Lutheran church is the one saving Church? – Only a most inexcusable, intentional attempt to slander and rouse suspicions against us could make Mr. N. so sly (as he is described in "*Theophilus*" and "*The Apologete*") as to so shamelessly and without hesitation account those papistic doctrines to us. Mr. N. appears to say that it is fine to say that a church saves (p. 26) but not that she alone saves. But where did we ever say that? We certainly did assert that a person would only be saved in the true church, but that means nothing other than that we can only be saved through true faith in Christ, which obviously can only be obtained in the true church. Therefore this is also one of the many untruths which Mr. N. has spread through his pamphlet, that he placed in our mouth the concession that even outside of our one true church, people can be saved. Where did we write even a single word about that? Certainly we have conceded that many true Christians can stand externally bound to a sect, and that certainly there are undoubtedly countless people who are bound externally to the association that calls itself Lutheran who do not belong to it, but have we not clearly taught that these true Christians all still belong inwardly to the spiritual body of the true church? Have we not clearly explained that when we call ourselves Lutheran, we are not adhering to any modern church, but to the one ancient Christian church, which always has taught the same thing, which means, that has the truth, to which all true Christians of all times and lands have belonged and which consists of the children of God? – Further, where do we say that those who belong to the true church "lay in spiritual death"? Do we not say the opposite, that only those born again can be members of the true church? We know right well that believing in something means placing one's trust in it. We perceive from that

Mr. N. might like to bring against us the charge that we have made the church into our God or much rather into our idol,¹¹ therefore he does not blush, p. 57, to foist on our hearts that we “place the church over Christianity.” When we are pressed like that, in order not to forsake the church, we seize this opportunity not to forsake nor to deny Christ, the pure Gospel, the truth, the doctrine of the universal Christian church. – In the next issue we will conclude this and show the extent to which we understand the Lutheran church to be the single, ancient, true, universal, apostolic, Christian church.

...

Since we are drawing quickly to our conclusion as to how this impacts the church, let us finally attempt to present how our Lutheran Church understands the relationship that exists between her and other denominations.

God, who from eternity foresaw that the people he would create would fall into death and eternal condemnation through sins, also decided from eternity to gather an eternal church, which means an elect people, from this lost and condemned human race throughout all the ages of this world, to have them battle here for a period of time and, finally, to unite them in heaven as a triumphant assembly unto eternal blessedness. This eternal plan, most worthy of praise, would also then ultimately be gloriously carried out in time. That is, out of inexpressible love, God’s only begotten Son became a man, fulfilled the law through his holy life for all people, atoned for all sins through his bitter suffering and death, and through his resurrection brought justification, life and salvation into the light. Now God had proclaimed all this to the world, sometimes directly doing so himself, without means, sometimes through his prophets and apostles. He promised salvation and blessedness to all who would through faith receive this Gospel, this joyous proclamation of universal atonement through Christ, and make it their own. So through this preaching of the Gospel that has gone out into all the world, the whole world is most significantly divided into two groups, that is, into those who reject the gracious Word of their God, or still do not take it to heart, who harbor unbelief or false belief, who are, therefore, lost and, again, those who receive this Word in faith, who follow the gracious voice of God and thus, as they remain in faith, are finally saved. That latter group is the church. So the church is the assembly of those whom God has called out of darkness into his marvelous light and who have received this call. She is the aggregate of all who truly believe in Christ, the sum and total of all who are justified by faith, all who are born again of the Holy Ghost, all who are converted from out of the kingdom of Satan to God. She is the elect race, the royal priesthood, the chosen nation, the peculiar people. She is the fellowship of all those who have become partakers of the divine nature. She is the holy family of the children of God on earth who are born of God. She is the leaven that God has kneaded into the dough of the children of this world, by which the world will be more and more permeated by him.

Indeed this church consists in different eras, amidst various constitutions, and has her various forms and fates, but she always is and remains one and the same. At the time of the Old Testament she stood under a different sort of household (divine stewardship) than in the age of the N.T. That is, according to the Old Covenant, the church stood under the pedagogy and disciplining authority of the law, but according to the New Covenant she is free of the pedagogue and lives under the Gospel alone. But this has no impact whatsoever on their unity, for the church of the O.T. was just as holy through faith in the Savior, who was to come, as she awaited his appearance in the flesh, as the church of the NT is holy through faith in the Savior, who has come already, as she now awaits his appearance and revelation in glory. So the churches of the OT and NT therefore actually comprise but one church, for they have the same faith, the same mercy, the same hope, except the church of the NT has come of age. She is no longer burdened by the pedagogy, the yoke and the burden of the law.

¹¹Whoever is attributed as believing in the church is necessarily a brother in faith to Arians and the Jesuits. That is, it is known from Socrates and Sozomen that the Arians also wrote back then in their confession of faith: “We believe in one catholic church.” In this they acted deceptively so they could also say: “We believe in Christ,” even though they did not regard him as the very God. The Jesuits have followed the Arians in that falsification of the apostolic confession of faith. For example a Jesuit missionary did this when he had published a writing under the title: “The Universal Apostolic Article of Faith: I Believe in One Holy Apostolic and Catholic Church. An Apostolic Declaration that Neither the Catholic in his Faith nor the non-Catholic in his Heresy Leaves in Doubt; In the Apostolic Mission, introduced by P. Adamo Flott, of the Association of Priests of JESUS, published with permission of the authorities. Augsburg and Munich. 1729.”

So now as the church of the OT and NT is one and the same, so the church of the NT, to an even greater degree, throughout all her centuries, is always one and the same. She always has the same faith, the same hope, the same Spirit, the same unity, the same truth, the same sacraments, the same wealth, the same holiness, the same foundation, and preserves all this to this hour. She was one and the same before Luther's time and after. She had not perished under the papacy. But a distinction now persists, in that under the papacy the church had been almost completely buried and crusted over by the clouds of human doctrine which had become dominant, which clouds were dispelled and driven away again through the holy work of the Reformation. Even under the papacy there was a holy seed of believing children of God, but they languished in Babylonian captivity until God fashioned abundant help through the Reformation and once more let comfort be taught, and led a great portion of his church out of Babylon, that is, out of the papal sect.

So now when we affiliate with the Evangelical Lutheran Church, we thereby want to affiliate with none other but even with the one, holy, universal (catholic) church of all times described above, which alone has the truth and in which is included the gathering of all God's children.

What? By this won't the accusation be made: "How can you be so presumptuous? Is the Lutheran Church, so limited, so narrow minded, yes, so deluded? Is this little chapel, that is almost in a state of utter collapse, that is stuck in the dead letter, is that little group that is so sunk in spiritual death, and almost plagued and consumed in utter disbelief, to be regarded as the universal Christian church, apart from which is no salvation, which even the gates of hell shall not overwhelm? – If anyone is thinking that, we cry out to you: Just hold on a minute! Just hear us out and then you can judge for yourselves.

Luther had, dear reader, in no way founded a new church, much less had he desired to do so. He had much rather protested that the papists were the ones who, in countless doctrines, had departed from the ancient, apostolic church. His writings were nothing other than his plea to Christianity not to forsake the ancient church. Luther never manufactured any new doctrine, but through study, meditation, and prayer and pleading, mined in the shaft of the divine Word and in the writings of faithful witnesses to the truth after the unchangeable doctrine of the true church of all ages. All the doctrine which Luther learned from the Word of God was the doctrine of the true church of God he retained, confessed before the world, and defended to his dying breath. Far be it from Luther to want to follow his own thoughts, to separate himself from the church or to found a new church. We see how much he valued the voice of the true church by the way Luther reacted as Zwingli not only attacked the false teaching of the papacy, but also a doctrine of the ancient catholic church of all ages, that is, the doctrine that in the holy LORD's Supper the true body and the true blood of JESUS Christ is present and is received with the mouth by the worthy and the unworthy. This is what he says on this: "Also, as this article is not a doctrine nor some nuanced conclusion from the musings of fallible man, but is established and grounded clearly in the Gospel, through the clear, pure, certain Words of Christ, and unanimously believed and preserved from the beginning of the Christian church in all the world to this very hour. – This witness of the entire holy Christian church (even if we had nothing more) should alone be sufficient for us to remain with this article, and not to listen to any fanatic spirit about it, nor to tolerate it. For it is dangerous and shocking to listen to anything or believe something against the unanimous witness, faith and doctrine of the entire Christian church, from its beginning on, that has now, for over fifteen hundred years, been unanimously retained in all the world. If it were a new article, and not stemming from the inception of the Christian church, or if it were not in all of the church nor retained with the whole of Christianity unanimously in all the world, then wouldn't it be safer and less shocking to raise doubts about it or dispute its legitimacy? But now if it has been unanimously retained from the beginning on, and to the entire extent of Christianity, whoever would then raise doubts would thereby be as much as believing there were no Christian church and thereby condemning not only the whole Christian church as a condemned dame heretic, but also Christ himself, with all the apostles and prophets, who have established and mightily born witness to this article we recite: "I believe in the Christian church," that is, when Christ says, Matthew 18:20: "Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the world," and St. Paul says in 1 Tim. 3:15: "The Church of God is the pillar and bedrock of truth." – I would rather have not only every fanatical spirit, but even every emperor, king and wise ruler and authority bear witness against me, than see or hear one iota or one tittle of the Christian church oppose me. For one is not to play games with articles of faith unanimously retained from the beginning on and throughout Christianity, as he might poke fun at papistic or imperial rule, or of the human traditions of the fathers or counsels." – Therefore Luther also always appealed to his consensus with the universal church. Even in 1544 he wrote a

confessional witness he had made on behalf of a certain J. Reybitz: "He (Reybitz) has promised to remain immovable in the Christian doctrine of the Gospel, as it is taught and confessed in our church through God's grace in Christian unanimity with the true catholic church." In another place Luther composed an ordination witness from the year 1540 which says: "We have learned that Johannes Fischer retains the pure catholic doctrine of the Gospel, and bears disgust for all enthusiastic opinions which have been condemned by the judgement of the catholic church of Christ."

Further, Luther had not once ever taken leave of the Roman Church itself nor did he want to separate from her. He would gladly have remained therein if the confession of the pure Gospel would only have been permitted him. That is why he remained so long in the fellowship of the Roman Church until he was thrown out by the ecclesial and temporal authorities. So he writes this in the year 1519: "Even if, unfortunately, things could be much better in Rome, neither that nor any other reason is, or can be, so great that one should leave or separate from that church. Yet, the more evil things stand with her, the more one should run to her aid and remain, for she will not improve by leaving or despising her." (Halle. XV, 848.)

Now after Luther, with all who received his doctrine, had been placed under the ban as a condemned heretic, and had been thrown out of the fellowship of the Roman Church, and therefore Luther also renounced the papacy as it had become obvious to him that it was the synagogue of Satan, yet he also, even then, did not ultimately have any goal to found a suitable Church in Germany, into which he would have gathered all the children of God, and which he wanted to have made the single fountain from which the water of life should flow into all the world, to be regarded as the sole source of the same. He says specifically: "This (church) does not gather herself together in one group, but rather she is scattered over all the world. She believes as I believe and I believe as they believe. We have no impediment or dissimilarity in faith, we all believe in one Christian church. There is nothing outside of that church." (*Luther's Works* VII. 2347.) Luther writes further: "Augustine directs this passage, Ps. 19.5: 'It sounds throughout the land,' against the Donatists, who confined the church to a corner in Africa. But much more must it be directed against our new Donatists who deny that there are believers in India, Persia and Asia. For wherever the sound and the Words of the Spirit of Christ are, there is no doubt that the church of Christ is there. For the Spirit of Christ speaks nowhere but in his church. Because, since the text plainly says it, that sound of the apostles has gone out into every land, and you can't read any other passage contradicting this, so we must have a concern for ourselves that we not boast of ourselves at all as do those godless Donatists, no matter who they are or whether they are ancient or modern, as if we were the only believers. They are nothing less than unbelievers to us since we never hear the Word and the voice of the apostles from them." IV. 1487.

Now many might say at this point: Good! By that, if you concede that the church is not merely with the so-called Lutherans, but to be sought and found throughout the whole world, then we are as one. So you also admit that even the Reformed, the Evangelicals, the Methodists, the Catholics, etc, are even as much the church as the Lutheran Church! In no way, dear people. Certainly the gates of Christ's kingdom of grace are opened, so his church is everywhere that Baptism is still administered according to Christ's institution, but they are not, for that reason, the church who, indeed, stand in external fellowship with the church, but who stubbornly falsify the Word and the sacrament of JESUS Christ and hard heartedly hold fast to error. For Christ has given us an infallible proof stone for "who is the church": "If you remain in my speaking, then you are my legitimate disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." (John 8.31,32.) "Whoever loves me will keep my Word, and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him." (John 14.23.) "My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. They will not follow after a stranger, but flee before him, for they know not the voice of a stranger." (John 10.5,27.) "I have also been born and have come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Whoever is of the truth listens to my voice." (John 18.37.) So that is why St. Paul says of the church that she "is a pillar and bedrock of the truth." (I Tim. 3.15.) Now as surely as Christ has spoken the truth here, it is just as sure they are not the church who do not remain with Christ's speaking, who contradict his voice, which is the voice of the truth, do not retain his Word, do not heed it, but rather falsify and pervert it, and indeed stubbornly defend their errors. The church is the pillar of the truth, for through this fellowship the immortal children of God and disciples of Christ constantly bear witness to the truth, defend it and spread it. But a fellowship that exists as a pillar and bedrock of error is – a sect.

Yet we will repeat this yet again, all the Christian parties who have departed from God's Word and have thereby caused a division in the Christian church, if they have retained Baptism and the Word of God according to its nature, are certainly still in the church (for heretics and sects can

only be in the church), and the church also lays hidden even under these heretics and sects, but those heretics are not the church because of that.

Yet we want to explain ourselves even more clearly. Every fellowship of erring faith in Christianity must be considered in two ways: That is, insofar as she still has the truth and through that truth children of God are born among her, then again, insofar as she spiritually murders God's children. Now insofar as a fellowship of erring faith still has the truth she is still in the Christian church, but insofar as she destroys the truth, she is a sect and not an institution for sanctification, but rather an institution of the devil to mislead and eternally destroy the redeemed. So if we say, for example, that the Roman Church is not Christ's church, but is a sect, we are thus considering them as the papistic hierarchy, according to the abuses, the heresy and the idolatrous worship of God, by which she has created a schism in the Christian church. But we are not denying thereby that even amongst the Roman Catholic sect the church, that is, children of God, lay hidden, who are spiritual priests and for whose sake, therefore, even in the Roman Church the keys of the heavenly kingdom are being administered, so valid calling and ordaining, valid baptizing, the validly administered Holy LORD's Supper, valid absolving and excommunicating, in short all the rights and perfect authority of the church can be validly put into practice.¹² So naturally, all this also applies to the Reformed, the Evangelicals, Methodists and other religious fellowships. When we call these sects, denying them that they are true churches and institutions for blessedness, we are saying this about them insofar as even they have separated from the true church and have institutionalized their unique identity by their false doctrine. We assert that the Reformed Church is not a part of the true church of Christ because, as such, she is not a pillar of truth but rather a pillar and a bedrock for soul endangering error. But in this we in no way deny that even among them, as among all the other fellowships of erring faith, the true church lays hidden. So Mr. N. errs mightily when he imagines that it is a contradiction for the sects not to be institutions for blessedness, and yet to concede that in them there is much that is good, by which souls might still be saved. Mr. N. notes that there is a great distinction between considering the sects as such according to her nature and according to her (in the philosophical sense) incidental properties. As sects, none of them is an institution of blessedness or a true church, even if the true church (believers) can lay hidden under them. So when Mr. Nollau on p. 24 writes, in the sweet conviction that he has convinced us: "We hope for their own good that our opponents will yet humbly acknowledge this sad error and – become ashamed." So we must explain to Mr. N. that he is too quick in his gloating over us. Our assertion stands fast, but it is up to Mr. N. now to look into his own error and add it to the list, even as we would be glad to show him the shame he foists on us (were it legitimate).

We will now follow up with a few important witnesses that, according to God's Word, in the orthodox church, those fellowships that err in faith are from now on to be considered exactly in the manner we've expressed, that is, in that two fold manner, as sects and as fellowships among whom the church lies hidden.

¹²That's why we were astonished to read in "*The Christian Newspaper*" a report that the General Assembly (Old School) of the Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati has, with unrestrained temerity coolly made the, to say the least completely precipitous, but in deed highly sectarian decision "That the baptismal ceremony performed by Roman Catholic Priests is not valid." Luther had to battle that heresy against the Anabaptists even 300 years ago. He writes this about it: LW XVII. 2697ff.: "I say that amidst the papacy is true Christianity, yes, legitimate paragons of Christianity and many pious, great saints. – Now even if the pope (just as I believe) is the very Anti-Christ, he should not sit or rule in the devil's stall, but in the Temple of God. – And since he must sit and rule, then he must have Christians under him. – Therefore we do not buzz like the fanatical spirits, that we reject everything that the papacy has under it. – That's why such discourse by the Anabaptists and enthusiasts is nothing when they say what the pope has is illegitimate, or because this or that takes place in the papacy, we want it to be something else. – They act like one fellow treated his brother in the Thuringian forest. They walked together through the forest and a bear came upon them and pounced on top of one of them. Since the other brother wanted to help him, he tried to bite the bear, but missing the bear, he sadly bit his brother under the bear. Even so the enthusiasts do the same thing. They should help the poor Christians whom the Anti-Christ has under him and tortures, and so they grimly set themselves against the pope, but they miss the mark and most sadly murder the Christianity that is under the pope. For when they legitimately allow Baptism and the sacrament, Christians might yet escape with their souls from the pope and be saved as has taken place up until now. But now if the sacraments will be taken away from them, they must certainly be lost, since thereby Christ himself is taken away from them. Friend, it is not affirming the pope to say that Christ's saints lie under him. It is also of an assuredly meek spirit, to allow those who are God's temples to remain under him, and defend papal promises as God's Temple is being destroyed." This is the right appraisal of the Roman church. Mr. Nollau gets it exactly wrong when he regards the hierarchical organism (of the papacy) as the true form of the church and he considers the destruction of the papacy as what destroyed the church!

When the Roman church rejected Luther, he then taught that a distinction must be made. He said: "But by the words 'Roman Church' you must not understand the legitimate Roman church, especially as it was before the papacy, which did not want to accept or allow the papacy, as we hear in the time of Gregory, yet, without doubt, Christ also has a few Lots and Lot's daughters in the Roman Sodom, who have evilly fallen under the horrible nature of the papacy, but rather you must understand the papistic, mischievous, and demonic way that the pope has shamefully and blasphemously abused the name of the holy Roman Church, and intends to use it for his schools, his Church of whores and hermaphrodites of the devil's gruel." (XVII, 1318.) In another place Luther therefore makes the following confession about the papacy: "I confess that the Church in which you sit proceeds from the ancient church, just as does ours, and even has the same Baptism, as well as the sacrament, Keys and text of the Bible and Gospel and I will even give you the greater praise and confess that we have received everything from the church among you (not from you). – We know you are not to be regarded as Turks or Jews, who are outside the church, but rather we say you do not remain with her and you have become the prodigal, apostate, whoring church (as the prophets used to say), which has not stayed in the church from which she was born and bred." (XVII, 1673.) – "Well then, the pope says that he is the Christian church. So we reply, no. Even if there are certainly a few under the papacy who belong in the Christian church, just as there are many amongst the Turks, in France and in England, who belong to the Christian church. They are baptized, retain the Gospel, rightly receive the sacrament, and are true Christians, but since they now condemn us and say our doctrine is illicit, and rage in opposition and justify themselves with their laws and say whoever keeps those laws is a true Christian and is the true Christian church, then we reply, no. That's fine with us and we allow that they are in the Christian church, but they are not legitimate members of the church." VII, 2343.

Luther confesses the other new sects in a similar way. Among other things he says: "Yet we must confess that the enthusiasts have the Scripture and God's Word in other articles and whoever hears it from them and believes will be saved, even though they are profane heretics and blasphemers of Christ." (XVII, 2675.) And elsewhere: "That is why the church is altogether holy, even in places where enthusiasts and fanatical spirits also predominate, only inasmuch as they don't deny or reject the Word and sacrament. For those who completely deny those things are no longer church. But where the Word and sacrament substantially remain, the holy church remains there. – But Jews, Turks, enthusiasts, fanatical spirits or heretics are not the church, for these deny and reject such things." VIII. 1591,92.

Now from all this the Christian reader can perceive that whenever we Lutherans reject certain parties as sects, we do not thereby have in mind the church which also lays hidden even under that sect, but rather the false doctrine which they stubbornly and obstinately defend, and those who are thereby guilty of the church being and remaining divided. We in no way condemn the whole Christian party, much less the poor people who are misled therein, who err in naivete, and do not blaspheme the truth (as do the false prophets who lead them), nor hate, mock and persecute those who rightly believe, as clearly witnessed in the introduction to the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. –

Now after we have given voice to this report of the position fellowships that err in faith enjoy in Christianity, so now we come to the ultimate question: What does it mean that the Lutheran Church is the true catholic (universal) church of JESUS Christ on earth; and how dare we claim this great honor for ourselves?

To this we reply, the Lutheran Church is not the visible gathering of those who call themselves Lutheran, but the great, immutable church, to which those who legitimately call themselves Lutheran affiliate along with her doctrine, to which millions of souls had belonged before Luther's name would have ever been heard on earth, who therefore don't falsely use the name Lutheran. A particular church or a national church, in which the Lutheran doctrine is preached and received is, therefore, A Lutheran Church, but it's not THE Lutheran church. For this is scattered through the whole world, but only wherever this faith is found. Therefore from our hearts we want to concede that this collection of all who have legitimately been called Lutherans up until now, have only affiliated with a particular church and not the catholic Christian church, but what is only a part

of the church.¹³ But the sole church with which they have all affiliated is not a particular church that is bound for destruction, but rather the unchangeable, eternal, catholic Christian church, the “pillar and bedrock of the truth.” So Lutherans by that name affiliate themselves with no party, but to the one, ancient universal church and therefore, obviously, to all Churches in particular, who reveal themselves as part of this universal church by her orthodox confession.

But now one might therefore turn around and ask us, so why then do you call the church which you want to regard as the only legitimate one, Lutheran? By this human name are you not clearly proving you’re defining yourself as a sect? – We answer: We did not give ourselves that name. As Luther stood up 300 years ago and brought the doctrine of the ancient apostolic Christian church again into the light of day, then there were foes who called all those who received and confessed this pure doctrine “Lutherans” in order to disgrace them. Now after a time this name had been so commonly used and defining that many orthodox Christians have been pleased to retain it, as those living in the fourth century grew accustomed to the name “Athanasians.” The name Lutheran therefore does not designate the object of our faith as does the name “Christian” (since we do not believe in Luther, as we believe in Christ), but it is only a distinct name by which we distinguish ourselves from all false believers, and want to affiliate with the orthodox universal church, whose doctrine Luther preached and is delineated in the so-called Evangelical Lutheran symbols which are confessed before all the world.

So whenever we assert that the Lutheran Church is the one holy Christian church, we want to say, then, that the doctrine and the faith that is born by true Lutherans in their heart and confessed with their mouth is no other doctrine and no other faith than the doctrine and faith of the universal Christian church, and that no other doctrine is the doctrine of Christ and no other faith can save a person. Now if, by this explanation, Messrs. Evangelical and Methodist, like the high priests in Jerusalem tear their robes at the blaspheming of God they think they find in that, it certainly doesn’t impact its truth at all. They only reveal thereby that they obviously cannot in good conscience say they alone have the legitimate doctrine and the one true faith. Merely prove, dear sirs, that the doctrine which true Lutherans have confessed in their public confessions mitigates against the Word of God and is not the voice of Christ and his church and you have won. But even if you raise a thousand outcries and suspicions about our explanations, you are not helping your cause, for it proves nothing, just as the name “Evangelical” does not prove that your doctrine based on having sweet or bitter feelings is the Gospel and the true doctrine of justification.

Moreover, had we asserted, as Mr. Nollau says we have, that the whole Lutheran Church, the only Church with which we affiliate, is a party established 300 years ago that called herself Lutheran, who has unique ceremonies, and along with that has taken the *Augsburg Confession* or all the Lutheran symbols as her *terre firma*, and has made them her church law, our detractors may well have good reason to accuse us of being a sect, and we are battling for a human name. But we don’t battle for a human name, as we are constantly charged ‘till we’re sick of hearing it, but rather for the sake of a great, inexpressibly significant matter, which obviously also has a name, as does everything else in the world. We do not battle for a peculiarly constituted party that calls herself Lutheran. Our goal is not to see to it that all Christians accept a so-called Lutheran church order and Lutheran ceremonies, to enter together into a Lutheran synod, to call themselves Lutheran and to subscribe to the Lutheran Symbols, whether they take them to heart or not. No, we do not fight for an external structure with a “Lutheran” sign over the door. The matter we fight for is nothing other than the legitimate faith, the pure truth, the unfalsified Gospel, the pure foundation of the apostles and the prophets, where JESUS Christ is the chief cornerstone, so the jewel that was entrusted to the true church of all times, which she had handed down to us through the centuries and often defended with the shedding of rivers of her blood, and is now entrusted also to us. So when, indeed, a Lutheran Constitution is legitimately recognized, everything is stamped with the name Lutheran and fellowship is completely given the external form of a Lutheran Church, but where the pure, clear apostolic doctrine, the only one that saves, is now preached and received, we recognize it as a Lutheran church, and thus as a true church, just as when everyone in Lutheranism following the path of the Evangelicals, Reformed and Methodists, etc., we regard as false teachers who, bearing the name

¹³This and this alone is what Mr. N mentions on page 7 of his booklet as “noble, strict Lutheran theology” that was admitted with the quoted words. This quotation was far from wanting to belong to a different church than the universal Christian church.

Lutheran, are less our brothers in faith than the most vicious blasphemers of the name Lutheran, while we feel the most intimate bonds with those who also might be held captive in the sects, as brothers in the faith. –

Now we want to briefly repeat once more what we are saying here. There is only one church, which always has the same doctrine and the same faith. This one doctrine did not, indeed, disappear in the papacy, but had become almost completely unrecognizable, since the pure doctrine of the Gospel was preached practically nowhere by the public preaching office, but almost exclusively the doctrines of men. But God had mercy on his Christianity and aroused and equipped his servant Luther not for his church's dissolution, as Mr. Saxer says, but for her Reformation. That is, Luther had again sought the ancient doctrine of the true Christian church in God's Word and brought it into the light of day. He had not established a new church, also not a distinct party in the Christian church, but rather he himself remained with the ancient apostolic church and purely warned that every person must return to this church and remain with her. Yet from now on, whoever receives the ancient Christian doctrine of God's Word will now be evaluated as a Lutheran. For under the Lutheran doctrine and church is understood nothing but the apostolic doctrine and church. Indeed, all the many parties in Christianity want to be true Christian churches, but since they are not obedient to the Gospel (Rom. 10.16) and they have all departed from the universal Christian church by their false doctrine, and even stubbornly maintain this division, so they are not true Churches, but sects, or false fellowships. For in the true church the obedience of faith arises (Rom. 1.5), so she therefore does not stubbornly remain in her heresy, but listens to the voice of her Shepherd. Now indeed false believers don't want to concede to Lutherans that only the Lutheran church publicly confesses the true catholic¹⁴ doctrine and therefore does not belong to any sect, but they have never yet proven that Lutherans teach contrary to the holy catholic Christian church in a single article in her symbolic writings. It can't be done.

So rejoice, dear reader, if you belong to a pure Lutheran congregation and you confess the pure Lutheran doctrine, not only with your mouth, but also through true faith you bear in your heart. For then you do not belong to any sect, neither outwardly nor inwardly, but to the ancient church that remains forever, to which all the prophets, apostles, martyrs and all orthodox Christians belong, even now, which is made visible where the Gospel is preached pure and clear and the holy sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution, but which lays buried for the most part amidst heretics and sects. Thank God that he has preserved you also from the external fellowship of the sects, for many souls are also being saved therein, whose hearts are not also swayed by their sectarian doctrine, but yet who are still in greater danger of being misled. Defend yourself also from the thought that since people can be saved in all places that it then makes no difference if one outwardly belongs to a sect or to a group of orthodox believers. Remember, those being saved amongst the sects are simple souls who, out of a lack of knowledge, do not see through their false prophets and are defended and preserved through Christ's wondrous grace. Therefore if anyone who has learned the truth nevertheless joins with those who err in faith, he would not be saved thereby, but is certainly eternally damned as one who divisively denies the truth. Finally, watch yourself, dear Lutheran Christian, that you not become deceived by the name "Lutheran," for as many call themselves Christian who aren't, so now many also call themselves Lutheran, that is, orthodox, and yet are false prophets. They only bear the name Lutheran in order to put on sheep's clothing to mislead poor sheep into their false doctrine and enthusiasm. So therefore remember that you only find a Lutheran congregation where that old, pure doctrine of the universal Christian church is preached and received, as you find it in God's clear Words and as it's quoted in your Lutheran catechism, in the unaltered *Augsburg Confession* and in the other symbolical books of the Lutheran Church. Where you encounter a little flock that confesses this doctrine, stay there, enjoy the sweet pasture of the pure Gospel and there let yourself be led to JESUS, and remain with him in true faith, battle and suffer with her there. For here you battle and suffer for Christ's holy church, and with that, for the extension of his kingdom, for the glory of his Name, for the truth of his Word and for the salvation of your fellow redeemed. Do not grow weary in this battle, but be faithful until death, so you will also someday receive the crown of life, and, through a blessed death, pass over from the church

¹⁴May the reader not be offended at the word catholic. This word has a two-fold meaning, first a good one, when it means as much as "universal Christian," but, then again, it's also understood as those connected with the pope, for they have given themselves this fine title. The reader should note that we're using "catholic" here in the best sense of the term.

militant of believers into the church triumphant of those perfected in righteousness. The merciful God finally aid us all in this latter, troubled age. Amen.

God willing, a further response to N.'s booklet will follow at a later date. ' . . .

Again, the principles to be followed regarding the 19th Century Evangelicals (unionists) are expressed in an article by Dr. W. Sihler in the second year of *DL* in which he contrasts the original Evangelicals (Lutherans) with those who call themselves this in the 19th century. While, as usual, a focus of doctrinal indifference is placed on the Sacraments, but the caution is expressed against demoting any of God's Word to a category of 'secondary doctrine' since God's Word is God's, not more or less. Also, note that allegation of sin and unfaithfulness to those who break their vows to uphold the church's true doctrine by joining themselves to a falsified confession of the same:

What Were the Evangelicals and What Are the Evangelicals?

by Rev. Dr. Wilhelm Sihler (1801-1885)

Vol. 2, pp. 65ff

The people named evangelicals in the Reformation era were those exhibiting the following marks and characteristics:

1) They simply and honestly, without hypocrisy or reservation, subscribed to the whole holy Scripture, Old and New Testaments, and to the pure, unfalsified, saving doctrine of the same, as these were confessed in the holy Christian church from antiquity on, even against heretics and false faith.

2) They also submitted, to the same extent, to the three most important witnesses and confessions of their evangelical-apostolic mother church, that is, the Apostles, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, the latter two further explaining and more clearly defining the original against godless heresies that would destroy their foundational basis on the holy Scripture.

3.) By their submission, that is, through their free confession of the most precious truths of salvation confessed in them, they bore witness to their unity in doctrine and faith with the orthodox (rightly believing) catholic (universal) church of the first century, predating the emergence of the papacy with its lies and heresies. –

4) They asserted and defended the pure, clear doctrine of salvation with holy zeal and diligence even at the expense of property and blood, and especially the service of Christ, which alone avails, and that he is received by believers in the preaching of the Gospel and in the holy sacraments, *contra* the papists and enthusiasts (*Schwaermer*).

5) They did not make fools of themselves by viewing the Scriptural doctrine of the holy sacraments as secondary doctrines, as people naturally think, for they were fully aware that they would be excluding half of the saving truth of how Christ and his service are received, and the sacraments would be a mighty dam and bulwark against the Anabaptists, LORD's Supper enthusiasts, and other renegade, flattering spirits.

6) They continued to administer the office of watchman and witness of the pure Word and sacrament and would have no fellowship or unification (unity) with those who rejected both, which would eviscerate holy Baptism and the LORD's Supper, as empty signs and symbols.¹⁵ They were fully aware that true union would only be possible if they gave up their enthusiastic heresy of the holy sacrament, as well as of the Office of the Keys, and others that had long been in contention, and united in the orthodox, Scriptural doctrine, as it was retained in the evangelical apostolic church since her inception.

But now people called evangelicals (or Protestants or the Union) in this age are those of a Christian faith based on diverse, immature, fever pitched, fanatic feelings who are weary of confessing, who possesses the following recognitions signs and marks:

1) They do not simply and honestly submit to the whole holy Scripture, Old and New

¹⁵And yet a portion of these Reformed in Switzerland and upper-Germany had already received the Wittenberg Concord of 1536 and thereby gave witness by their actions thereby of their unity with the pure Sacramental doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Confession, but latter again apostasized from it.

Testaments, without hypocrisy and reservations, as well as the unfalsified saving doctrine of the same, despite every claim they do submit, and these blemishes must be proven by the following.

2) In the same way, they also don't submit to those three most important confessions of our apostolic mother church in which she asserted the pure evangelical doctrine of salvation externally against false believers and heretics, and that internally she developed in ever greater clarity. Some, that is, today's evangelicals (for example, those in the Rhine region of Bavaria) who renounce every church confession, stubbornly cut themselves off from their roots in the ev., apostolic mother church and willfully place themselves on the side of enthusiastic, fanatic spirits who always do this, and, indeed, under a guise and pretense that this shallow stubbornness is the way to honor God's Word, as if a Confession of the church would either be placed next to holy Scripture, or even over it. Some others of these so-called evangelicals, or unionists, (for example, in Prussia), indeed, doesn't reject all churchly confessions *per se*, but the confessions don't matter to them so they maintain this: That Lutherans and the Reformed can certainly retain their particular church symbols, but they can still just as well join together and ignore those contested doctrines. We'll take a closer look at that in a bit. But here we'll only briefly go so far as to say that even this is rooted in the violation of an essential truth. – For it is impossible that in the doctrine of the holy LORD's Supper the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church and the Reformed Church could be in the same submission to the Words of institution of the LORD JESUS Christ in holy Scripture. So then it is also as clear as day that only the Lutheran Church submits to the literal sense of these Words, and has and holds firmly to the kernal and the meat of the sacrament, whereas, to the contrary, the Reformed Church subjects these Words to a symbolic meaning and is satisfied with the empty shell and husk of the sacrament. So now how can there be true, non-hypocritical, reverent fear for God's Word in the so-called Evangelical Church of the present age, since it is still impossible that the same sacrament can be literal and symbolic at the same time, when they see this profound contradiction in the Lutheran and Reformed doctrines as nothing, and, despite that, see unity as not only possible, but even good and desirable, since there's still unity in other articles! If the Word of God is not respected in one passage – all the more when it treats a public institution and an essential means of grace of the Son of God – not caring if it's literal or figurative, that is, whether this heavenly wealth is truly in that earthly means or not: then one might be hard pressed to prove that they possess a pure and honest submission to any Word of God. –

3) They are now completely different than the evangelicals of the old days, who were co-confessors with Luther, who sacrificed property and blood to defend the pure, unassailable, saving truth against the papacy, as well as against the enthusiasts. That is, in this they are either lukewarm or lazy – and, based on uncertainty and ignorance, no longer does any courage for a true, churchly confession run through their veins – so their opposition against the papists is more fleshly than spiritual as they are that much more inclined towards sacramental enthusiasts, yes, they are, for the most part, inwardly of one heart with them. In the doctrine of the holy sacraments they are more or less closet Reformed, that is, heretical, as they also regard both holy Baptism and the LORD's Supper as only external shells and husks, lacking the kernal and meat. If there were really any authentic, that is, rightly believing and discerning Lutherans among them, and if they ever really taught these holy means of grace simply and without embellishment according to what the Words of institution of the LORD JESUS Christ say, it would be impossible for them not to gladly and willingly join the ev. Lutheran Church, since now, as back then, no other church believed, taught and confessed the holy Sacraments Scripturally, as did the Evangelical Churches of the Lutheran Confessions. –

4) They presumptuously view the doctrines of holy Baptism and the LORD's Supper as secondary doctrines and pretend that a union (unification) between Lutherans and the Reformed would certainly be possible, even if the Lutheran (that is, Scriptural) doctrine is contrary to the Reformed (that is, enthusiastic) doctrine. But the following must be stated against this:

a) It is a thoroughly human presumption to think some single link in the golden chain of pure doctrine or another is less important than others. If it were imagined that one link or another might be removed, according to man's thoughts and whims, the whole chain would break, just as also a bell having a crack or flaw in one spot will never again ring with a pure sound. The apostle Paul says (Gal. 5.9): "a little yeast leavens the whole loaf." In it's context this teaches us that his warning applies especially to doctrine, just as he also declares in Gal. 1.8 a curse over himself or any other creature that would falsify or add to or subtract from his Gospel. But the holy sacraments are the divine seal on the letters of grace of the Gospel. Now how could you allow someone to view this seal and its Gospel content so presumptuously and blasphemously, in such indifference and spite, but yet, hypocritically,

pay lip service to the words of grace printed on that seal?

b) It's just not true that the doctrines of holy Baptism and the LORD's Supper are secondary doctrines. For first, that would exclude half of the saving truth by which salvation is appropriated in Christ since the Holy Ghost only makes Christ and his service our own through Baptism and the preaching of the Gospel. But secondly, every stripe of the crowd of religious, and free spirits here in America, who treat souls so miserably and so destructively, teach that pure doctrine and the treatment of the holy sacraments is important and essential. For as disparate as their main parties are with one another, they are all united when they, for example, 1) fundamentally hate and despise the pure Scriptural doctrine of the Lutheran Church of holy Baptism and in that 2) they mix the law into the Gospel. Now so far as the first point is concerned, it's clear as day that they promote minor things over the major thing, either next to or besides the essence of Baptism as, for example, the Baptists do in all their branches and offshoots, only allowing Baptism to remain as a mere empty, external form and ceremony, but inwardly they regard the worry bench and their own self chosen human inventions as greater than what is in Baptism. Special ways of praying, an individual's feeling the pains of repentance and feeling grace, etc., are likewise instituted in place of holy Baptism, as among the Methodists, United Brethren, etc.

What else can this be but a shameful and dangerous admixture of the law into the Gospel to the destruction of souls? What is it other than a clouding and falsification of the gracious covenant of God in holy Baptism? What else is this but the witness of a sickly, wavering and uncertain faith based on feelings and an obstruction to a healthy, steadfast, and certain Scriptural, churchly faith that finds its child-like comfort in the steadfast, unshakeable gracious action of God in holy Baptism, for its effective, well founded, and honest renewal and repentance in the presence of the law? What is this other than the imposition of the law and a darkening of God's grace, of the service of Christ, and the gracious means of the Holy Ghost in the Gospel and the sacrament, which a person must firmly grasp with repentant and believing purpose, instead of his inner feelings and repentance and faith that are today strong and tomorrow weak, and the next day gone without a trace, and the day after that completely stuck either in despair or carnal security? – Isn't that despising God's Word and instituting one's own works? Isn't that what you'd call destroying, or at least weakening, the Gospel, when holy Baptism is instituted as the work of the Triune God but next to it, or opposing it, is this fine new legalism, as an individual's feelings of repentance and faith are instituted as some sort of cooperating service? Will not, then, the most important article of justification be most egregiously violated through such a legalistic imposition of law? And will not thousands and thousands of thousands of souls be most shamefully deceived and robbed of their most glorious and steadfast comfort of grace, and be thrown instead into constant turmoil upon the partial and sputtering nature of their dubious conversion? Yes, truly! If the true pearl and gemstone is taken away from these souls and they are given instead wax pearls and glass gems, or if they, instead of being moored in the safe haven, are left in the wild waves so they can, indeed, see land but are unable to get there – that analogy doesn't do it justice. – And since learning or despising this doctrine of holy Baptism has such an impact on souls, can it really be a secondary doctrine?

c) So then, a true uniting (Union) between Lutherans and the Reformed is only possible if the latter let go of their stubborn reason's darkening the holy sacrament and all that goes with that, to simply and faithfully receive its Words of institution, just as they sound, and, by that, enter into the original doctrine of the Scripture and the church, as the Lutheran Church has this, and clings to it. Then, by all means, she would present herself as a true, Evangelical Church and would need add no other name to that. We Lutherans would then also gladly and willingly let go of that clarifying name, Lutheran. And, most certainly, that precious man of God, Dr. M. Luther, himself would rejoice in heaven for this, if he could look down from the church triumphant upon the church militant. – But that is certainly not presently the case. For the Reformed stubbornly hold fast to their rationalistic enthusiasm over holy Baptism and LORD's Supper. And as disparate as were Calvin and Zwingli in other subjects, yet they are one in this, that in the water, bread and wine no heavenly wealth is distributed and received through God's Word. –

So how can it be that, for the sake of unity in other doctrines, a true union is possible between Lutherans and the Reformed with pure and upright hearts and untroubled consciences towards God and man? To the contrary, today's union and the attitude of so-called evangelicals, is a multifarious wounding of the heart and soul, at least when Lutherans get entangled in this, and we pray that our precious fellow Lutheran believers, near and far, carefully read what follows and seriously consider it.

First, "the pattern of sound Words," (2 Tim. 1.13), that is, the pure saving doctrine unto the salvation of souls, does not belong to us as individuals such that we could pick and choose from it what we like or don't like, to add or subtract from it, to consider one matter important but not another. Rather this pure saving truth is entrusted to us by God in his Word as a whole. They are his property. We, on the other hand, must be faithful stewards and administrators of these treasures of grace. But this is done when people receive this saving doctrine of the Word of God in preaching and the sacrament in repentance and faith, but so that they also, each according to his calling, externally witness orally and in writing so it is asserted, defended and sown forth, as the "norm and the consensus," which the apostle treats in Phil. 3.16.

Now how could we, against God's clear Word, give way here to teachers who even oppose a single aspect of this Word and, for the sake of external fellowship and unity, surrender the truth to be satisfied with a heretical definition of this matter? What would we say of a servant who, contrary to his lord's will, gave away his property? Or who quietly watched as his lord's gold was being carted away and brass left in its place? In either case, wouldn't he be a thief? (See Luke 16.10) Doesn't the saying "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" apply to us as what is pleasing to God? Shouldn't we even sacrifice our property and blood for the preservation of true Christian freedom, that is, so that no human law or insight be allowed to compel us to do anything or stop doing anything God has not commanded or forbidden, but where he's given us freedom? So how much more must we do this here when God has stated a definite, clear Word, and that has simply been the stance of faith from the beginning of the Christian church, even amidst the heresies of the papacy and the enthusiasts? Is that not manifestly a sin against the Triune God, if anyone surrenders a single divine truth out of deference to men? And is not whoever becomes a friend to men in this way God's enemy? Doesn't Christ the LORD say: "The Word I have spoken to you will judge you on the last day"? And didn't he also say the Words: "Take eat, this is my body"! Yes, will this Word not judge you in the hour of your death, if you stubbornly and whimsically discarded it, or joined a churchly fellowship that did not believe what his Words say?

Secondly, my dear fellow believers, you are also breaking the oath of faithfulness to your Church you made when you enter into or remain in that kind of fellowship. For it may be that, unfortunately, many of the servants and teachers of our Church are rank unbelievers and teaching falsely, and some are even actually joining in the enthusiastic, opposing doctrine of the holy sacraments and teaching heresy, yet our church does not thereby fall from the church of the pure Word and sacrament. For she does not stand upon the faith of more or fewer of her teachers and hearers, nor does she fall with those unbelievers, but she stands in all articles of her confession and doctrine upon the pure Word of God in the holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments. She bears unanimous witness of her standing and being founded upon this in her confessional writings from the *Augsburg Confession* through the *Formula of Concord*. And finally, even in the time of her deepest apostasy, when she was horribly corrupted through rationalism, or faith in reason, she retained her 7,000 in her midst who had not bent their knee before any Baal of wisdom, and had remained faithful with the pure Word of God and the witness of the saving doctrine she possesses, as it is, for example, well embraced in Luther's Small Catechism. And look! Even in that brief summary of the saving truth, in this precious bequest of that precious man of God, you have, even now, a great treasure, a shield and weapon against every sort of flattering and enthusiastic spirit, which, for example, would make Baptism dubious for you, as well as a steadfast, legitimate understanding of faith in every article of the Christian doctrine that is useful and necessary for the salvation of the soul of a Christian person. Therefore remain with your Church, your spiritual mother who has birthed and raised you, even if, unfortunately, many hirelings, thieves, murderers, and false prophets are among her servants through God's wrath. If you have also previously helped further her devastation through your disbelief, and if you were perhaps the (spiritually) dead son of Nain – then don't leave her when you've been awakened and brought to faith by the voice of the LORD JESUS where ever you are. Remain with her. Help her now as a faithful son by building and planting.

Thirdly, you Lutherans are also sinning directly against those with whom you are walking in Churchly fellowship against the confession of your Church, whether you've joined the Reformed or so-called Evangelicals or Protestants. You are helping them be strengthened in the godless and giddy dream that the doctrine of the holy sacraments is really a secondary doctrine, whose variance does not hinder unification (Union), as if the same Words of institution of the LORD JESUS Christ, with and in which he had founded and instituted holy Baptism and the LORD's Supper could be literal as well as figurative, and that both meanings, even contradicting each other, could be legitimate. For the Church of the Lutheran Confessions believes, teaches and confesses, and remains by the Word of the LORD JESUS that in and by means of water is the grace of second birth, and in and by means of the bread and wine his body and blood, given and shed for us, are substantially and truly distributed and received. But the Reformed faith in the Words of the LORD JESUS imagines and asserts that water, bread and wine are mere outward signs and images, that symbolize and designate heavenly wealth that are not essentially and truly contained in them, so that the same will not be distributed and received in them and by these means.

So now, how is it possible that our faith and our holding fast to the Words of institution of the LORD JESUS Christ, as they sound, and this "unbelief" and rejecting of what they say could be equally true? Could these same words in the same passage in this same subject and application have two such different meanings? So as long as the Reformed cannot produce proof that our simple and literal version of the Words of institution violates and contradicts another article of faith of the saving doctrine, in which case only a figurative version could be allowed, we must remain with our simple, settled understanding of the same, and can stand upon it in the hour of death. That's why we cannot live or act against the same.

So what are you doing by entering into church fellowship with the Reformed? Despite the legitimate signpost of the Church, you are joining them on a heretical path as if it were right, and you affirm them thereby in their delusion, or you are there sinning against your neighbor, since by your following him into Church membership he will become more indifferent and dismissive towards the sure, saving truths of the Word of God, as, for example, towards the truths concerning the holy sacraments.

And are you not thereby powerfully lending your aid to the falsification and covering over of true and unfeigned reverence for the whole Word of God in the holy Scripture and for its saving truth as a whole? For certainly you are doing just that. By your joining and approval you are encouraging your neighbor to remain either dubious and unsure or indifferent or dismissive over at least one article of this truth of salvation. So can your joining be Christian love, when your neighbor's soul is thereby being harmed?

So when we see what evangelicals once were, unfortunately, it is illegitimate for them to appropriate that good name now. So also, let no honest but unwary Lutheran Christian be fooled now by the showy love that these false evangelicals display. For there is certainly no truth to love where there is not love for the full and pure truth the Triune God has entrusted to us in his Word, to which the only orthodox church, then called Evangelical Lutheran, bore witness and confessed in her confessional writings unfalsified and undivided, without superstitious additions and without unbelieving deletions. -¹⁶

III. Confronting Unionistic Tendencies in 1844 American Lutheranism

As a number of articles in early *DL* chronicle the emigration of the *Loehe Sendlinge* and their subsequent walk out from the Michigan District that they had unwarily joined, one of the issues raised as necessitating many of these some-day-founding-members of the LCMS was the serving of congregations of mixed confession (unionistic congregations). These articles (pp. 218-229 in *Essays of the Founding Fathers*) also show the consternation of these confessional Lutherans in finding no better church conditions in America than in Germany, even among so-

¹⁶Baseley, Joel R., editor and translator. *Missouri Synod in Formation (1844-'47): Essays of the Founding Fathers*. (Mark V Publications. Dearborn, MI 2012) pp. 162 f - From *DL* vol. 2 as cited in title of article

called Lutherans, except that they were not forced to be in fellowship with heterodoxy through the force of law and government. Walkouts are possible in the land of the free!

Among the perversions that were found widely practiced in the American Lutheran Church was the regularized practice of issuing limited calls (contracts?) that had to be renegotiated after the term of the call.¹⁷ Sharply critical articles warned against unLutheran formulas for Baptism and the Lord's Supper in the 1842 General Synod agenda diagnosing the influences of both rationalism and unionism (Evangelicalism) on these formulas, as well as the facile dismissal of these concerns by the convention when Rev. Wyneken filed charges for this. Layman Barthel of the Saxons offers critique when human reason is declared by proponents of American Lutherans to be one of the pillars, along with Scriptures for Luther and the Lutheran Church (see articles on pp. 230 - 242 of *Essays of the Founding Fathers* for more detail).

Finally, Walther cites a report to Germany by the General Synod itself as that Synod's own admission of her shift from Lutheranism to Evangelicalism (union church) with respect to the sacraments. This concern over unionism thus not only occasioned Confessional Lutherans leaving synods existing at the time, but also made it impossible for others to join them, making clear the necessity to form a synod explicitly opposing this union for the sake of Biblical fellowship principles and divine commands not to participate in other men's sins, to confess the truth of God's Word before men, and to mark and avoid those who teach and preach doctrine contrary to the doctrine learned from Christ and the apostles. This frank admission must be admired for its honesty but deplored for its innovation and deceptive redefinition of Lutheranism:

The So-Called "Lutheran General Synod"

by C.F.W. Walther
Vol. 2, pp. 43f

This church body has recently dispatched a report about her own condition to Germany. This report is a rather significant document, in that it has laid out in no uncertain terms an official verification of the apostasy of the General Synod from the Lutheran doctrine and Church. We hereby share its most significant passages with our readers, and will perhaps return to this matter again later. But the report mentioned states the following:

"A chief principle of Lutheranism, which we often have opportunities to employ, is that which is in Mosheim's description of the Lutheran Church, that, "in the view of this Church, all duties in life are solely and exclusively mined out of the holy Scriptures," and that the symbolic books must be subordinated to the divine Word.

Therefore (?) only what substantially agrees, in view of doctrine and life, will be demanded among us. According to the formulation or churchly agenda published by the General Synod, candidates, after they had acknowledged the Bible as the sole infallible divine norm of their faith and life, only make the following promise: "We believe that the fundamental truths of the Bible are presented in an essentially correct manner in the doctrinal articles of the *Augsburg Confession*." Our principle is: "*In fundamentalibus Lutheranismi unitas, in non-fundamentalibus libertas, in omnibus charitas.*"¹⁸ And it is significant that among all the preachers who belong to the various synods that are united with the General Synod, there is, so far as we are aware, not a single innovator. The few rationalists, who were already then aged, who existed in our Church at the time of the establishment of the General Synod, and had set themselves against that position have, for the most part, died. Thus essential orthodoxy is assured through our rule, even when strict uniformity is here unattainable. Our fathers came from all parts of the German fatherland, and who does not know that even among the

¹⁷Op. Cit. Pp. 373 ff esp. pp. 377f - From Th. Brohm's article *On the Orderly Call to the Office of Preaching*, DL. Vol. 1 pp 61f and 65f.

¹⁸In foundational doctrines of Lutheranism unity, in non-fundamentals freedom, in all things, love.

orthodox, a predominating diversity of views was there, which our fathers brought with them. Only through this kind of eclecticism, through such a free form, which transcends diversity in secondary doctrines, binding the essential moments of Lutheranism with the true experience of Christianity forged into the bonds of unity, can our church in America preserve peace and be happily built. This whole free Church movement may seem to our German brothers to be most strange, but this flows out of the context of the freedom of the Church here that also dominates all the other religious institutions of our country.

Now as far as our view towards doctrine is concerned, we unabashedly confess, yes, we confess loudly and openly, that the great majority of us are not Old Lutherans in the sense the name is used by a small party in Germany. We are convinced that were the great Luther yet living, he himself would not be one of those, either. We believe that in the course of the last three centuries, men have also been produced who are just as gifted to think, to discover, to formulate, as those of the sixteenth century. Yes, as poor as we consider ourselves, yet we, driven by the gifts of our duty, even presume ourselves able to search Scriptures for ourselves, and to create our own doctrinal insights from this heavenly source. But we are, nevertheless, evangelical Lutherans, holding fast to the chief principle of Luther, that God's Word alone is infallible. We have tested Luther's doctrinal construct according to this Word and found it to be essentially correct. Here we stand, as ever, in the majority of our churchly principles, on common ground with the Union Churches in Germany. We consider unsubstantial the distinguishing views between the Old Lutherans and the Reformed churches. And the judgement of the Old Lutheran party appears to us to be outdated for our times. The glorious Reformation of the sixteenth century was neither immediate nor complete. The great Luther had, his whole life, made great strides of progress and, at the end of his life's span, he considered his work incomplete. We are following his own counsel when we seek the truth more in God's Word than in his writings, and we thus seek to complete his work; and, faithful to his principles, we, as honorable men, believe we are able to still call ourselves Lutherans. Over all the chief points of the Christian doctrinal construct, we agree unanimously with Luther and the symbols of the Lutheran Church. The dogmatic insights of a Mosheim, of a Reinhard, excepting the latter's theory about the future punishments of hell, we could, in general, consider as our own.

The doctrine of the absolute election is not believed by any of our preachers. **Luther's particular insight over the physical presence of the LORD in Communion has long since been abandoned by the great majority of our preachers if, indeed, a few of the older German teachers and congregational members still retain it. As in the Evangelical Churches in Germany, each is allowed liberty as to the manner and meaning of Christ's presence in the LORD's Supper.**

The majority of our preachers believe in a special presence and a special blessing of the LORD, but only of a spiritual sort. According to our view, the atonement is appointed for all people. The justification of sinners takes place for the sake of Christ alone, grasped by faith. God's grace is proclaimed to all people – but it is not irresistible. Baptism takes the subject into the visible church of God. It also assures children of the forgiveness of sins, but is for an adult only when he is truly repentant, and practices a living faith in Christ. On the *novissimis*, or last things, we know of not a single point at which we have departed from the ancient doctrine. We see the restoration doctrine as unbiblical and reject the present day Universalism, that has its roots in Socinianism, as highly contrary to Scripture and dangerous to souls.

The Methodist Church has also established many useful things amongst the Germans, and has formed several congregations. But the views of this otherwise precious Church concerning the orders in worship, are disconcerting to Germans. – When preachers come here, if they should join themselves to our synod, it is not advisable for them to form a real evangelical congregation, as it exists in our old fatherland. They would only consist of Europeans, and form a new sect next to those already existing here. The Reformed here incline themselves towards the doctrine of absolute grace, and are not willing to unite with Lutherans but, much rather, with the Reformed from Holland, who strictly retain the doctrine of Calvin. Now should they come with the intent of wanting to transform the American Lutheran Church according to a European standard they could never do it, and the attempt would only cause contention and division. A few European brothers have attempted to do this, by which they also employed a German periodical that we at first supported, "The Church Newspaper." But the American Germans did not accept it and the paper will certainly fail. The Seminary in Columbus, where some newly arrived theologians have come into administrative control and want to transform it into being exclusively German and Old Lutheran, will soon alienate the Americans, and is even now floundering.

Gettysburg, Pa., the 10th of Nov., 1845.

Dr. S.S. Schmucker, Prof. of Theology at the Seminary of the General Synod of the Lutheran Church
at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

Dr. B. Kurtz, publisher of the “Lutheran Observer” in Baltimore, Maryland.

Dr. H. N. Pohlmann, Pastor of the Lutheran Church in Albany, New York.

Dr. J.G. Morris, Pastor of First Lutheran Church in Baltimore, Maryland.

The Honorable H.J. Schmidt, Professor at Hartwig Seminary, in New York State.¹⁹

Finally, after the proposed constitution of the envisioned synod (constituted in April/May of 1847) was published in the first issue of the third year of *DL* (September 5, 1846), a series of articles spanning 9 (non-consecutive) issues was released centering on the proper use of Christian freedom. While this article does not specifically address the issue of unionism, it addresses the need to avoid the appearance of unionism by rejecting ceremonies that are insisted upon by heterodox and unionizing Churches to promote their false doctrine. In this, Walther points out that in those areas of Christian freedom, the orthodox church does not depart from traditions of the Church that serve to promote tranquility and good order in the church, but retains those traditions, also for the sake of the weak who would see innovation in these areas as uncertain and thus sin by observing them. He also makes the point that when heterodox rites demand a tradition in order to promote some false doctrine, the doctrine of Christian freedom forbids the church from following such traditions, but by staying the course away from them, enlists matters of adiaphora into the noble service of the confession of the truth.

This article, responding to American Lutherans who criticized the “old” rites of the Confessional “Old Lutheran “ pastors as leading people to Romanism, is important. It defends ancient traditions held by the church that unites her to the church of all times, and also gives a proper precaution against erosions of tradition which can abuse the doctrine of Christian freedom by attacking good church tradition which has formed around, and enfolds godly doctrine and practice in the name of freedom. This proper regard for tradition affirms not only a proper confession of freedom, but also the responsible and pious use of freedom. Being free makes one responsible for what he does towards God and his neighbor. This proper view of Christian freedom guided the formation of the Synod to steer her proper course; and must be observed as a doctrine closely connected to the doctrine of justification. As the American Lutherans (above) were slipping into the doctrinal indifference of the Evangelicals due to indifference to the Word of God, indifference became the attitude towards rites and church practice. Since the doctrine of Christian freedom is a Biblical doctrine that governs a Church’s choices in practice, departing from this doctrine not only leads a Church into heterodoxy (departing from a doctrine) but also to express that heterodoxy through an abuse of Christian freedom in worship.

Does Old Lutheranism Lead to Rome?

by C.F.W. Walther

Vol. 3, pp. 20f, 27f, 33f, 39f, 45f, 60f, 77f, 79f, 130f

“God be praised! I have become so certain, that I would go so far as to say that if a pastor (*Seelsorger*) does not see himself as diametrically opposed to the pope, the bishops and their human doctrine and commands with everything in his power, and set himself against them, whether it means his dying or remaining alive, there is no way that he can be saved.” Luther to Nic. Hausmann in the year 1521. (See *L.W. Halle*, X. 1880.)

¹⁹ Baseley, Joel R., ed. and translator. *Missouri Synod in Formation (1844-’47): Essays of the Founding Fathers* (Mark V Publications. Dearborn, Michigan. 2012) pp. 244 ff. From *DL* as cited at the beginning of the article.

We live in an age that calls itself the enlightenment, but in which such astonishing ignorance dominates in the area of religion. This can even be said of those who call themselves Lutheran. For example, these days if a Lutheran is asked what sort of difference exists between Lutherans and the Reformed, what is the usual answer given? Most say, as far as they know, the difference consists in that Lutherans pray, "Father ours" and the Reformed, "Our Father," that the former use hosts in the holy LORD's Supper and the latter use plain bread. So naturally few are also able to explain these days how so many Lutherans can possibly not desire to unite with the Reformed or want anything to do with the union movement taking place everywhere. For if there were truly no great differences between Lutherans and the Reformed, and most people, in their ignorance, think that way, then obviously people would have to be crazy to want to break fellowship for such insignificant reasons. But the differences between the Lutherans and the Reformed have nothing to do with those reasons, that is, it involves the most holy sacraments, Baptism and the LORD's Supper, the Office of the Keys, the person of JESUS Christ, the Decree of God unto Salvation, etc., which means, as every Lutheran can see, even from his *Small Catechism*, it involves "Chief Parts" of the Christian religion. But since these Churches are both at odds over this, true unification between them is impossible so long as the Reformed won't acknowledge their heresies that mitigate against God's Word. When, despite this, pastors establish an external unification with them (only in order to substantially increase their membership), they are, first of all, sinning greatly against God, whose truth they are denying, and also against those whom they are thereby strengthening in their heresy. Yet we have already spoken of this elsewhere and will come back to address it again if we have an opportunity to do so.

Another proof to show the extent of the ignorance among Lutherans is this: If many people now hear the doctrine of the Old Lutheran Church preached by a few pastors, that has been silenced for so long, and observe external worship conducted as it was done in the Old Lutheran Church, many then say: "Oh, that's half - Catholic!" Yes, in America that's gone so far that even Lutherans who call themselves pastors and newspaper writers are so ignorant that they preach and write this: Old Lutheranism leads to Rome, which means, whoever accepts the Old Lutheran doctrine and the Old Lutheran ceremonies must be on the road to becoming a subject of the pope in Rome, to becoming a so-called Catholic or papist.

In previous ages Luther and Lutherans were not so easily dismissed since everyone knew that it had just been by Luther that God had uncovered the mystery of lawlessness to those groaning in Christendom, of course, revealing to them the Antichrist in Rome and leading them out of the Roman Babel (cf. 1 Thess. 2.1-12 and Rev. 14. 6-11). It's certainly true that all the heretics and enthusiasts who founded Protestant sects asserted the Lutheran Church was still clinging to remnants of the papacy, so God had not called Luther, but them as the true reformers to foundationally reform the church. Among others was Dr. Andreas Carlstadt. That is, as Luther was absent from Wittenberg for a whole year in 1521-22 and had to hole up at the Wartburg, Carlstadt incited a terrible tumult there, declaring that everything that arose under the papacy was godless and must be destroyed, and the Reformation was going too slowly. That's why he had images and the alters in the Churches smashed and discarded, abolished private confession, commanded that the bread and the cup in Communion be taken in the hand, disdained those who had become doctors and magistrates and those who were educated in general, and, therefore, consorted with the uneducated, simple laborers and asked them to explain difficult Scriptural passages. (Now when these people objected: How can a learned doctor seek instruction from simple, unschooled laymen, he replied that it had to be that way, for Christ said: God has hidden his mysteries from the wise and intelligent and revealed them to the babes. Mt. 11.25.) This enthusiasm spread to many students who now abandoned study as a fleshly disgrace. The university precipitously declined. Yet, upon Carlstadt's counsel, the boy's school there was completely disbanded and its structures made into counters for the baker. Thereupon Carlstadt stormed into the country to stir up farmers and wouldn't let them address him as anything but "neighbor Andreas."

This crazy Carlstadt was the first to charge Lutherans as being semi-papists because they retained ceremonies and, later, also because of doctrine, that in the holy LORD's Supper the body and blood of JESUS Christ were truly present and that through the reception of the same one was given the

seal of the forgiveness of sins.²⁰ Luther mentions this in his last confession of the LORD's Supper from 1544, where one of the things he writes is that Carlstadt had chided the Wittenbergers for the sake of the elevation, that means, since they still lifted the host up high with the consecration, according to the ancient custom, as "neo-papists." We also find this in Carlstadt's extant writings. Among other things, Carlstadt writes in his *Explanation of the Words of Christ: This is my Body*, from the year 1525, the Lutherans and their pastors are "doubly neo-papists, who act like unreasoning asses and horses." But he called Luther and his retention of images and the crucifix and the like "a patron of idolatry," and, for the sake of the doctrine of the holy LORD's Supper, a "neo-papist sophist, a kissing cousin of the Anti-Christ, a sign maker just like the devil who directs people to walk on glare ice," etc. Already the year before Carlstadt had written in his paper *On the Anti-Christian Abuse of the LORD's Bread and Cup*: "if there are some who seek forgiveness in the sacrament, probably ranting and raging as do those papistic parsons...those who have the expectation of receiving Christ with the sacrament would be better off munching on figs." By the way, when Carlstadt later got into big trouble, he recanted and wrote: "If he had known the great perils of the times he would never have published a book with his likeness pressed in it, and he would have to pass away in misery because of it." Yet he fell again into his heresy and finally died in Basel in fear and terror as the plague gripped the city in 1541.

There's the first impious enthusiast who wanted to foundationally reform the church and accused the Lutheran Church of being a holdover of the papacy. The Anabaptists, the so called heavenly prophets, Nic. Storch, Marcus Thomae, Marcus Stuebner, Martin Callarius and Thomas Muenzer followed him in this, the latter becoming the leader of the Peasant's rebellion in Schwabia. As Luther did not let himself be blinded by the great brilliance of holiness they were constantly putting out but, much rather, removed their mask, declaring as inspired by the devil what they were asserting to be divine revelations and having no desire to join them in their rejection of infant Baptism. These enthusiastic spirits also slandered the work of the Lutheran reformation and asserted that by Luther's "insisting upon the external, literal meaning of the Word" he was introducing "a new papacy" as they called it. – Now, finally, included also among those heretics who were critical of the Lutheran Church, is Zwingli, who, just as in the case of Carlstadt, was opposed to the Lutheran retention of innocent ceremonies, the crucifix, the sign of the cross, images, altars, priestly vestments and the like, as well as the doctrine of the presence of Christ in the holy LORD's Supper, declaring them all to be remnants of the papacy. In order to quote just one witness of this, among many, Zwingli issued these words as a caveat to his presentation to the Emperor of his disagreement with the *Augsburg Confession*: "The Lutherans were looking back to the flesh pots of Egypt."²¹ Therefore this is also one of those points of contention which has been leveled for over three hundred years by the Reformed Church against the Lutherans, even though the Lutheran Church has freedom to retain her ceremonies, though she had to abolish them if they were at all related to the Anti-Christian nature of the Roman, papistic Church. For example in the Reformed Heidelberg Catechism, to question 98: "But may images not be tolerated in the Churches for the instruction of the laity?" the following answer is stated: "No. For we must not be wiser than God who wants to have his Christianity instructed by the lively preaching of his Word, not by dumb idols." By this statement the Reformed assert the images that we Lutherans

²⁰It is worth noting that Carlstadt states that he had arrived at his doctrine on the LORD's Supper in a similar manner as did Zwingli (See *The Lutheran* V.1 # 13. P. 3, note). That is, Carlstadt writes the following in his *Dialog on the horrid idolatrous abuse of the most worthy Sacrament of JESUS CHRIST*, from the year 1524: "He learned it from a voice he heard, but had not seen nor known if the voice had come from him or to him." – Already a year before this Carlstadt had written the following by what manner the truth is to be sought and found in his pamphlet: *How should it be read?* "A well read person must also read the holy Scripture, but not learn it according to the letter, etc. If one not understand something, he must listen intently, desiring its meaning from God, what God wants to tell him, so sudden ideas will occur to him and he must defend these thoughts with the witness of the Holy Ghost." – Isn't that what all our present enthusiasts (*Schwaermer*) do as they seek and find the truth? Whatever suddenly pops into their heads from their prayer they regard as God's revelation, and then to confirm it they grab Scripture by the hair to force it to say just that.

²¹We see how far this truly crazy and ridiculous Zwingli's zeal for reformation usually took him with respect to churchly ceremonies as he did everything in his power to ban singing hymns in Church. In order to do so, he prepared a petition for the city counsel in Basel that he did not read, but sang, in their presence. As the counsel expressed astonishment as to why he would bring his request to them in that way, Zwingli responded that he did it to witness by his actions how distasteful it must be to God when people sing to him and petition him in that way. That just goes to show how low one can sink when he goes with the first impressions of his ruined heart without testing it.

retain in our Churches are idolatrous images. They hereby deny us our freedom to use them and, therefore, judge us as having the same idolatrous worship as the papists.

From this historical overview, which we felt we had to give before responding to the above question, the attentive reader will observe what sort of people are making this charge, that Old Lutheranism has remnants of the papacy even today, that's being raised everywhere, of course, by our enemies. . . .

In the previous issue we saw who has been accusing Lutherans of what for three hundred years now, namely, that she still has many papistic hold overs, being charged in part by enthusiasts who are obviously people with corrupt minds (2 Tim. 3.5-9), as by a Carlstadt, Muenzer and the whole army of the so-called heavenly prophets; in part by stubborn heretics as a Zwingli; and even by sworn enemies of the Lutheran Church and doctrine, as by the Reformed, etc. So then, first of all, this must at least raise suspicion that there is nothing to this charge, since no one has made any great progress in our highly enlightened age to uncover the flaws in the Lutheran Church that the Old Lutherans had not recognized in their naivete. Further, it's clear enough from all of this what to think about people who renew this accusation these days, yes, who even go beyond all bounds and assert that Old Lutheranism leads directly back to Rome again and who still want to be considered good Lutherans! Namely, that is just what Mr. Weyl, the publisher of the so-called "*Lutheran Shepherd's Voice*" in Baltimore does. The same writes the following in that paper of his:

"But it is proven that this sect (the Old Lutherans) leads back to Rome 1. by the liturgy received by Pastor Wyneken in Baltimore from Pastor Loehe in Bavaria, since it gives instructions to employ catholic customs for example: the making of the three fold cross over the baptized child, calling upon Mary at the consecration of the hosts, erecting a crucifix in the Church, and burning wax candles on the altar in the light of day at the time of holy Communion, etc. etc. Doesn't that reek of Rome? We are not saying that these things are explicitly commanded in this liturgy, but they have made their appearance in one Church where these have been introduced as what is American had been suppressed. The time for child's play is past and worship of God in spirit and truth have been ordained to us. And who can still remain in doubt where this sect will end up when we remember that Pusey, Newman and Consorten ended up even singing their thesis, "We eat flesh and drink blood in the LORD's Supper"? And where are these men now? They have converted back to the papacy. It doesn't matter where you start, as that saying goes, whoever remains on this path and follows it must inevitably arrive at the same goal. We're giving fair warning."

This method and line that Mr. Weyl is pursuing here is sad proof of the depth to which a man can finally sink if he stubbornly opposes the witness of the Holy Ghost in the Word of God, which he still has to acknowledge as God's Word. He ultimately sinks to the level of being a common liar and into pure hypocrisy.

That is, Mr. Weyl here makes himself a common liar when he writes that in Loehe's agenda an instruction is given to "call upon Mary at the consecration of the hosts." Here Mr. Weyl obviously is following the maxim (principle) of all master liars: "*Calumniare audacter, semper aliquid haeret; etsi enim canctur vulus, manet tamen cicatrix*, that is, in slander, just get to it, something will always stick, for even the wounds (when your lies are exposed) will heal, and all that's left is a scar." – Yet, let's see what the words in Loehe's agenda say that Mr. Weyl refers to in this accusation that it demands calling upon Mary. Only one prayer in the whole Order of Holy Communion contains the name of Mary, that is, according to said agenda the following verse should be sung by the congregation immediately before the chanting of the Words of Institution, according to the ancient usage of the so-called *Sanctus*, which says:

"Holy, Holy, Holy LORD God of Sabaoth,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory,
Hosanna in the highest }
 { Mary's Son } who comes in the
Blessed be { the Passover Lamb } Name of the LORD.
Hosanna in the highest.

So now who is being blessed here, or whom are the people here invoking? – Whom has this lying spirit not so blinded to the point that he can no longer properly explain this most simple of all sentences (perceiving the consistency of these words)? Hopefully he will at least acknowledge that it's clear enough that not Mary, but Mary's **Son** is being called upon, as in, for example, that hymn: "We all Believe in One True God," which says: "Born of the virgin Mary, Word made flesh," which,

of course, is not saying that we believe in the holy virgin, but that we believe in the One she bore in Bethlehem, Christ. Of course the ancients, by common custom, often also expressly called the Son of God the Son of Mary, since there had been heretics who either directly denied that the Son of God had received a true human nature or who still asserted that he had not received the same from Mary but had brought it with him from heaven, or even that Mary had only given birth to a man and not the Son of God, so therefore Mary was certainly the mother of the man JESUS, but that she could not be or be called the mother of God. The latter were called Nestorians. Now since the Loehe agenda gives instructions to call upon Christ and to confess with the ancient church that he who is blessed and worshiped by angels as the Son of God, is also Mary's Son, Mr. Weyl uses this to spread the rumor that the so-called Old Lutherans commit what is regarded by all Lutherans to be the most despicable idolatry, as they, like the papists, call upon the holy virgin. Therefore we hereby declare in the presence of the whole Lutheran Church in America that so long as he has not retracted this, Mr. Weyl is a liar who blasphemes God, who has entirely lost his credibility with every honorable person (to say nothing of every Christian).²²

Yet Mr. Weyl not only reveals himself here to be a bald faced liar, but also, as said, proves he's a hypocrite. He promises here to prove that the so-called Old Lutherans are a new sect that leads to Rome, so what does he do? – He takes the field against the ancient, true Lutheran Church. That is, he accuses the so-called Old Lutherans of observing, or at least justifying, ceremonies (except for their prescribed invocation) and confessing and defending doctrines which Luther and all orthodox Lutherans have observed, or at least justified, and have confessed and defended for three hundred years! Now what does this mean that Mr. Weyl has now just flatly stated that he considers the Lutheran Church, with her doctrine and ceremonies, to be the vestibule of the pope's Church and a bridge that leads out of Protestantism to the kingdom of the Anti-Christ? The reason for this remarkable game that Mr. Weyl is playing is easy to see. Namely, Mr. Weyl does not want to lose the appearance that he is amiable to the Lutheran Church, yes, that he is much rather one of the true watchmen for the same. We see that Mr. Weyl really wants to wear this mask not only by the title of his article, but he also explicitly asserts this in said issue of the same where he writes: "They (the Old Lutherans) are not people who hold fast to the purified doctrine of Luther from the Reformation of the 16th century, for we, also along with the whole Lutheran Church, yes, the Protestant (!?) Churches of America and Germany also have that honor." Yes, in what follows Mr. W. writes that the Old Lutherans cause division, "and everything that is best for us in the names Lutheran and Old Lutheran are most dear to us. . . that we take to heart as what is honorable and good for the whole Lutheran Church in America . . . that's why we're sounding the warning. Or should we not, as watchmen, sound the alarm?"

Truly one doesn't know if he should laugh or weep about what this man's doing. We ask, can a person act as a more blatant hypocrite than this show he's put on? First he writes: The doctrines of the Gospel were only taught in the *Augsburg Confession* "in a general purity" (For it taught specific doctrines impurely that must be excluded, see: *Shepherd's Voice* IV, 21.). The ceremonies of the Lutheran Church and her doctrine of the presence of Christ in the holy LORD's Supper lead back into the papacy (see above). In holy Baptism a person is in no way born again as the Lutheran Church teaches in the *Small Catechism*, only dedicated (see issue 18 of the *Shepherd's Voice*). "It is high time that no evangelically minded Christian ever again say, 'I am of Apollo, I am of Paul, I am of Luther,' etc. (see the same V, 4.) and the like. Yes, first Mr. Weyl declares that those who would rather lose everything than intentionally seek to depart from a single letter of Lutheran doctrine as the greatest enemies of the church, and calls them, because of their holding fast to the Old Lutheran Confession, a new "dangerous sect" – and then – he, with Pilate, washes his hands in innocence, seizes us and says he also has the honor of being a good Lutheran, that he certainly preserves the doctrine of Luther and the reformation of the 16th century like everyone else, that the names Lutheran and Old Lutheran are such a "beautiful and dear name" that he would never surrender it. In sum, everyone will have to bear witness of him that he is a true watchman on the bulwarks of the Lutheran Zion, who is

²²In this situation Mr. Nast has started in a more clever way. That is, in his apologetic to Pr. Wyneken he refers to "a calling upon, or naming of the blessed virgin Mary." By the addition: "or naming of" he assured himself of a way out if someone caught him in the lie. So now if it comes up in conversation Mr. Nast can say: I didn't mean any harm by using the word "call upon" as it may sound, for this addition shows that I only was thinking of her "being named" in that. The latter is actually what I was accusing Pr. Wyneken of. A child once burned fears the fire!

obviously gazing with the eyes of a falcon so that nothing un-Lutheran in doctrine or in ceremonies will invade. – So we ask once more, can anyone play the hypocrite more unabashedly than does Mr. Weyl here?

Oh! How has Lutheranism in America come to this, that a man who blasphemes the characteristic doctrines and practices of the Lutheran Church as papistic, and who wants to publicly brand as Puseyites, which means, as crypto-Catholics, those who still want to faithfully preserve this Church with her doctrine and her confessional ceremonies, even in these last times of apostasy and, for that, horribly slanders and persecutes them as founders of fanaticism and destroyers of the Church, who thus reveals himself as an (albeit impotent) enemy of the Lutheran Church – how, as we've said, has it happened that such a man with no shame at all, while still publicly calling himself a Lutheran, can try to assert that he steadfastly preserves the doctrine of Luther and the reformation, and act according his calling as if he had the right to do all that by the office of watchman entrusted to him?! Does not Pastor Weyl have to believe that all the Lutherans in America have either utterly lost their minds and their understanding, so they won't notice how he has blasphemed it under the new, infamous name, "Old Lutheran," as he was hypocritically praising the ancient name of Lutheranism, or that those who are now still called Lutheran in America only act unanimously out of hypocrisy, even as he does?²³ O you Lutherans, if you still want to remain with the faith of your fathers, you'd better open your eyes! For if you still let yourselves be duped by wolves that are no longer wearing their sheep's clothing, but rather have openly appeared in their wolf's skin and who are mocking both God and you by crying out: Are we not faithful shepherds? Aren't we not vigilant watchmen? – but you – with men like Mr. Weyl at your lead – who have, up until now, called yourselves Lutheran, yes, have insisted upon that name, while they have at heart and in words rejected the doctrine of the Lutheran Church as laid out in her confessions, how can you want to continue to stand before the eyes of all reasonable and honorable men in such despicable hypocrisy? Won't you just once remember how God, who is a God of truth, has threatened hypocrites and liars in his Word? Do you want to know the fate that you will meet if you do not repent, then open to what is written in Job 8.13-14, Ps. 5.5-7, Jer. 23.15, Rev. 22.15. If that applies to you then at least be honorable men and lay the name aside, and just flatly announce that you don't want to be a Lutheran and that you have only wanted to defraud the people with that name, and beg both God and man to forgive you for it. That's the path you must follow should you want to become respectable men again. Then call yourselves what you want, and to us Lutherans it's none of our business. You see already that you may not be allowed to call yourselves Reformed since these already have as much as told you "no thanks" to fellowship with you. Just recently we heard of a huge "World - Convention" that will be on the rise in modernism. We think perhaps if you knock at that door, you'll be welcomed. But if you persist in continuing to wear your mask of hypocrisy and to name yourself after Luther, then we want you to know we'll also continue to witness against you to uncover your hypocrisy to the poor misled people and day and night cry out to God in heaven for help against your lies, so long as our tongues work! What good will that do? God will see and your reward will be disgrace! Cf. Ps. 12.

But now enough of this! – We had to publish this, primarily to protect even our readers from this misunderstanding, as if we were promoting some newly established sect when we advocate for certain doctrines and practices that are now disparaged as remnants of the papacy. Hopefully, by what has already been stated, it will be clear to every reader that it's not a matter of whether a new, so-called "Lutheranism" leads to Rome, but if it's ancient, true Lutheranism, which Mr. Weyl really has in mind. We will now go on to answer that question.

First, in regard to the ceremonies of the Lutheran Church, for which it is charged that she

²³Even the Reformed in our present country are beginning to become ashamed of this category of Lutherans, even as the latter would be all too glad to become one Church with the former. One of the things a Reformed theologian writes in the Chambersburg *Christian Paper of the German Reformed Church* is the following: "It can't be denied that the Protestant Church departed completely in this (in holy Communion) from the doctrine of the Reformer. In Europe this happened through rationalism (faith in reason). But this took place no less in America. This is especially conspicuous in the Lutheran Church of that land. Here (that is, in a book of that excellent Reformed Theologian, Dr. Nevin) striking passages are produced from the so-called *Lutheran Observer* (a periodical in English, like the *Shepherd's Voice* in the German language) from most recent issues that all too clearly expose the shame of this most lamentable spiritual and creedal laxity. O Luther! You man of God, full of power and might, the bastards are making themselves fat on your name!" – Thus writes one of the Reformed about the so-called American Lutheran Church, and, indeed, based upon undeniable truth. – Oh, Shame! – Why? You Lutherans, isn't it high time we learn to be ashamed and finally turn round?

is related to the Roman Church and has inclinations towards the same, every reasonable person must admit that if the Lutheran Church has a few things that are also found in the Catholic Church, this, in and of itself, could not prove that the former has inclinations towards the latter. For, if that were so, this charge would apply to every Christian denomination. For don't all parties in Christianity also have the same Bible, the same Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, the same Baptism, the same preaching office, the same Sabbath observance, etc., as the Romanists? Don't even other so-called Protestants also have church buildings with steeples on them, bells, organs, the custom of folding hands, kneeling, uncovering the head when praying, and the like? Who would charge the Reformed, the Methodists, the Evangelicals, etc. with Catholic tendencies for those things? Certainly no one. Whoever regards the mere acceptance of certain innocent ceremonies (even if he perhaps like Mr. Weyl considers them monkey play) as papism cannot possibly know what papism actually is and no one would be happier with that than the papists themselves, as they would be asserting that the mystery of lawlessness of the Anti-Christ consists in the use of wax candles, in priestly vestments and in the priest standing behind the altar and the like? . . .

In previous issues we have remembered, and every impartial reader will agree, that the Old Lutheran Church, indeed, has a few ceremonies in common with the Roman Church, but that a certain uniformity of these Churches in a few external ceremonies can exist without them necessarily having a direct inward relationship with each other.

This raises a question: In what cases would it be right to draw the conclusion that those specific ceremonies in the Old Lutheran Church would lead to Rome? Our answer: 1. If the Luth. Church, along with the churchly ceremony, had also accepted the false doctrine of the Roman Church regarding it, and 2. if the Luth. Church also has retained the ceremonies of the Roman Church that, in and of themselves, are against God's Word, and, indeed, just those that embrace any of the unique character of the Roman Church that are unique to the very essence of the papacy and have been introduced to win their favor and to undergird them. By applying a detailed examination and comparison, please see for yourself that the Luth. Church teaches something much different in her ceremonies than does Rome, the one, the truth, the other a lie. Test for yourself that Lutheranism has only retained the good, salutary ceremonies of the Roman Church according to 1 Thess. 5.21, which are completely free of any tie to the papacy, that actually predate the papacy, having been used during the best age of the church. So also prove for yourself that the charge is obviously false that through her ceremonies Lutheranism leads to Rome, but it only goes to show that the Lutheran Church at the time of the Reformation had not hastily acted in ignorance, or as we Germans say, she did not throw the baby out with the bath water. This all is proved in the examination we will now present.

What does the Roman, the so-called Catholic Church teach about her human institutions, ceremonies, or Church customs? We find this clearly and plainly stated in her public, universally acknowledged symbols or churchly confessional writings. Among other things, it says this in the resolutions of the council held in Trent: "Whoever wants to say that the received and approved ceremonies of the Catholic Church, which are observed with the celebration of the sacrament, may either be arbitrarily discontinued without sinning by the servants of the Church or that they can be replaced by each parson by new ones: Let him be condemned." (*Council. Trid. Sess. 7 Can. 13.*) In another passage in that same confession it says: "The holy synod has decided that the bishops. . . shall defend, through written orders and with predetermined punishments, the priests' retaining no other hours for the Mass than those appointed (*debitis*), not employing other rites or other ceremonies and prayers during the conduct of the Mass than those the Church has examined and have been accepted through frequent and official use. (*Sess. XXII Decret. De obs. Et evit. Etc.*) It goes on to say: "The Church has accepted the same ceremonies into usage as silent declarations of blessing, candles, incense, vestments, and many similar things, according to apostolic order and tradition (summary)." (*Sess. XXII. Sacr. Miss. Ch. 5*) Finally, it says: "Even though Christ the LORD has instituted and entrusted to the apostles the most holy sacrament under the forms of bread and wine,. . . yet she (the Church) has approved and decided to communicate by this tradition (to give the laity only the bread in the LORD's Supper), so that this is to be retained as a law which no one is allowed to reject or to change arbitrarily without the full authorization of the Church herself. (*Sess. XXI. Doctr. de comm. ch. 1.2.*)

It is clear to see from these resolutions that in the Roman Church consciences are bound to their ceremonies, the discontinuance or changing of the least bit of the same being made a sin and connected with punishments, and the human Church orders with respect to ceremonies are in many ways placed in the same status as divine commandments, yes, even placed above them. That is also

why anyone who converts to the papacy must pledge themselves to the whole lot of the Romish ceremonies. For it says this in the *Professio fidei*, or the Roman Catholic Oath: “I also steadfastly receive the apostolic and churchly traditions and the other remaining customs and orders of the Church. I also accept and submit to the received and approved rites of the Catholic Church with the public conduct of all (seven) of the sacraments.”

Now does the Lutheran Church agree unanimously with the Romanists in this doctrine of ceremonies? Far from it! Much rather our Church most strictly distinguishes between human and divine commandments, and stands guard over her jewel of Christian freedom, with a faithfulness that many seek in vain in other Churches, and declares that just this doctrine of the Roman Church on ceremonies is a most horrid abomination.

Among other things she says in the 7th Article of the *Augsburg Confession*: “For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached unanimously according to a pure understanding, and the sacraments be administered according to the divine Word. And it is not necessary for the true unity of the church that ceremonies instituted by man be retained everywhere in the same form, as Paul says in Eph. 4: One body, one Spirit, as you were called to one hope of your calling, one LORD, one faith, one Baptism.”

It goes on to say in the 15th Article of that confession: “On Church orders made by men, it is taught that they should be retained so long as they can be retained without sin, and serve for peace and good order in the church, as certain feasts, holidays and the like. Yet instruction should be given in this so that the conscience not be burdened thereby, as if such things were necessary for salvation.”

It goes on to say in the 26th Article: “Also of these aspects many ceremonies and traditions will be retained, like the order of the Mass²⁴ and other chants, feast days, etc., which also serve for the preservation of order in the church. But, along with that, the people are instructed that such outward worship does not make them pious before God and that they should be retained without making it a burden on the conscience so that one could omit it without causing offense, and would not sin by doing so. The ancient fathers had also retained this freedom in external ceremonies, for in the Orient (in the Eastern Church) the Easter celebration was held at a different date than in Rome. And when some wanted this disparity to be regarded as a schism in the church, others admonished them that it is not necessary to retain uniformity in such traditions. And Irenaeus says this: Differences in festivals do not divide the unity of faith. As also *Distinct. 12* describes such dissimilarities in human orders as not violating the unity of Christendom. And *Tripartia hist. Lib. 9*. draws together many variegated church customs and adds to it this useful Christian saying: It was not the apostles’ intention to establish feast days, but rather to teach faith and love.

It goes on to say in Article 28: “Instituting human laws, even doing so against God’s Word, since they invent sins in food, in days and similar things, and thus encumber Christianity with servitude to the law...that it should be a mortal sin if one does some work of labor on a holiday, even without causing others offense.” – This same article goes on to say: “So then how should Sunday and other similar church orders and ceremonies be regarded? To this our people give this answer, that the bishops and parish priests may create orders so that the Churches are kept orderly, not thereby to receive God’s grace, and also not thereby to make satisfaction for sins, nor to bind consciences to them, to regard them as necessary worship, and to consider that they are sinning if they, without causing offense to others, break them. So St. Paul has ordered the Corinthians, as such, that women in the assembly should cover their heads, etc. It was incumbent upon the Christian’s assembly to keep this order for the sake of love and peace and to be obedient²⁵ to the bishops and parsons in this matter, and to retain the same so as not to offend one another, so the Church would not be disorderly or in disarray.”

The Apology says on this: “For this unity (of the church) we are now saying that it is not necessary that human institutions, be they *Universales* (universal) or *Particulares* (one introduced in individual provinces), be everywhere alike. For the righteousness that avails before God, that comes through faith, is not bound to external ceremonies or human institutions. For faith is a light in the heart that renews the heart and makes it alive. External institutions or ceremonies are not enough to aid

²⁴As in many writings at the time of the Reformation, mass here means the same as the holy LORD’s Supper.

²⁵Read on below to see the remarks shared about this passage.

in this, whether they are universal or particular.” (Art. 7)

The Apology goes on to say in the 15th Art.:

“Therefore it is the apostles’ intention that this freedom should remain in the church, that no ceremonies, neither the law of Moses, nor any other institutions, should be valued as necessary worship.”

Finally, the *Formula of Concord* expresses the following on this subject: “We unanimously believe, teach and confess that ceremonies and church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden in God’s Word, but are only established for the sake of tranquility and good order are, in and of themselves, not worship, and are no part of the same, Mt. 15. ‘They worship me with the commandments of men.’ We believe, teach and confess that the congregation of God in every place and in every time, according to the situation of the same, has the authority to change such ceremonies, as may be most useful and edifying for that congregation of God.” (*Brief Summary. Art. 10*) – –

That’s how the Lutheran Church talks about ceremonies. Now whoever compares this with what the Roman Church teaches about the same will unanimously say with us that the Lutheran Church’s evaluation of ceremonies, – far, far from leading to Rome, has raised a permanent wall and an eternal fence dividing the Lutheran and the Roman Churches. For in the Lutheran Church all human institutions in the church, or ceremonies, are aspects of Christian freedom which are retained as thought best or can be changed or removed by each congregation in every time and place. But in the Roman Church the conscience of the Christian is bound in this, as it is bound to those things as if commanded by God himself, which therefore can neither be discontinued nor changed without sinning.

Perhaps here some might say: But isn’t it quite obvious that you Old Lutherans act against this principle of the Old Lutheran Church since you place such a weighty importance on some ceremonies, some of you rejecting certain ones and some clinging tenaciously to certain others, so that you accuse each other of being schismatic for the sake of certain ceremonies? We will answer this question in the next issue. . . .

We demonstrated from the symbols of the Lutheran Church in the previous issue how definitely and decisively these teach that ceremonies that are neither commanded nor forbidden by God, but have rather been introduced by men, are matters of Christian freedom; that, therefore, no conscience should be bound to them as if it were sinful in of itself to use them or not to use them, and as if a Church could not be a true Church if they lacked just these ceremonies.²⁶

As already mentioned, many think that we ourselves have here positioned ourselves with those who are now called Old Lutherans and have proven that Old Lutherans, then, cannot be true Lutherans. Many will now say to us: Don’t you Old Lutherans obviously depart from the 7th Article of the *Augsburg Confession*? That is, from that foundational principle that: “for the true unity of the Christian church it is not necessary that ceremonies invented by men be universally retained”? Don’t you seek to preserve, introduce or to universally introduce the Old Lutheran service, with all its ancient ceremonies? Sure, don’t you also, at the same time, rebuke some Lutheran preachers as traitors when, for no reason, they serve common bread instead of hosts or they break the bread like the Reformed do, or give the bread and the cup into the hand of the communicants, or hand out the consecrated elements with some innovative formula and the like at the administration of the holy LORD’s Supper, as if the Lutheran Church and truth were being violated? So aren’t you thereby, most obviously, to some extent turning the discontinuance or the use of certain practices into sins, which the ancient Lutheran Church in her public confessions has declared matters of freedom (*adiaphora*)? So aren’t you thereby raising human institutions to the level of divine commands, like the papists? Aren’t you hereby denying the pure Lutheran doctrine of Christian freedom?

This charge, actually being leveled against us from various sides, is no minor issue. Woe to

²⁶ May the dear readers of *The Lutheran* not become upset with us for going into such depth on this subject. We have noticed that even among those totally committed to the Lutheran Church and truth confusion dominates about this matter, and, for this reason, many here are divided amongst themselves who ought to extend a fraternal hand to each other and work together for their common goal. We might, therefore, like to add something here to learn to come to a common understanding with those who oppose us and – bring peace. We therefore most fervently plead that each and every reader not ignore the importance of this matter but take this matter up for their careful consideration.

us if they are well founded! For the heresy with which we are here charged is an earth quake that certainly must topple the pure doctrine of justification. Yet we shall see – it is quickly shown which side can be charged with heresy, whether it is those being charged or those making the allegations.

Before anything else we must state: Whoever thinks that, according to this same doctrine, the use or rejection of ceremonies that are neither commanded nor forbidden by God is always totally indifferent or a matter of personal whim, since they are grey areas, really have a poor understanding of the doctrine of Christian freedom. Even reason tells us that even innocuous matters can become most sinful under certain circumstances. Even that famous heathen, Seneca, writes this (*Lib. IV. controv. 25.*): “*Quaedam, quae licent, tempore et loco mutato, non licent,*” which means in English: “Much that’s allowed is not allowed in a different context of time or place.” So, of course, situations can always arise where ceremonies that are, in themselves, indifferent, stop being indifferent, situations in which great sin can be committed by either accepting or rejecting the same. That’s the doctrine of the Word of God and, therefore, the doctrine of our ev. Luth. Church. It’s certainly true, in his conscience a Christian must always assert his freedom in all matters neither commanded nor forbidden by God and suffer absolutely no diminution of the same. The Christian is never allowed to let a single person, or even the whole Christian church rule through human commandments. Therefore, for example, the apostle admonished the Corinthians not to eat of the sacrifices to idols: but he also adds “but not for conscience’s sake”: “But I do not say this for the sake of conscience but for the sake of others. For why should I let my freedom be judged by another man’s conscience?” 1 Cor. 10, 28, 29. But shortly before this passage the holy apostle establishes this important rule: “I indeed have authority to do everything, but not everything is good.” v. 23. By these Words it’s abundantly clear that even within the bounds of Christian freedom some limitations are drawn that no one who wants to be a Christian may be allowed to transgress. For whenever our use of our Christian freedom does not result in what is good, according to this apostolic passage, we are always then responsible to voluntarily forgo the use of our freedom, lest by not doing so we commit terrible sin. Therefore Luther also treats it this way in his glorious sermon, *On the Freedom of the Christian Man* under the paradoxical (seemingly contradictory) themes: “1. A Christian man is a free lord over all, and 2. A Christian man is a submissive servant of all.”

Now the question arises: In what cases can even a Christian not act as he pleases in regards to ceremonies nor appeal to his freedom? We answer:

1. The individual is bound to observe the ceremonies and to abide by all human orders which have been introduced in an orderly way through the majority of the congregation to which he belongs. This is based upon all the passages of the holy Scripture according to which things taking place in a Christian congregation are to be done in peace, good order and honorably, and all should be subject to one another, especially the young to those who are elder. Cf. 1 Cor. 14. 33,40; 1 Peter 5.5. This divine law, the fulfillment of which is immediately binding on the conscience of every Christian, makes every churchly institution binding for the individual in a way that is, indeed, mediate but yet true. Therefore an independently minded person has no right to say: He won’t abide by any congregational order, he will not observe this or that ceremony the congregation has accepted, for human laws are not binding on the conscience and ceremonies are obviously free and indifferent, whose rejection must not be allowed to be considered sinful, and the like. Certainly it is true that if it is demanded of a Christian that he consider a human commandment to be a command of God, he must then rather die than submit to it. But, on the other hand, if he is required to keep a human institution for the sake of love, for the sake of peace, for the sake of good order, then he can in no way presumptuously appeal to his freedom, for his conscience is mediately bound to it, for by overstepping that churchly institution he would be overstepping the divine command: “Let everything take place honorably and in good order. Everyone should be subject one to another.” Here applies the already mentioned passage of the *Augsburg Confession*: “Such orders are incumbent upon the Christian assembly for the sake of love and peace, and the bishops and parsons are to be obeyed in these cases, so that people not offend each other, so there will be no disorder or wild behavior.” (Art. 28) Luther writes about this in his sermon on good works: “The second work stemming from this (the Fourth) Commandment is honoring and obeying our spiritual mother, the holy Christian church, that we conduct ourselves according to her spiritual authority, what she commands, forbids, institutes, assigns, bans, frees, even as we honor, fear and love our physical parents, so also we grant

the spiritual authority²⁷ their rights in all things that are not in violation of the first three Commandments.” (L.W. X. 1649.) Since it is not uncommon that there are members in congregations who believe it is a violation of their freedom that they should be ruled by the majority in matters that are indifferent and not sinful, then let us go on to see what a few witnesses of pure doctrine say on this point. First, Luther goes on to write in his book *On Councils and the Church*: “Concerning such external signs and holy things (sacraments) the church has a number of external rites by which and through which they are not sanctified in either body or soul, and are not commanded and instituted by God, but rather. . .these have an external usefulness or utility and are perfectly good and proper. For instance, a few holidays are observed for preaching and prayer, a few prayer hours, as morning and afternoon, churches are built, or a building is used, an altar, a pulpit, baptismal font, lamps and candles, bells, vestments and the like. Christians would be able to be and remain sanctified without such things, . . . but these are fine things for the children and for simple people, and provide them with fine order so that they have a definite time, place and hour which they can count on, as St. Paul says in 1 Cor. 14.: Let everything be done decently and in good order. And no one should – as also no Christian does – out of pure stubbornness and with no reason, act alone against this in disorder, and ignore it, but act in good faith towards the flock, retain their good order nor even disturb or hinder it. For they would violate love and hospitality.” (*Luth. W. XVI. 2814. 15.*) Luther goes on to write: “Between you, as a person, and God there is nothing but pure and perfect freedom, so that before him you will not put up with being forced to do those things he has not commanded. In this, heaven and earth are filled with his freedom, as heaven and earth cannot yet contain it. But between you and your neighbor, or those in authority over you, this freedom does not extend except insofar as it does not harm your neighbor. Yes wherever it can be to his benefit and support, such freedom must not want to be free, but rather give way and be of service to our neighbor.” (L.W. XIX. 1671.) Finally, Heinrich Mueller writes in the appendix to his *Enlivening Hour*: “One is not bound by the institution of the confessional chair to deny a person Communion as a bad thing if he has not first appeared for confession, especially such people who had come from evangelical places where (private) confession had not been practiced, and thus, as he was being raised as a member of the church in this way, he could not yet be prepared to do this, for then such an institution would turn the confessional chair into a compulsion of conscience, even when private confession itself does not have a divine but a human institution and is not universally instituted, but only in part of the church. Even so, thoughtful people, in order to prevent offending in any way the untaught and the weak, are also showing kindness by also being prepared to admonish such people so that they first attend to the confessional chair. For wherever private confession is practiced and is confirmed through church law, it is also binding on a person who comes there from a foreign place, insofar as he desires to be received in good standing as a member in fellowship with that Church, for these incidental, local, officially adapted rules of the church are no less binding on the conscience than any other laws, to be conformed with, and what Augustine writes in *Epist. 86* therefore applies here: “In those things that have not been firmly established in the holy Scripture, the customs of the people of God or the institutions of the ancient church are to be regarded as law.” We would also add what the church father, Augustine, offers in regard to this point in another place, when one of the things he writes to Jannarius is: “When my mother followed me to Milan, she found that the congregation did not fast on the Sabbath. She began to be disturbed by this and was confused as to what she should do. Indeed, this did not bother me, but for her sake I asked Ambrose, of blessed memory, for some counsel about this, who told me: Whenever I go to Rome, I fast on the Sabbath. When I return here I don’t. So in whatever congregation you enter, you should observe their customs if you don’t want to offend anyone and what they do should not then be regarded offensive by you.””

²⁷“Spiritual authority” does not only mean the so-called spiritual estate, but also not only the congregation of the laity, but the whole church or congregation, as consisting of both teachers and hearers, and either consisting of all adult males, or, in some circumstances, a smaller number of representatives. Therefore Luther writes in the appendix to the *Smalcald Articles*: “Christ gives the final and highest judgement to the church when he says: Tell it to the church.” (*On the Power and Primacy of the Pope*) In *the Apology* it says: “What the bishops and parsons resolve is not also immediately the church’s decision.” In the so called Wittenberg Reformation of 1545 Luther expresses himself even more clearly when he writes: “When our Savior, Christ, says: ‘Tell it to the church.’ with these Words he is commanding that the church must be the highest judge, so it follows that not just one station, that is, the bishops, but also others educated in the fear of God of all other stations, are to sit as judge and have the *voces decisivas* (deciding voice).” (L.W. XVII. 1754.)

2.) A second case in which indifferent matters cease to be indifferent or remain matters of freedom is this, when through the use or through the discontinuation of the same the weak would be offended. St. Paul not only expressly writes about this to the Romans (Ch. 14.13 – 22) and to the Corinthians (1, Ch. 8. 9 – 13), but this worthy apostle also shows us this by his example of how a Christian should behave in this case. That is, Paul once wanted to take young Timothy along on his apostolic journey, but since his father had been a Gentile Timothy had not received circumcision. Now since Paul feared this would be taken by the Jews as offensive and thus would hinder the Gospel being brought among them if he would preach the same in association with someone who was uncircumcised, so, as a concession to the weakness of his brothers according to the flesh, he had Timothy circumcised, even though not long before that the decision had been adopted by the whole Council in Jerusalem that the Gentiles, who would become Christians, would not first have to become circumcised. Cf. Acts 16. 1 – 4. Being directed by this doctrine and this example of the apostle, it therefore says explicitly in our symbols: “Our people also teach clearly and plainly that Christian freedom must be exercised in these matters so as not to offend the weak or the uninstructed, and that no one, in any way, abuse freedom so that the weak are frightened away from the Gospel, but rather for the sake of peace and unity customs must be retained that can be retained without sinning and without burdening the conscience.” (*Apol.* Art. 15) But as, by these words, the *Apology* first warns against offending the weak by doing away with the ancient ceremonies that had been used before, so the *Formula of Concord* just as seriously warns against introducing ceremonies from the false believing Churches for the sake of causing offense with the following words: “So also through such concessions and similitude in these external matters, one is first uniting in their doctrine which is not Christian, strengthening the idolaters in their idolatry, disturbing and offending those who rightly believe, and weakening their faith, for both of which every Christian will be responsible to give an account upon his soul’s welfare and salvation, as it is written: Woe to the world for the sake of offense. Or: Whoever has offended the least one who believes in me, it would be better for him that a millstone be hung around his neck and he be drowned in the sea, where it is the deepest.” (*Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration Art. 10*) Oh that these preemptive woes had been taken to heart by those who wanted to be servants of the Lutheran Church but who, without ever thinking about their offending the weak, set out to abolish practically every ancient Lutheran practice, and have received in their place the ceremonies of Reformed Churches. They will someday have to give an account before God for that, as through such misleading they cause many Lutherans to wander from their old mother church and have strengthened those who are Reformed minded in their dream that the ancient Lutheran Church had been semi-Catholic and that the Reformed are the truly cleansed and purified Church. Preachers who mislead people like that obviously actually think they’re the ones acting thereby on behalf of the weak, but they err badly by thinking so, so it becomes all too clear that there is a third case when we are not free with respect to ceremonies to act as if they were arbitrary.

3.) That is, ceremonies cease to be free matters of indifference when they are either demanded of us as necessary or made into a sin in our conscience. For in this case it is not being treated at all as an indifferent ceremony (over which mature Christians would be ashamed to debate), but then it must be considered as nothing less than asserting a denial of what is true, especially a denial of that important doctrine of Christian freedom. In this case, before a Christian should make the least concession, especially to manifest enemies of the truth or even to false brothers, even in matters that would otherwise be innocuous and insignificant, he must rather suffer any consequence to himself. The holy Scriptures teach us this through Word and example. Thus St. Paul chiefly writes: “So don’t allow anyone to make matters of food or drink, or of specific holidays, or new moons or Sabbaths matters of conscience. Don’t let anyone corrupt your goal, who by their own choice boast in the worship of angels. Why do you allow yourself to be taken captive by their principles as if you still lived in this world? Who say: You must not touch, do not taste, do not handle, which all concern things that decay in your hands and are human commands and teachings.” (Col. 2.16 – 22.) Further: “So stand firm in the freedom by which Christ has set us free and don’t let yourselves again be taken prisoner in a yolk of slavery. See, I, Paul say to you: If you let yourselves be circumcised then Christ is no use to you.” (Gal. 5.1,2) Paul has also confirmed this doctrine by his example. For though under other circumstances, as we heard above, he conceded for the sake of the weak and had Timothy circumcised since the jewel of the pure doctrine was not being endangered thereby yet, on the other hand, he was dead set against letting Titus to be circumcised. The apostle states the reason for this alternative handling of the matter with the words: “For when some false

brothers had forced their way among us and infiltrated us to spy out the freedom we have in Christ JESUS, so they might take us captive: We did not give in to them for a moment to submit to them, so that the truth of the Gospel would remain among you.” (Gal. 2.3 – 5) So in keeping with this, our symbols speak in the same way: “We believe, teach and confess when the enemies of God’s Word desire to displace the pure doctrine of the holy Gospel, the entire congregation of God, yes each individual Christian man, but especially the servants of the Word as representatives of the congregation, are responsible, by virtue of God’s Word, to confess the doctrine, and what belongs to the whole religion, freely and publicly, not only with words but in actions and deeds, nor even in this case should they yield at all in matters of indifference to the opponents nor should they allow themselves to adopt anything from the opponents to weaken true worship nor germinate an instituted idolatry, by force or by stealth, as it is written in Gal. 5.1, or Gal. 2.4,5. Paul speaks in the same way of circumcision, which was, at the time, a free matter of indifference (1 Cor. 7.18), as something that was otherwise also used by Paul in spiritual freedom. Acts 16.3. But since the false apostles demanded and abused circumcision to certify their false doctrine as if the works of the law were necessary for righteousness and salvation, Paul then says that he would not yield to them for a moment so that the truth of the Gospel would remain. So Paul gives way and concedes to the weak in food and times or days. Romans 14.6. But he will not also yield to the false apostles who wanted to lay such things as being necessary upon the conscience, even if such matters were, in and of themselves, indifferent. Col. 2.16. And when Peter and Barnabas conceded something in a case like this, Paul rebukes them publicly since they were not walking rightly according to the truth of the Gospel. Gal. 2.14. For here it no longer has anything to do with an outward action that is indifferent, which according to its nature and essence are and remain in themselves free and therefore may not suffer any commanding or forbidding to use the same, or not to do so, but rather it has to do with 1. the high matter of our Christian faith, as the apostle witnesses in Gal. 2.5: “So that the truth of the Gospel remains,” which would be darkened and ruined through such force and laws, since such indifferent things would promote false doctrine, superstitions and idolatry, and displace pure doctrine and Christian freedom, either openly, or at least by their thus accepting the abuses instituted by the opponents. In the same way, 2. this also has to do with the article of Christian freedom, which the Holy Ghost has so earnestly commanded us to retain through the mouth of the apostles of his church.” (Formula of Concord. Epitome. Art. 10) From this it is manifest if a Lutheran preacher gets rid of the old ceremonies of his Church and replaces them with the ceremonies of the falsely believing parties, since those heterodox bodies condemn the Lutheran ceremonies, turning them into a matter of the conscience and condemning them as sinful, superstitious, idolatrous, papistic, and since they declare that their own ceremonies (as the Reformed for instance with their breaking the bread) are the only right ones and require them as necessary, then such a preacher denies the important article of Christian freedom, lets himself again be caught under an Old Testamental yoke of slavery and thereby even denies Christ himself, who purchased our freedom at such a great cost. It doesn’t matter if the preacher had good intentions in this, as if he were misleading them in deference to the weak. Truth cannot give way, nor the purity of the Gospel endangered for the sake of the weak, much rather everything must give way to God’s truth. Therefore Luther writes among other things: “Listen, my brother, you know that we should surrender life and limb for Christian freedom as for each and every article of faith...It is necessary for you to confess and retain Christian freedom, and not put up with the devil making any command or prohibition here, or calling anything sinful or a matter of conscience where God does not want to. But when you allow such to be made sins, Christ is removed who takes sins away. For by such a conscience the true Christ is denied, who takes away all sins. So watch yourself, lest even in these insignificant matters you stand in no small danger, when they thereby are playing games with your conscience.” Further: “Wherever they want to deal with commandments and prohibitions, sins, good works, conscience and endanger whatever God wants left free, and has neither commanded nor forbidden, you must stand fast above all that in freedom and always do the exact opposite of what they demand until your freedom has won the field.” (Writing on the Heavenly Prophets. L.W. XX. 278) Here a Lutheran preacher sees what he’s obligated to do if he wants to remain faithful to his Church.

4.) Now we come to the last case, one that is especially relevant to our times, when the acceptance or rejection of an otherwise innocuous rite is not indifferent. It is this: If, in one way or another the appearance is given as if one is deferring to the opponents of pure doctrine, or as if one is now united with them or as if one is saying orthodoxy and false faith are essentially the same. The

sacred duty to be most careful to diligently suspend the use of this freedom in this case is based, amongst others, on the following passage from 2 Cor. 6.14: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what use has righteousness for unrighteousness? What fellowship has light with the darkness? What agreement is there between Christ and Belial? – Therefore come out from among them and separate from them, says the LORD.” Rom. 16.17: “I admonish you, dear brothers, that you mark those who cause division and offenses alongside the doctrine you have learned, and withdraw from them.” In this connection confer with 1 Thess. 5.22: “Avoid every appearance of evil.” Now, according to these declarations of the Holy Ghost, if the orthodox must sever fellowship with unbelievers and the heterodox, separate from them and depart from them and thus, according to that last passage, also avoid any appearance that fellowship was established between them, then those who receive the sorts of rites that are characteristic of a heterodox faith, that likewise have become trademarks of certain sects by which those who are heretical in faith want to express and confess their heresies with their rites, obviously act against God’s Word: For by that the members of the orthodox church give the appearance of having become one (united) with those of that heretical faith, as if they had become one with them, as if they had quit their accusation against the heretical doctrine, and as if they had now become one church body with the enemies of pure doctrine. That’s why in this case even our churchly symbols point this out when, among other things, they say: “Also among the legitimate, free adiaphora, or indifferent things, must not be included such ceremonies that give the appearance, apparently to avoid persecution, as if our religion and the papistic religion (or any other heterodox religion) were not far different than each other, or as if that religion were not highly opposed by us: Or if such ceremonies have the purpose and are thus forced to be accepted so that by that means both contradictory religions are integrated (*in unam redactae*), and made into one body, or again (*cum periculum est*) rapprochement is being attempted to the papacy by a retreat from the pure doctrine of the Gospel and true religion, or that this should be the final result. For in this case what Paul writes in 2 Cor. 6.14,17 should and must apply: ‘Do not be yoked with strangers, for what fellowship has light with darkness? Therefore depart from them and be apart from them, says the LORD.’ (*Formula of Concord. Epitome. Art. 10*) We must not overlook what the *Apology* expresses, in the following: “The Christian church does not only consist in association with outward signs (*externarum rerum ac rituum, sicut aliae politiae*), but rather chiefly in the inner fellowship of the eternal wealth of the heart, as of the Holy Ghost, of faith, of the fear and love of God.” (Art. 7) By this the *Apology* clearly explains that even the external ceremonies are not to be completely excluded from that by which the true church takes part in her fellowship.

Now when we apply the doctrine on ceremonies that we have presented here from God’s Word and the symbols of our Church to our present circumstances here, then it is not difficult to say that we, who are being favored by being called by the name “Old Lutherans,” do not want to diminish the freedom publicly confessed by the Lutheran Church nor again institute a papistic insistence on ceremonies.

We do not deny that we are geared up to retain the external worship service as it has long been retained for centuries by the ancient Lutheran Church, in its characteristic, constituent parts and to certify it as such to our congregations. We do not deny, however, that we intend to have no connection at all with the other church fellowships, nor to conform to any of the ceremonies characteristic of the Reformed, Methodists or others. Finally, we in no way consider those who nowadays abandon all the distinctive ceremonies of our church and in their place accept those of foreign churchly fellowships to be true Lutherans. But we do not do this because we believe that any ceremony instituted by man is, in itself, necessary for the Church to be true, as do the papists, or that we do not have the authority under every circumstance to use any non-offensive ceremony, whatever it might be. Much rather we only treat it that way because we won’t let our freedom in ceremonies be taken from us, we don’t want to deny any truth, especially in this important doctrine of Christian freedom, but want to confess it by our deeds, not wanting to offend the weak, nor confirming any seemingly innocuous rite tied to any heretical doctrine, lest we strengthen anyone in his error, or even give the slightest hint that by doing so we agree with the opponents of our Lutheran Church and her doctrine, nor that we were merging together into one church with them. We are dead serious about this. That’s what we want to do and what we are contending for. But it has nothing to do with the ceremonies, as such, whose use or abolition in other circumstances we would consider and declare with all our hearts to be a matter of complete freedom. Those who oppose our employing the Lutheran confession of freedom in ceremonies are boxing with shadows against us when they assert these things are, of themselves, free and necessitate no schism. The question they are raising is much

rather this, if we now are in circumstances where, according to God's Word and the confession of our Church, we must not concede to opponents even in certain indifferent matters. But since we are now in exactly those circumstances, **it is what we believe that dictates our response.**

For others, that is, for the Reformed, they want make what a Lutheran Church does a matter of conscience, since Lutherans have altars, images, crucifixes and the like in their Churches, that they use the oblation, or hosts and candle lighters with their administration of the holy LORD's Supper and require people to kneel at the reception of the most holy sacrament, that the pastor chants the Words of institution of the holy Supper, the liturgical verses, collects and the Aaronic benediction at the altar, that at Baptism, consecration, blessing, absolution they like to make the sign of the cross, to bow one's head at the Name of JESUS, etc. On the other hand, the Reformed have insisted, as indispensable for a valid celebration of the holy LORD's Supper, on the use of common bread, breaking it, giving the bread and the cup into the hand of the communicant, etc. But it is just for this reason, partly because they portray these practices of the Lutheran Church as sinful superstition, papistic and idolatrous, and partly because they want to demand that their innovations are necessary, just for that reason the Lutheran Church has not given way to her opponents for a moment, but rather has retained her relief against these lies imposed upon the conscience so that this important article of Christian freedom would not be darkened and that she would not lose it. But has anything changed since then? Are not the innocuous rites of the Lutheran Church still now turned into remnants of the papacy, which now must be completely eradicated to be pure? Don't even the false brothers in our own Church now press the same issues because in their view it's so obvious that the jewel of ancient Lutheran worship cannot compete with the enthusiastic (*schwaermerisch*), Methodistic movements of the Spirit? – So therefore you must see that we must be diligent and careful in our watchfulness, that for the sake of the false spirituality and pride that now predominates and is being raised against the naivete of our fathers, we not also publicly and disgracefully deny our Christian freedom, if ever we give way to our opponents and our false brothers in their insistence on these things. What sort of doctrine, what take on Christian freedom would we be bringing into the hearts of many thousands of Christians and helping to confirm in them by doing so! It is clearly our responsibility, even right here and now, to lay down a witness by what we practice that a true Christian must not let people call sinful and make commands when God has not called it sinful or placed a command. And no one is permitted to say: In my circumstances, for my part, those things don't apply to me. We reply: If you really want to be a servant of the Lutheran Church and want your congregation to be a part of the same, you must not let yourself be satisfied to do what would be right and salutary for the narrow confines of your congregation, as if you stood there all by yourself but, as a member of the whole, you are obligated to act in conscious connection with the whole church. If you want to raise the issue of your prerogatives as a membership in the Lutheran Church, then you must keep this in your mind constantly in all of the work of your office: What attacks the church is an attack against me. Her wars are my wars. What the church does is what I will do. What I do is the church acting along with me. If the church is being led into temptation, I am also being tempted.. If someone falsifies one of the treasures of the church, he is also falsifying that treasure for me. Whenever the church might reject something, I thereby also reject it. "If a member suffers, then all the members suffer with it." 1 Cor. 12.26. Obviously whoever doesn't take his stand being aware of being a part of the great whole of the church will never understand this. –

It would be a different situation if, this issue aside, the Lutheran Church in America had retained pure doctrine and only discontinued her rites for the sake of situations changing over time. It would then be crazy to force a return to ceremonies that have been abandoned. But we must bear in mind that most Lutherans, once they had abandoned Lutheran doctrine, have accepted Reformed and Methodistic doctrine instead of the old Lutheran doctrine and only then had also introduced the ceremonies of the latter. We remember how the old doctrine vanishing went hand in hand with the old practices disappearing, and the new practices followed directly in the footsteps of the new doctrines into our Churches. Finally, we bear in mind that most congregations who call themselves Lutheran here retained nothing but the name, while the union has already been introduced in them by their practice, since the preachers (just to mention one thing) are receiving the Reformed as members of their congregations, even as they want to remain Reformed, partly because of their greedy bellies, and partly from their complete indifference to religion. – Above all must we not acknowledge here and now that just now it is the most sacred obligation of a faithful servant of the

Lutheran Church and of a congregation of that name that they give evidence of it also through her external worship service, so they are visibly distinguished from the congregations that are sectarian and also to publicly and decisively renounce them? Must we not regard it as our most sacred duty, as true sons of our Church, to take great care to avoid any appearance as if we belong to that great party or as if we approve of or even do not abhor with our whole heart the nature of the same or of what's being pushed by those who are here unfaithful to the Lutheran Church, yes, who already have become members of another Church, and yet hypocritically want to bear the name Lutheran? Must we not regard it as our most sacred duty to seriously see to it that we never by either word or deed make ourselves part of that godless Church and religious syncretism that is always becoming more dominant? To sum it up: If it has ever become necessary in any country that a Lutheran congregation must not want to bear her name as a show or in jest, retaining the confessional ceremonies of our church and defending herself from the acceptance of Reformed ceremonies and the like— is it not now, more now than in the confusion of Babylon, and just here in America, in this land of sects and of indifferentism? . . .

In order to make it clear to our readers that the ceremonies the Old Lutheran Church had preserved did not have their origins in anything that was uniquely characteristic of the Roman Church, we have, as the attentive reader will remember, proceeded from what we hope is an unquestionable premise, that Old Lutheranism could only lead to Rome: 1. If our Church had accepted the false doctrine that Church connects to such rites; and 2. If she also preserved the ceremonies of the Roman Church that mitigated against God's Word, or even just those ceremonies which embrace anything that is uniquely characteristic of the Roman Church, taking part in the actual essence of the papacy that were introduced to support or make the papacy acceptable.

Now we have proved, first of all, that the Old Lutheran Church has a completely different doctrine of ceremonies than do the Romanists. We've shown, while the Roman Church teaches that her human ceremonies are binding upon the conscience and are essential to the worship of God, so, on the other hand, the Old Lutheran Church teaches that all human ceremonies in the Church that are neither forbidden nor commanded by God are matters of Christian freedom, which may be accepted or abolished, preserved or removed, according to circumstances. We have further shown that the Old Lutheran Church by no means relegates the doctrine of freedom in all ceremonies to mere words, but this Church much rather affirms this doctrine in her actual practice, whenever she decisively rejects a few ceremonies under certain circumstances and has decisively preserved others.

Now the question arises: Even if, indeed, the Old Lutheran Church has a different doctrine in her ceremonies than the Roman Church, isn't she showing that she is closer to the Roman Church than other Protestant denominations, since she has preserved ceremonies mitigating against God's Word since they are ceremonies used exclusively by papists? Thus muses the "Watchman of Zion" in Baltimore. Mr. Weyl asserts this. He writes: "Making the three fold cross over a baptized infant,²⁸ mounting a crucifix in the Church and burning wax candles on the altar in daylight at the holy LORD's Supper, etc., doesn't that reek of Rome?"

Now to go on to illuminate this point, we will lead the reader through the ceremonies the Lutheran church has received from out of the Roman Church one by one, to investigate if one or more of them really mitigate against God's Word or could even be referred to as remnants of the papacy. We begin with those Mr. Weyl has proposed, since it's obvious that these raise the greatest objections.

The first rite of our church that is supposedly papistic is the rite she uses so often, called "making the sign of the cross." Now it's certainly true, this ceremony is seldom used nowadays, since even many of the servants of the Church are ashamed of the crucified Son of God, so now even naive, honest Christians, who only see this done when they're around Catholics come to think it's a badge designating a vassal of the pope. But we ask, why could it not be an innocent ceremony, when such a lovely message is so clearly given to everyone by it? Even if it were admitted that this ceremony was not put into practice until after the papacy ascended, wouldn't we still have to say it's a very lovely and edifying rite to anyone who believes in the crucified Savior, who loves him and, therefore, gladly wants to remember him? Yet whoever is even slightly familiar with the history

²⁸We have omitted his words about invoking Mary, which Mr. Weyl included with these, since we have already squelched the shameful lie this bespeaks in issue number 5.

of the Christian Church must know that this beautiful, meaningful ritual is ancient. It far predates the rise of the papacy, yes, it had even been a common practice in the age of Christianity's first love, in the age when even hundreds of thousands died as martyrs for the Crucified. Already the first doctor of the Church after the apostolic fathers, Justin Martyr, makes mention of this Christian custom in his second letter of defense in the days of the church father, Tertullian, who was born in the year 160. Making the sign of the cross was so universally practiced that he could write: "Step by step, every time they came in or went out, when putting on clothing and shoes, upon waking, eating, lighting lamps, laying or sitting down, in short, in all our daily activities, we make the sign of the cross upon our forehead." (*Lib. De corona militis* c. III.) One of the things this same Tertullian writes in giving the details of the rites used with Baptism is this: "The flesh is signed (with the cross), by which the soul is guarded." (*De resurr. Carnis. Ch. 8*) From this we see that even in the time of Tertullian the sign of the cross was put into service, not only in common life, but also in the Church. And, of course, at that time it had no tie to any superstitious ideas that in the sign of the cross itself lay some magical power as it was later taught in the papacy and is still taught.²⁹ To the charge that heathen of those days leveled against Christians, that they worshiped the cross, Tertullian responds: "Whoever among you thinks that we worship the cross takes refuge in the same principle we do. Wood is wood. A figure does not obliterate its distinction from what it depicts." (*Apolog. c. 16*) So, according to that, what must you say about Lutheran preachers and writers of newspaper articles who disparage making the sign of the cross as being papistic? Aren't they themselves branding a most innocent rite, and a lovely, simple sign for the remembrance of the crucified Savior as an abomination? Aren't they turning the Christians in the golden age of Christianity, along with many thousands of holy martyrs, into superstitious papists? Doesn't the Lutheran Church have the right, as no reasonable person can deny, to preserve innocent rites that have remained in the Church, even from the ancient, good times, even through the rule of the papacy, and how may she, then, do away with the sign of the cross, this loveliest of all symbols, that only a believer can have? – Yes, says Mr. Weyl, "the time for child's play is over and the worship of God in spirit and truth is ordained for us." We respond: We truly do not begrudge this man his childish and ridiculous thoughts about responsibility and the Spirit. Yes we much rather pity him as an unsaved man who ought to be ashamed of his own explanation of the childishness of what is simply Christian. (cf. Mt. 18.3) But perhaps another might say: Shouldn't the Lutheran Church abolish making the sign of the cross, since it is used so much by papists in service of their superstitions? We reply: Abuse must not eliminate a proper use. The true Reformation was not the elimination of all existing ceremonies, but the purification of what was good from abuses and of false accretions according to the apostolic rule: "Test everything and retain what is good!" It doesn't say to abolish, but – "retain." But as to why the Lutheran Church retained just this designation, we will let the great Lutheran theologian Johann Gerhard explain: He writes thus: "The sign of the cross is made upon the forehead and the breast of the child (to be baptized). This is not done out of superstition, nor for the sake of its supposed supernatural power, but this is to bear witness that the baptized is received to grace and born again unto eternal life through the service of the crucified Christ alone. By this we are also reminded that the child is being received into the number of those who believe in the crucified Christ, that the old Adam in him must be crucified daily through Baptism, Rom. 6.6, and that he will be subject to the cross in this life. According to Genesis 48.14, the patriarch Jacob similarly formed a cross when he laid his hands upon both of his grandsons, Ephraim and Menasseh, reminding them of the cross of Christ. Here we also include that some elders did this on the foreheads of the servants of God in Ez. 9.4 and Rev. 7.3. Christ the crucified was once foolishness to the Gentiles 1 Cor. 1.23. That is why they mocked Christians, calling them cross worshipers (*crucicolas*), as Tertullian witnesses. Christians designated themselves in that way to show that they were not ashamed of the cross of Christ, placing the same in the middle of their forehead. Cyrill of Jerusalem writes (*Catech. 13*): 'Do not be ashamed of his cross. If you want to dispute with

²⁹In the catechism of the Jesuit, Canisius, so highly regarded by all Catholics, it says: "For what is the sign of the cross useful?" Answer: "Chiefly to drive away evil spirits and to destroy their power, attacks and devilish skills." Compare this with Eph. 6.16. – The Catholics will say: Don't the church fathers say these things about the sign of the cross? We answer: Here 1 Thess. 5.21 applies. The Bible is not to conform itself to the church fathers, but the church fathers must conform to the Bible. Besides that, it is also one thing for the church fathers speak of a matter in bold, rhetorical terms but quite another if one would want to forge new doctrines from out of those figures of speech.

unbelievers, then first make the sign of the cross with your hand. . . It is the sign of faith³⁰. . . Do not deny the Crucified, or the whole host of the witnesses of his crucifixion and his suffering will rise up against you, even the stones which are still visible, which were split at the death of JESUS.' Augustine³¹ writes (*Serm. 8 de verb. Dom.*) 'The wise people of the world mock us because of the cross of Christ and say: What are you thinking, honoring a crucified God? The cross is signed upon the forehead, which is man's disgrace, etc.' Therefore when catechumens (who had registered to be baptized) give themselves over to the crucified Christ, their forehead and breast is signed with the cross, as a sign of faith and confession of Christ. The sign of the cross comes from the baptism of catechumens, as do most other ceremonies, and is carried over to the baptism of infants." (*Loc. theol. Bapt.* § 261.) "Can," writes Gerhard in another passage, "forming the sign of the cross over the bread and the cup (in the holy LORD's Supper) be disapproved? Answer: This is a free ceremony if it is used as a sign of the blessing and consecration, but it is to be ascribed absolutely no spiritual power, . . . by it, the remembrance of the cross of Christ is renewed, that is, the suffering of Christ on the cross, which is the fount of all blessing, just as the laying on of hands in the Absolution and ecclesial ordination is used as an external sign. Even Chrysostom (*Horn. 55. in Matth.*³²) and Augustine (*Tract 118 in Joh.*) mention that the sign of the cross was used back then at the celebration of the holy LORD's Supper." (*Loc. th. S. Coena.* § 156) – Hopefully this will be sufficient to convince any objective person that nothing is less papistic than making the sign of the cross. . . .

A second practice of the Old Lutheran Church which must lead to Rome, according to Mr. Weyl's judgement, is "the mounting of a crucifix in the Church."

To this charge we must first remind you that, by all means, the Lutheran Church has, from the beginning, also distinguished herself from the Reformed Churches by doing this, as she has permitted images, altars, crucifixes, etc., in her houses of worship, while ever since the days of Carlstadt's smashing statues, the Reformed Churches have, for the most part, rejected them, though even the Reformed have not been perfectly united in that. So, for example, Beza, one of the Reformed, is not shy about saying he abhorred the image of the crucifixion from his heart," (*Coll. Moempel.* P. 418) but, on the other hand, a Calvinist, Petrus Martyr says, just as staunchly, Christ may be portrayed according to his human nature. (*Comment. I. Reg. 7*)

We can best see how rightly believing Lutherans regard images in the Church in some statements Luther made about the same. Luther speaks as follows in this regard. In his fourth sermon in the year 1522, after his return from the Wartburg to Wittenberg, he preached against Calstadt's enthusiasm (*Schwaermerei*) and statue smashing, saying: "Therefore we must conclude and must also remain in this, that images in themselves are neither good nor evil. But they should be left matters of freedom, to have them or not, only that no faith or dream be entertained that God is served or placated by venerating images." Further, Luther writes in his pamphlet, *Against the Heavenly Prophets of Images and the Sacrament*, from the years 1524 and 1525: "Not that I want to defend images or judge those who have broken them, especially those who destroy the images of God and venerated images. But images are reminders to bear witness to us, as do the crucifix and images of the saints, and this is even justified by looking to Moses, since even in the law they were certainly affirmed, and not only affirmed, but, inasmuch they were reminders and witnesses, they were also lovely and precious, like the stones of witness in Josh. 24.27 and 1 Sam. 7.12." Another important witness on this topic is found in the Church Postils. In his sermon for the *Invention of the Cross of*

³⁰It is confessed by Felix of Narcissus that this was such a recognizable sign by the heathen that this is how a Christian was recognized, for they would make the sign of the cross on the hour.

³¹This church father boasts before God in his *Confessions* (v.1; ch.1) that his pious mother, Monica, had consecrated him, even when he had been a baby, with the sign of the cross.

³²The words say this in Chrysostom: "Everything that is included in our salvation is perfected by means of the same (the cross). For when we (in Baptism) are born again, the cross of Christ is there. When we are fed with the most holy food (in the holy LORD's Supper), when we are ordained to the Preaching Office: always and everywhere the sign of the cross accompanies us. It's unimaginable that Chrysostom would ascribe a power to an outward sign of itself as in the superstition of the papacy, so he yet adds this: "The apostle called the cross something precious which one must not merely make with his fingers over his body, but obviously is made with great faith upon his thought."

Christ, Luther writes: “Therefore where this abuse and heresy occurs in the worship of images and the cross, the cross or image should be removed and destroyed and even the Church building itself demolished. For we have in the Old Testament this figure of the bronze snake commanded by Moses in the wilderness, as you just heard in the Gospel. All who were bitten by the fiery serpents were cured when they looked up to the bronze snake. That is what we also must do to be healed in our sins. We must also look at the crucified Christ in such images and believe on him.”

From this the attentive reader sees that even though the Lutheran Church gives so little attention to images that Lutherans don't think such external things are worth disputing over, she merely asserts she has the freedom to use them, and therefore she does not disdain them when they may also serve as a God-pleasing reminder, or as an appropriate, external adornment for public worship.

Now since, on the part of the Reformed, they often want to accuse Lutherans of sinning since they have allowed images, altars and crucifixes and the like in their Churches as they charge this as being papistic, yes, idolatrous, as this, for example, is done in the Heidelberg Catechism (see this year's *The Lutheran*, issue 5), then using or not using these images has taken on a significance beyond what it is in and of itself. That is, since now they have made images a matter of conscience for Lutheran Christians, then between Lutherans and the Reformed it is no longer a matter involving poor, innocuous images, but rather it impacts the high article of Christian freedom, the legitimate understanding of the divine law, the proper distinction between the Old and the New Covenants, and therefore, whether a Christian ought to allow something God has not forbidden to be called sinful. Therefore, against her will, the Lutheran Church has been dragged into this dispute, which truly had to be engaged for the sake of the most important article of faith, yet, at face value, it concerns the kind of matters our Church would let go of in a second without dispute if she didn't want to betray a leaning to Rome. So Luther witnesses how significant this conflict had become in the pamphlet mentioned against the heavenly prophets in the following words: “This has been stated about images being required in the strictness of Moses' law, not because I thought that I should defend the images, as I've sufficiently said, but so that we grant no space for the murdering spirits, since they make sins and matters of conscience where there are none and, thus, needlessly murder souls. For though images are poor, external things, yet if consciences are thereby burdened, as if they were sins under God's law, then that elevates this issue to make it most significant. For that destroys faith, violates the blood of Christ, condemns the Gospel, and nullifies everything Christ has won for us. So also this abomination of Carlstadt is no less destructive to the kingdom of Christ and to a good conscience than was the papacy with its forbidding of food and marriage and whatever else was free and not sinful. For eating and drinking are also paltry, external matters, yet souls are murdered when the conscience is stricken with laws in these matters.

Whoever considers this rightly will not wonder when faithful servants of the Lutheran Church still advocate their congregation's adorning their Churches with images, with a crucifix, an altar and the like. They do this primarily so that, even in this way, God's Word is preached and the places where the congregation of the faithful gather invite their devotion, even externally. But they also do this, and, indeed chiefly do this, so that a public witness be constantly laid down for the freedom of the Christian in all matters not forbidden by God.

So now this brings up another question: Is the use of images, crucifixes, altars, etc. really a matter that is part of Christian freedom?

The Reformed deny this and with this they have always appealed to Ex. 20.4-5 where, in the midst of the enumeration of the Ten Commandments, it says: “You shall not make any image or any likeness, neither of that which is above in heaven nor that which is under the earth, nor that which is in the water under the earth.” In order to emphasize these words the Reformed have even declared that this is a separate, that is, the Second Commandment, (so the Reformed number four Commandments on the first table and six Commandments on the second; they combine the Ninth and Tenth Commandments, on coveting, or lusting, into one Commandment). So the Reformed say: Isn't it clearly forbidden here to make images? We answer: Yes! But what kind of image is forbidden is also stated in this addition: “Do not worship and serve them.” That these words must be applied to the word “make” and must limit the same, we see from the 23rd verse of this Chapter where the LORD declares: “Therefore you shall not make anything next to me, you shall not make gods of silver or gold.” These Words clearly and plainly show, first, that vs. 4 and 5 are not a separate, Second Commandment, but rather an explanation of the First Commandment and, secondly, that God only forbids making images for worship, as images of idols, in vs. 4 and 5. This is stated so naturally and

obviously that it seems inconceivable that anyone on the side of the Reformed could have raised a doubt against it.

Yet the Reformed might object: Those Words: “Do not worship them, or serve them” stand on their own. It doesn’t say “You shall not make them so that you worship them.” But even this objection dissipates into nothing when we compare this to Lev. 26.1. There the LORD says: “You shall not make any idols, nor an image, nor any pillars, nor any memorial stones in your land, which you worship. For I am the LORD, your God.” Here we have God’s own, thus an irrefutable, sure explanation of this addition to the First Commandment (Ex. 20.4,5.) But his divine explanation tells us that making images and having them is only forbidden when it is done “that they be worshiped.” Now this also follows from Lev. 26.1, that erecting pillars and setting memorial stones is forbidden, from which it is clearly seen that merely making these things could not be forbidden, but rather making them to worship, for who could deny that they had been allowed to raise pillars and to set memorial stones? This is even more clearly seen in the following passage, Deut. 4.15-19. In this passage God even places next to the prohibition of making images “lifting your eyes to heaven to the sun, moon, stars and the whole host of heaven.” Now wouldn’t it be ridiculous to assert that according to that it is sinful to look up into the heavens and the stars? Certainly. Everyone sees that here only looking could be forbidden which is accompanied by a veneration of these creatures as it also says at the conclusion of this passage: “and fall down and worship them and serve them.” But now if only the kind of idolatrous gazing into the heavens and its stars is forbidden that is idolatrous, then this also applies only to the idolatrous making of images on earth.

So from this it’s clear that in the holy Ten Commandments, merely making and using images is not being forbidden. From other passages of Scripture and from the nature of this matter this is clear and self evident.

God willing, we will continue with this in the next issue.

Now we have arrived at the answer to the question: So is it really indisputably beyond doubt that God’s Word allows one to make, possess and use images?

First we must point out that we Christians, who live in the New Covenant, are no longer bound to the civil and ceremonial laws of the Jewish people with their shadows and types (Col. 2.16-17), but rather only to their moral ethics. But this ethic is nothing other than the natural law that has been written by God in the heart, of the eternal, immutable norm of his will. Therefore we find if God himself has done something or commanded it, it can’t be anything forbidden by moral ethics. But now, as has been confessed, God himself has had images made, sometimes by commanding it and sometimes by affirming them being made. According to Ex. 25.40 God himself had made and shown Moses an image of a model of the tent of meeting. Further, according to Num. 21.8, God himself had commanded that an image of a snake be made and, according to Ex 35.30f, God filled Bezeel and Ahaliab with his spirit for the very reason to equip them with gifts for all sorts of artfully working with gold, silver and bronze, and the like. According to Ex. 25.18 God had arranged for them to make figures of cherubim and to even place them in the Holy of Holies. Here we also include the images that were found in the temple of Solomon, of cherubim, lions, cattle, pillars, flowery adornments, pomegranates and the like in 1 Kings 6.7. Now none of this, even if it were not specifically ordered by God, is offensive to God as he bears witness. For at its dedication he wondrously filled this temple that was adorned with all sorts of images with his glory, 1 Kings 8.11. So who could now declare that it is forbidden to do what God himself has done and commanded to be done, or has affirmed? It cannot possibly be against the moral precepts buried in the heart of every human being, so obviously, without doubt, it must also be allowed for a Christian of the New Covenant.

But we go on to bring this to a conclusion: What even God himself has established in nature can not possibly be sinful. But what is the whole of creation but a great stage upon which there are placed countless images? We see images in the mirror of a lake, or upon some other glassy surface of a stone, polished metal, etc., so everywhere you see the image of a man throughout the world that surrounds him. The temple of nature that God himself has built has altars everywhere. Every hill and mountain is an altar. And as often as the sun rises and sets, adorning the ceiling of the cathedral God himself built, in which all the children of God worship daily and gather under the heavenly canvas, painted in glorious colors. Yes, doesn’t even our own imagination constantly sketch images of all kinds of subjects in the temple of our hearts? Even Mssrs. Reformed, whether they want to or not, are forced by nature itself to suffer images in the temple that God himself has made and, indeed, even in the temple of their hearts, in the way of all good Lutherans. Now isn’t it foolish to want to accuse

Christians of sin, yes to even waste a word on it, when they adorn the meeting places they construct for themselves with images that can give them reminders of God's blessings? One of the things Luther writes about this against the heavenly prophets is: "So I also surely know that God wants to have his work heard and read, especially the suffering of Christ. But if I must hear and think about that, it is impossible that I not make images of those things in my heart. For, whether I want to or not, if I hear of Christ (the Crucified) an image of a man hanging on a cross is sketched in my heart, just as my face naturally appears in water when I gaze into it. Now if it's not sinful to have Christ's image in my heart, why should it be sinful if I have it in my eyes? Surely the heart is more important than the eyes, as that is the true throne and dwelling place of God!"

Beyond all doubt it is finally established that if, then, God had forbidden images and memorial stones, etc., it was not because those things in themselves were being disparaged, but the idolatrous use of the same, since we observe these things are rejected in some circumstances and have actually been affirmed in others. The calves at Bethel in Dan that were venerated were hated by God, but he affirmed the placing of the bulls in the temple of Solomon, which was now dedicated for worship. And back when the tribes of Ruben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh constructed an altar on their side of the Jordan, they were at first suspicious that said tribes might have been guilty of trespassing the law by doing that. But as it came to light that this altar was only a witness and a memorial monument that by no means would be used idolatrously, then the suspicious brothers were pacified, and they thanked and praised God. Cf. Joshua 22. So it is also only fair that our Msrs. Reformed along with their lackies, Mr. Weyl in Baltimore and all the other non-Lutherans, calm down a bit when they hear that we Lutherans have images, crucifixes, altars, etc., not in order to offer sacrifices and the like, but rather merely as adornments and as pious reminders.

Now at this point a few might still respond, certainly all images are not to be rejected, but in any case it is still wrong to make an image of God and to make a likeness of him, since God is by nature invisible and can and must not be depicted (Deut. 4.15) Whoever does that presents God in human terms, which would thereby place a false presentation of God into the heart and thereby institute obvious idolatry, as Aaron did with the golden calf. We reply: In this we are in full agreement with the Reformed. We also reject all images that man himself makes of God as idolatrous. Therefore in the Lutheran Churches and books only images of God's revelations (not of God himself) are permitted. For example, we permit representations of the revelation of God the Father as an ancient man, according to Daniel 7.9; God the Son as the Son of Man according to Daniel 7.13, 1 Tim. 3.16, and according to the whole New Testament; God the Holy Ghost as a dove, according to Mt. 3.16. Included in this are also all of the ways the Bible presents the characteristics of God. These have been given in paint instead of in letters, such as the eye, etc. To reject such things is ridiculous, since obviously no one could keep such images out of his soul. Would to God that had our opponents also made no other images of God than that which the Bible sketches of him in their hearts, then they would quickly unite with us about these external adornments and visual witnesses. But they attack these visible, idolatrous images with fists and axes while the idolatrous images which false doctrine stirs up in their hearts they leave untouched upon their thrones. Compare Rom. 2.22, 2 John 9, 1 Sam. 15.22-23. So if you, you image warriors, would like to practice your trade, then by all means take to your battlefield. Go into your hearts, and you'll have plenty to battle there!

Now what must finally bring us to sum up all we've said about the use of images? It is this: It is not Old Lutheranism that leads to Rome, for according to God's Word, he teaches freedom in these matters. But certainly innovative, modern, neo-Lutheranism does lead to Rome, for it, like good Romanists, commands what God has left free. Luther also came to this conclusion back in his battle against Carlstadt. He writes, "Now notice here who writes on behalf of the Anti-Christ, we or Carlstadt. We act like the papists, except that we do not suffer their doctrine, commands and force. We also allow what the Carlstadtians do, but we do not suffer their forbidding things. So now the papists and Carlstadt are the true pens of the Anti-Christ in doctrine, for they both create doctrine the one by their doing, the other by their prohibiting. But we teach neither and practice both." (Against the Heavenly Prophets.)

As it is well known, this also is counted among the signs of an intentional tendency of the Old Lutheran Church to Rome; that in our church, with the distribution of the holy LORD's Supper, small round coins of bread called hosts or wafers are used instead of common bread, and we, therefore, don't break them. We consider it necessary to note a few things about this.

There are two things to note as most important concerning the use of these so-called hosts. First, we use them because they are also nothing other than bread. They are prepared from flour and water and baked, and that, and nothing more, is the essence of bread. Now, since Christ has given no command as to what form the bread should have and how big or thick it must be, and since, more than that, the holy LORD's Supper was not instituted for our body, but to feed our souls and since, finally, even from ancient times this was the usual form (even Epiphanius mentions them in the fourth century) as most appropriate for this holy use, so we do not see why any change should be required. Additionally, since the Reformed have called us sinful for this form of the bread we use and have even often ridiculed it as an abomination of the papacy, and have called the wafers foam bread, fog bread and silver pieces by which Christ is betrayed, and the like, it is most appropriate to do this. For that's how Lutherans take their stand upon their freedom and do not allow their conscience to be bound to innocent things, and retain this as their indifferent custom. Of course, they do not call the Reformed sinful as they use common bread, but since they declare that just this custom of theirs is the only mark of the true church, then rightly believing Lutherans must do exactly the opposite, since what had formerly held no significance has now become a mark of a heretical church. It may certainly be the case that, especially here, the Reformed custom may have been introduced in many congregations, not to instigate Reformed doctrine but out of lack of a supply of wafers. We do think when it is up to a preacher to act with his congregation to confess they are a Lutheran Church, he must then, in this age of the external blending of religions, be determined to also conform to the Lutheran Church in this ceremony of confession and make every effort to avoid syncretism (mixing of faiths).³³

Now, further, concerning our omission of the breaking of the bread which is not seldom used as a charge against the Lutheran Church, there is more to this complaint than what has just been mentioned.

That is, it is by all means true that the holy evangelists explicitly report to us that before the distribution of the consecrated bread, Christ had first broken the same. From this, the conclusion is drawn on the side of the Reformed that thus it is obviously absolutely necessary for a valid LORD's Supper that the bread be broken with it.

To decide about that, it is first necessary to ask the question about what belongs to the actual essence of the holy LORD's Supper. Of course, it is clear that the holy evangelists have also expressly mentioned a number of circumstances that had obtained at the institution of the holy LORD's Supper, but which no one sees as essential to the valid celebration of the holy LORD's Supper. For example, they explicitly tell us that the first holy LORD's Supper had been celebrated in a guest room, in the evening, at a table, immediately after the evening meal, that all those eating reclined at the table. Now if someone wanted to say that everything that the evangelists relate about the circumstances of this institution is necessarily required for every valid LORD's Supper, then all of the conditions just mentioned would also have to be deemed necessary. But who would assert that? Everyone much rather perceives that all these circumstances are dictated according to the time and place, when and where any particular holy LORD's Supper is celebrated, and according to the customs and ceremonies that prevail there. Among these circumstances we Lutherans also concede that Christ broke the bread at the institution of the holy LORD's Supper. It is well-known that the Jews had not baked bread that rises as we Germans do in our ovens, but flatbread, so if they wanted to receive and distribute it, it first had to be broken. That's why in the Hebrew language breaking the bread means the same as distributing it. For example Isaiah 58.7: "break your bread for the hungry." Lamentations 4.4: "The young children crave bread and there is no one to break it for them." Therefore, of course, this is not a direction that the bread necessarily must be broken for the poor, but only, in general, that it should be distributed among them. The means to do this among the Jews was by breaking it. Since back on that night there was bread remaining from the evening meal they just finished, obviously Christ had to also break it as he now wanted to distribute it among the disciples. This was as necessary as a lamp being lit since it was evening. But Christ was in no way thereby giving a command that this method of distribution must be observed at all times and in all places, even where no bread needing to be broken is used. Far from it! Even those Christians who did not practice breaking the bread in the holy LORD's Supper into pieces yet remained therefore, united with the first Christians "in the apostolic

³³We want to make good brothers in office, who know of no local sources to obtain hosts, aware that the same can be obtained from the clerk of the local Lutheran congregation, Mr. Graeber, care of our address.

doctrine and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of bread," that is, when the consecrated bread was distributed among them according to Christ's institution and received in true faith, just as those kept that commandment in Isaiah 58.7, if they didn't give the poor bread they'd broken, but a whole loaf. Nevertheless, we Lutherans do not, for that reason, regard it at all as wrong to break the bread, as Christ had broken it, we only regard it, for the reasons just given, as so little necessary as that one recline at table, hold the celebration in the evening, or have a common mealtime beforehand, and the like.

This matter is so clear that everyone can probably see this. Yet we must nevertheless fear that perhaps many, who are not used to making these clear distinctions, may think we are only making this argument to justify our Church. For their sake we want to appeal to the witnesses of two famous Reformed doctors of the church, who, indeed, have criticized Lutherans for omitting the breaking of the bread but, nevertheless, have had to confess that it is neither commanded by Christ nor part of the essence of the holy Sacrament.

The first is Beza (from 1558 a close friend and colleague in office of Calvin in Genf), who writes: "it makes no difference if one breaks it into many pieces during the ceremony of a Mass or if he distributes small round breads, which have been previously separated into parts before the Mass." (*Lib. 99 et resp.* 9.194.) In another passage the same man writes: "it is still the LORD's Supper if only the chief matter and its pure essence be observed, even if the breaking of the bread is omitted." (*Epist.* 2. Vol. 3 p. 169)

The second is Zanchius (from 1553 professor at Strasbourg, later at Heidelberg), who writes: "the breaking of bread is not to be introduced if the greater portion of the Church is against it, so that no division results because of it, since by wanting to break the bread they would break and sever the body of the church by doing so. . . That many imagine that the breaking is commanded for the sake of these words: 'This do in remembrance of me,' is, in my judgment, an error, since it is obvious that this command is not referring to Christ's act: 'he broke it,' but rather to the command to take bread and to eat it. So this is also the case because it would otherwise follow that our preachers are acting wrongly when they alone break the bread since this command, (if he would also understand it to apply to the breaking of the bread) would not only apply to them but to all believers, to all of those to whom he had previously said to take and eat." (*Lib. Epist.* I. F. 238)

So then, how did it come about that, without noticing it, some Reformed are now so earnestly and strictly insisting on the breaking of the bread? The reason is not hard to find. They only regard the sacraments as ceremonies that give no grace, but rather should only point to, signify and represent the same. They believe of holy Baptism that it does not work the second birth, but only signifies it, that it is not the pouring out of the Holy Ghost, but only points to it. They believe of the holy LORD's Supper, there is no true presence of the body and the blood of Christ at all in it, but rather these heavenly treasures would only be represented in them under the bread and wine. The holy LORD's Supper is actually nothing but a performance, by which the suffering of Christ is presented through all sorts of rituals that must, in that way, be called into remembrance. So, for example, even the breaking of the bread points to Christ's body having been broken. By such doctrine the Reformed obviously must keep breaking the bread, since according to them the chief use of their LORD's Supper rests directly upon that.

Yet everyone can plainly see how erroneous that take would be since, first of all, the body of Christ hadn't really been broken at all, only figuratively (John 19.36 cf. Exodus 12.46). But had the breaking of the bread been a symbolic ritual, and something ought to have been signified by it, then, of course what was signified could not again be something symbolic, but would have to be something real, thus an actual breaking of Christ's body. But, as said, since such a thing never actually happened, then it is clear that Christ had only broken the bread so he could distribute it, not because he wanted to institute a symbolic act. But, besides that, if that were really the case, then in that same way he would have had to have commanded some of the wine be spilled in order to thereby signify³⁴ the shedding of his blood on its part. Apart from that, we just want to mention that it would obviously be

³⁴That the Reformed feel that these two belong together is clearly seen by the way they speak of it, as they apply this to both, but by this they prove that their thoughts are idiosyncratic. We refer only to one such passage from *The Beginning and Progress of Salvation*, by the Reformed Dobbridge, which says this: "We say how the bread is broken and how the wine is shed (?). Does that not give us a touching portrayal of our JESUS and how his body was broken into pieces in his suffering (?) and his holy blood shed, just as water upon the ground?" (See the edition by the American Tract Society, p. 247.)

just blasphemous if a servant of the church would actually want to break the body of Christ, even if it were just symbolically.

Had the Reformed only insisted upon the breaking of the bread because they wanted to impart to the ceremony a meaning which it must not have according to the will of Christ, then that already would be reason and grounds enough to rather omit that ritual, since that would be giving an opportunity to impart a meaning contrary to Christ's own thoughts. But the Reformed have gone even further. They have even openly declared that the goal of their strictly retaining this ceremony is to remove the biblical doctrine of the presence of the body and blood of Christ from out of the hearts of Christians. The famous unionist, David Pareus, among others, have revealed this. The same was born of Lutheran parents, but through his teacher, by the name of Schilling, he became a crypto-Calvinist, who was rector at the gymnasium in Hirschberg in Silesia, leading him, already in his youth, to the Reformed religion. Finally, he became professor at the Reformed University at Heidelberg in 1584 and now made a great effort to establish a union between the Reformed and Lutherans. The same writes the following in his book on bread and the breaking of bread: "with the breaking of the bread, the idolatrous, false idea of the body of Christ in, with or under the bread and of its oral reception will be most powerfully broken and removed from the hearts of the common, misled people. For what is enclosed for a few hours in 300, 400, 3000, 4000 wafers, could not be the natural body of Christ." (See. *Amberger Ed.* P. 199.)

After such a public statement on the part of the Reformed, for what honest Lutheran could the omission of the breaking of the bread at the holy LORD's Supper not be a matter of conscience? Here, what St. Paul had once done as false teachers wanted to insist on circumcision, and thereby to insinuate the false doctrine that it was necessary to retain the ceremonial law, is directly applicable. Previously, out of love, Paul had still allowed circumcision for the sake of weak Jews, but as it would now appear as if he were thereby justifying the false doctrine of those heretics, he then says: "since a few false brothers have snuck in, and have infiltrated, to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ JESUS so that they may take us captive, we did not yield to them for an instance to be subjugated, so that the truth of the Gospel would remain with us." Gal. 2.4,5. We think that when a preacher dares to retain this breaking of bread, he must either be a closet Zwinglian, or the money that the reformed minded members of his congregation would bring him is more dear to him than the truth of which he is convinced in his conscience.

But if someone should say that with him it is a completely different situation, that he has nothing to do with the Reformed, so in his case this doesn't apply for him to have to forgo the breaking of the bread for the sake of the confession, – then we reply: After the Reformed Church has separated herself from the Lutherans through her false doctrine and now both churches stand over and against each other, that makes it necessary that each individual congregation also not be at peace with the Reformed, and it would be out of the question for them to join our opponents in doing this, when they are using exactly those ceremonies to try to "remove from our peoples' hearts" the pure doctrine of our Church. But a Christian congregation must avoid every appearance of evil and offense. It is just here in America that every congregation is now hemmed in by the Reformed and they are thus always in too much danger here of this universal, constant mixing of religions, to deny any truth, even through certain rituals.

Besides that, a preacher must always think about the future. If he tolerates reformed ceremonies in his congregation might he not easily be thereby paving the way for his congregation's later departing from the Lutheran Church and falling into the hands of a reformed teacher? What answer will he give for doing so before God someday? Experience has proven that this fear is in no way unfounded. We will give an example. The reformed Elector George Wilhelm of Brandenburg writes the following in a response to the governors of Cleve from December 18, 1637: "and what is most offensive, the same report is coming to us, as you even have to force Lutheran congregations in other places to use reformed practices (worship) against their will, with the goal of displacing their own, and to that end you even employ some utterly unheard of pretexts (tricks). That is, when a parish pastor would run short of wafers, having too many communicants, he'd be forced to divide and break a few into more pieces, or if a schoolmaster ran short of books for a few students he was directed to read from the Heidelberg Catechism (Reformed), so you have to play such tricks to prove reformed practices are being accepted." (See: *Collection of New and Old Theological Issues*, from the year 1738. Pages 143, 44.) Now by this the Reformed are trying to demonstrate that a congregation may be forced to become Reformed if her pastor is forced by necessity to break the hosts a few times, but how much more will that happen if a person directly introduces this reformed breaking of bread?

IV. Original Constitution and Unionism

It is important to note in the forming of the original constitution that both unionism and the pluralistic freedom of America were theological issues that had to be addressed through a defense, but also through a conscience provision for fortification against unionism which would be fueled by the confusing pluralism that would be the new American context as every religious (and irreligious) voice would be heard. As such, membership would consist of those who reputed unionism, and measures would be built into the constitution to both assure the expulsion of factors that would promote any trace of unionism and set a foundation for vigorous theological education (catechesis and higher Christian education) which would promote depth of instruction and a concern for learning and concern for Biblical, spiritual discernment; a bulwark against unionism (theological indifference). Promoting a healthy lawn (field for growth) includes pulling weeds, but also sowing good seed and providing the best conditions for growth (pure Word and Sacraments).

As this compilation is concerned with Article VI of the synod's present constitution, it is interesting that the concerns against unionism in the original constitution are voiced in the Second Chapter (article). The evolution of the present constitution, however, is not a concern of this resource.

The following portions of original constitution are of interest in the synod's organization and requirements in dealing with the problem of unionism:

Synodical Constitution³⁵

by C.F.W. Walther
Vol. 3, pp. 2f; 8f.

Introduction

Although it is most certain that the church is not grounded nor preserved through any constitution, but rather only through the pure and clear preaching of the holy Gospel and the legitimate administration of the holy sacraments, yet it is just as certain that a salutary constitution is not contrary to Scripture and is also good for the maintenance of her Churches.³⁶ Here in the United States of North America, for instance, it has been very hard for some of the individual Lutheran congregations at length to defend all of her members with the pure doctrine and, upon that foundation, to stay the onslaught of flighty and enthusiastic spirits, and for some it seemed to be impossible to pursue their common goals for the extension of the holy church upon the basis of their common faith through their working together in love for her (see Ch. I § 6 below). Mainly, for those two reasons, the servants of the Lutheran church that are named below have now come together to draft a synodical constitution that is in no way merely a sign over the door, but rests upon the confessional writings of the church, and proves in its whole development that every component of the same can be undergirded by the unfalsified confession and is vibrantly permeated with the pure

³⁵ Baseley, J.R., ed. and translator. *Missouri Synod in Formation (1844-'47): Essays of the Founding Fathers* (Mark V Publications. Dearborn, Michigan. 2012). Pp. 315ff from *DL* volume 3, issues 1 & 2.

³⁶ As, for example, 70 or 80 years ago when rationalism (faith in reason) insinuated itself into the Churches and instead of the church's faith unbelief was preached from many pulpits, it was then the constitution and orders from the past, better times, where the orthodox formulations in the conduct of the public worship of God and in the special ceremonies of the church were what nourished the faith and the confession of the churches in the hearts of the believers, awakening faith in those searching and preserving the fellowship of the praying and confessing church.

doctrine of the church, so that the confession and teaching of church would be fully employed to equip and supply every single goal of the church. By this we want to avoid being misunderstood in two ways. The first being, as mentioned, that the Confessions of the church are only going to be mentioned peripherally or incidentally, without their being carried out as the influence that orders and shapes the whole constitution and the corporate mode of the church's work, so that, for example, it would not be obvious if and how the confession and the doctrine would vibrantly permeate the areas of our common worship, our discipline and administration of the churches universally, as well as also in specific goals, such as the establishment of churchly institutions of higher learning, the publication of churchly periodicals, the manner by which candidates are tested, the orderly placement into the holy preaching office, domestic and foreign missions, etc. We find this misunderstanding in the constitutions of the synods that presently exist, that exhibit a certain external respect for the churchly confessions and formally accept them, even though their church practice in many ways crassly contradicts that in one way or another. The other misunderstanding is that in pursuing some churchly goals, as for example, in helping the poor or caring for the sick, in mission associations and the like, we can certainly form private associations with neighboring churches pursuing the same things these days, that stand in no connection or a very loose connection with the confession of our church and most of which have actively adapted the boisterous and multifarious inventions of the Methodists.

But with the publication of the synodical constitution, the emphasis on its foundation resting upon and being permeated by the church's confessions was not necessitated only for the sake of the most valuable importance and the significant nature of the confessions themselves, nor because of that two fold misunderstanding, but rather even predominantly because of the Schmuckerites, that is, the so-called Lutheran General Synod, that has recently recognizably and openly declared their apostasy from the Lutheran, that is, the church's doctrine of the sacraments, whose confession of the church does not rest upon the unchangeable and eternal Word of God, but seems to be something that drifts in ambiguity, not to mention that God's Word should order the corporate practice of the church and it should be the life that permeates it....

Ch. II. Conditions which must be met for entrance into the Synod and by which fellowship with her can be maintained.

§ 1. The confession of the holy Scripture, of the Old and New Testaments, as the written Word of God and the sole rule and norm of faith and life.

§ 2. Acceptance of the collected symbols of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (as there are the three ecumenical creeds³⁷, the *Unaltered Augsburg Confession*, its *Apology*, the *Smalcald Articles*, *Luther's Small and Large Catechisms* and the *Formula of Concord*,³⁸ as the pure unfalsified declaration and explanation of the divine Word.

§ 3. Repudiation of all syncretism in church and faith, such as: Serving a church of a mixed confession, as such³⁹, on the part of the servants of the Church; Taking part in the worship and distribution of the sacrament of false believing and mixed congregations, participation in any heterodox tract and mission societies, etc.

§ 4. The sole use of pure Church and school books, (Agendas, Hymnals, Catechism, literature, etc.). If it is impossible for congregations to immediately replace heterodox hymnals and

³⁷That means, universal. That is, as the church councils (Synods, Councils), where delegates sent from the churches of the whole known world at the time, that is, from the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe, as far as they were discovered, as opposed to local synods that gathered some from a single province of the Roman empire.

³⁸Even though the *Formula of Concord* or Unity only wants to settle controversies in doctrines that had arisen between those who confessed the *Augsburg Confession* and within the Lutheran Church, and even though, therefore, not all of the Lutheran Churches in every country have accepted it within their spheres of churchly symbols, yet for our church in America, especially for the sake of its sharp and clear assertion and defense of the pure doctrines against the Reformed, it is of such decisive importance to most definitely confess it and it would be highly negligent and thoughtless not to.

³⁹So these are congregations that are formed out of Lutherans and the Reformed together, or so-called Evangelicals (*Unirte*, Protestant) and are often served by so-called Lutheran pastors, who are then, of course, duplicitous, that is, they are Lutherans to the Lutherans and Reformed to the Reformed.

the like with orthodox ones, the preacher of that congregation can only become a member of synod under the condition that he will promise to use the heterodox hymnal, etc., under public protest and make every effort to use all his influence to introduce orthodox materials.

§ 5. Issue regular (not temporary) calls for the preachers and an orderly election of delegates through the congregations, as well as a blameless walk of the pastor and of the delegates.

§ 6. Care for the children of the congregation with a Christian day school.

§ 7. Sole use of the German language at the synodical convention. Only guests can address synod in another language if they are not able to use the German language.

§ 8. Those who are not recognized cannot become members of synod unless they are able to present proper credentials concerning their doctrine and life. . .

Ch. V. Conduct of the Business of Synod...

§ 7. The synod will call for a report from the president of visitations made according to his instructions the previous year, with respect to the doctrine, life and conduct of office of pastors and teachers. (See below ch. VI. A. §. 5.) In this, should it be the case that the president points out a pastor of the synod who, even after being admonished many times by the president, the local congregations, and the ministry, persisted in false doctrine or offensive living, then synod at her convention will make a last attempt to convert him from the error of his ways. But if he will not also heed the rebuke of the synod, then he will be expelled from the same, and his congregation must deal with him according to Christ's command in Mt. 18.17. "If he will not hear the congregation, then regard him as a heathen man and a tax collector." The president must also report on the condition of the congregations he's visited, including whether he has found that they are using congregational and church orders, books for church and school, and the like, whose contents state things in opposition to the confession of pure doctrine. The leaders of the congregation will call a congregational meeting during the time of the president's visitation.

§ 8. It is the synod's duty in her yearly convention to corporately explore and discuss which articles of church doctrine are to be emphasized, chiefly in addresses and in writing, to be especially useful in battling heresy and defects in life, as to how to proceed in defense of that doctrine. In conjunction with this, the synod must consider the service of the publisher of her periodical and give instructions for its further activities. At the same time the synod is to discuss the churchly needs of our defenseless brothers in the faith and come to their aid by supplying men who are gifted to counsel them, who will actively seek abandoned Lutherans out of free Christian love, and make necessary preparations among them to establish orderly congregations. Such visitors are to be prepared for their work by being examined before their commissioning, being given instructions and sent out with solemn prayers and blessings. A journal is to be kept of their visits and written reports submitted to the president who must present a summary in his annual report to synod.

The synod also retains the duty to do as much as possible for the conversion of the heathen. Yet she may by no means participate in the efforts of syncretistic mission societies that are now so prevalent.

§ 9. It is the synod's duty to establish, support and to supervise institutions for the formation of future pastors and teachers as servants of the church....

§ 12. In cases where a vacant congregation approaches the synod for a pastor, the synod must bear a serious concern that the congregation be cared for by a faithful shepherd as soon as possible, as the synod proposes candidates for their vacant pastoral office. Yet should the requesting congregation be established, up until then, as one having a mixed confession, consisting of Lutherans, Reformed and so-called Evangelicals, or Unionists, their request will, of course, not be automatically returned, yet the glory of God, and honest and careful, true Christian love for the neighbor demands that a pastor of synod can only serve such a congregation under the following conditions:

a.) if the congregation declares she wants to unconditionally submit to the Word of God as practiced solely by the Lutheran Church;

b.) if she would from then on depart from her former teaching for the sole Scriptural doctrine of the Evangelical - Lutheran Church, specifically confessing that of the holy sacraments and the Office of the Keys, and rejecting contrary doctrine as unscriptural;

c.) since before she had made an un-Lutheran statement of duplicity, in receiving the holy LORD's Supper from the hand of a servant of the Lutheran Church, she now must publicly be in fellowship with the Lutheran Church and no longer be Reformed, Evangelical, Union, or any of such thing.

§ 13. The synod can be requested to render theological considerations and opinions and to settle disputes that arise only in cases when by doing so neither temporal matters would be placed into her authority nor any congregational rights be infringed upon nor the rule of Christian love and church order be overstepped or violated.

When a request is addressed to the synod during convention, the request is handled through that present convention if no investigation of particular circumstances is necessary. But if such a request is addressed to the president when the convention is not in session, then, if the matter is urgent, it is cared for by a committee appointed by the president.

§ 14. **Indeed, according to the seventeenth Article of the Augsburg Confession, the synod does not consider uniformity in ceremonies necessary for the true unity of the Christian Church, yet it seems to her, on the other hand, that such uniformity is a wholesome and worthy goal for the following reasons:**

a.) because through a total disparity in external ceremonies the weak can easily be caused to err about the unity of the church.

b.) because the church must avoid the appearance of seeking innovation and of carelessness by her abolishing customs and practices already tried and true.

Besides that, the synod also considers it essential for the purification of the American-Lutheran Church that the emptiness and lack of substance in outward forms of worship that have come to be prominent here through the imposition of the false spirit of the Reformed be thus opposed.

The synod requires of all pastors and congregations, should they want to be recognized as orthodox by her, to accept or retain no ceremonies by which the confession of the truth would be weakened or a heresy would be approved and strengthened, especially if the toleration or acceptance of such ceremonies are imposed by the force of the tenets of heretical faith. (3.)

Where private confession is already instituted, it is to be retained according to Article 11 of the *Augsburg Confession*, but where it is not, the pastor must work towards its introduction through teaching and instruction. **Corporate confession and Absolution can still be retained along with private confession in congregations where objections to the total abolition of corporate confession cannot be removed.**

The goal of this uniformity in ceremonies is chiefly to be brought about through the acceptance and, as uniform use as possible use of a pure Lutheran agenda.

§ 15. The synod in her entirety has oversight over how the care of souls is carried out by her individual pastors. She therefore has the right to make inquiries about that and to judge what is reported. She is especially obligated to be on the lookout if her preachers have allowed themselves to turn to the so-called "new measures" that have become popular (4.) or if they are conducting their soul care by the wholesome, Scriptural means of the orthodox church.

The synod is also obligated to ask her pastors the condition of their congregations in view of reading the Bible, home devotions, discipline of the children, **preparations for Communion (Beichtmeldungen)**, Church attendance, receiving Communion, voter's assembly and use of religious literature, and if any separatist activities or conventicles⁴⁰ are taking place in the congregation, and the general condition of the church culture.

§ 16. The synod only supports the reception of the preaching office in congregations who evidence an urgent need for it and have an honest longing after the full reception of the means of grace.

§ 17. The synod must see to it that there is always a good publication of the original text of *Luther's Small Catechism* and also make available an appropriate memory book of passages.

A catechumen can only receive Confirmation if he can at least recite the text of the

⁴⁰By "conventicle" is understood all meetings next to or outside the church which are established to encourage edification that overstep the borders of home devotions and that thus eschew the supervision and oversight of the regularly called pastor.

catechism without explanation and has been brought to sufficient understanding of it that he, according to 1 Cor. 11.28, is in a condition to examine himself. If possible, more accomplished catechumens will be brought further, to ground the doctrine of the Christian faith in the clearest proof passages of Scripture and to thereby oppose the heresies of the sects.

About one hundred hours are to be spent in confirmation instruction, when possible.

Finally, the pastor must see to it that his confirmands have learned a good number of seminal, churchly hymns by heart, which will serve as a gift to them throughout their lives.

§ 18. The synod makes her pastors' conscience bound to not take his eyes off of his catechumens after their confirmation, but to especially receive them as fathers, and therefore, whenever possible, among other things, to publicly quiz with them about the catechism every Sunday.

In the next issue note (3) explains the above reference “by force” as pertaining to rites distinctively used by the heterodox (also union church) to affirm their error. Please note the affinity of this article (Ch. 5, §14, b above) and its explanation to the doctrine of Christian freedom and the article reproduced above, *Does Old Lutheranism Lead to Rome?*.

3.) History teaches us that in their zeal for reform against the Romanists, the Reformed took an opposing and erroneous path in areas of individual doctrines, as, for example, the doctrine of election (predestination) and the holy sacraments and the Office of the Keys, but also in church practice. For they removed all kinds of church customs, traditions and rites, some of which were introduced even before the papacy arose and some that had nothing to do with Romish heresy. Included in these free, lovely and edifying practices and traditions are, among others, the celebration of church festival days, preaching on the Gospel and Epistle selections appointed every Sunday (pericopes), service at the altar, the use of the host, the sign of the cross, organ, bells, candles, etc. Now as certainly as these ceremonies are not commanded by God, but are left to the freedom of the church, yet the Reformed sinned against weak consciences, since they removed these church practices too quickly and forcibly and thereby abused their Christian freedom against Rom. 14 and 1 Cor. 8.9 But not only that, they even carried out these purges as if it were a new law, and demanded of the Lutherans that they do the same, always charging them as if they were papists. For this reason the Lutheran Church could not consent to them in this, because they would not surrender to them the precious doctrine of Christian liberty and become imprisoned in a new, false prison of legalism. But much less could they give ground in those areas and receive ceremonies invented by the Reformed, instituted in the context of their false doctrine as they were, at the same time, making them an act by which they were confessing their false doctrine, as, for example, the breaking of the bread in the LORD's Supper, which was to signify the breaking of the body of Christ on the cross, even though, according to John 19.36 that never actually happened. Also included in this was receiving the consecrated bread and cup in the hand, which the Reformed also consider essential, as if, again, against John 19.30, no other form of reception was possible except in the hand, as if this external manner of distribution and reception were the most important thing while it was less important if the Words of institution of the almighty and truthful Son of God: “This is my body!” would have to be simply believed with a child's faith, at face value, or if they are regarded as ambiguous and uncertain. Another aspect of this is the use of bread instead of hosts, although that certainly also consists of flour and water as is the other, as well as the acceptance of the words during the distribution of the holy LORD's Supper: “Christ said: This is...”, that the so-called evangelicals or unionists have also accepted, and that are in keeping with the answers to questions 78 and 79 in the Heidelberg Catechism. In all these and similar matters the Lutheran Church cannot concede to the Reformed or accept those churchly rites and ceremonies, partly, as said, to assert her Christian freedom and not to allow herself to accept as essential and necessary (Gal. 5.1) what God has left free, that is, has neither commanded nor forbidden, and partly to avoid the appearance of evil, as if her assertion of pure doctrine and rejection of false doctrine was not such a great and holy zeal, since she accepts the ceremonies of heretics and, indeed, right there in the doctrines where they must shun them, that is, where, for example, in the holy LORD's Supper, their heresy enters into the churchly practice and ceremony, and partly for the sake of not offending her own children by receiving such things.

V. Post-Constitution, Early Synodical Postures on Unionism

As C.F.W. Walther addresses synod in her first decades, (See *Treasury of C.F.W. Walther, Vol. VII, Sermons and Addresses to Synodical Conventions and Voters' Assemblies*. (Mark V Publications, Dearborn, Michigan, 2008)) the issue of unionism is mentioned and is a constant concern. But as members of synod from the outset had become members of the synod largely, or at least in part, because of the unionistic nature of the movements in the church, that is, the sinful and imprudent indifference over doctrine that prevailed and was encouraged by the pluralistic freedom of expression in America, these addresses and sermons, for the most part, sought to encourage the Churches through their delegates to be faithful to the Word of God in both their doctrine and practice.

In these addresses, of course, the key principal being expressed was the central doctrine of Justification by grace through faith and that doctrine's attendant distinction of Law and Gospel for which Walther is most renowned. But the doctrine that is attendant to that central doctrine which was featured in the above article *Does Old Lutheranism Lead to Rome?*, is the doctrine of Christian freedom, which deals most directly with church practice that is carried out internally, and repels the 'winds of false doctrine' invited by unwatched, open windows. These winds of Reformed Theology, whistling through (rejected) American Lutheranism, had made "traditional" Old Lutheran liturgy and practice abhorrent to the American Lutherans as being opposed by the doctrine of Christian freedom. That argument sounds strange in the 21st Century because Christian freedom is the banner under which Reformed innovations are adapted unexamined by some Lutherans in our day. The reasons the ceremonies of the Reformed were rejected is that the Lutherans of that day bothered to listen to why the Reformed were doing what they were doing. They understood that the Reformed / Evangelicals could bring in crowds of people because they had removed from their theology and practice the obstacles that must humble proud, fallen reason whenever the mysteries of God are brought near to save them. They saw that what widening the narrow way of salvation and obscuring the stinging law and the saving Gospel would allow many onto the road that leads to destruction, but that they were assured, following Scripture, that they were the keepers of the narrow way, for which they could only thank God.

The reader may think at least two things strange in the sections of the constitution cited above. First that private confession was mentioned so forcefully and that announcement for confession (*Beichtmeldung*) was to be retained, as well as the expressed desire that, despite CA XIV, as much uniformity in worship as possible was to be desired. Again, these find their way into the constitution not as affirming a human desire for uniformity, but as the application of the doctrine of Christian freedom. The high pitched tenor of the Missouri fathers in this is not only a concern not to import rites that would introduce and appearance of agreement with errorists, but a desire to hold onto the good order and instruction that had been provided the church through good and pious traditions of the Church's past. The fact that these traditions were not mandated by Scripture placed them in the area of adiaphora, which the Church uses as part of her Christian freedom. Yet the fact that they could be freely used or not (and that aspect could never disappear since it is a doctrine connected to the central doctrine) made good traditions and usages vulnerable to being displaced by ones that did not allow proper practice. This slippery slope was identified as the 'solid rock' of the Reformed churches in the *Does Old Lutheranism Lead to Rome?* article, as godly traditions were being legalistically called sinful and papistic when they were innocent, and even godly and good traditions. The doctrine of Christian freedom thus necessitates those traditions, called sinful, be observed in order to confess the truth. This is subtle,

but most important. Attack of godly tradition and practice by the heterodox and those seeking to confirm false doctrine thereby is not an attack against tradition, but against the good and godly confession that gave rise to the good tradition. Lopping off fruitful and healthy limbs from a tree damages the health of a tree. Blindly eliminating godly tradition and blindly grafting in a foreign branch without testing that branch is injurious to the tree. Without a right practice of the doctrine of Christian freedom (which often dictates what we must do) we lose of our freedom (trading what is true for a lie), and weaken, if not eventually lose, the central doctrine connected with it.

A. Grabau?

While Pastor Grabau of the Buffalo Synod was certainly no unionist, he is the example on the other side of the coin as to how Missouri stayed her course. As important as it was to rigorously exclude from early LCMS all practice that would open the door to identification with Reformed influences (making the church unionistic as the General Synod had admitted she had become “Evangelical,” or unionist in her doctrine of the LORD’s Supper), it was equally important that she maintain that she retained historic liturgy and practice not because she had to, but because she wanted to. Thus, although many identify the rift between Buffalo and Missouri as being located in their view of pastoral authority, I believe this issue must be broadened to be less concerned with the doctrine of the ministry than with the article of Christian freedom.

In Walther’s most preliminary response to the ensuing rift with Grabau he writes:

As much as we also had to acknowledge the goal of the pastoral letter (by Grabau) and most of what it said, we were equally estranged, not only by certain developments in the composition of the letter as a whole, but also specifically at explicit principles it contained, which concerned the mutual relationship between pastors and congregations, as well as ordination, church orders (agendas), etc.⁴¹

Note the controversy appears to be over Grabau’s forcing (thus congregations’ not freely accepting) such adiaphora as ordination and church orders (CA XIV). Walther commends this issue to the 1850 LCMS Convention, as there is a right and wrong way to address unionism:

... Yet among those whom the eyes of our Lutheran people desperately look to in this troubling era as their champions and saviors, we certainly see men of another stripe. That is, we also perceive among them men who are obviously serious about a thorough purification from the corruption of this previous, troubling time, men who want to remain in the middle and want to walk the straight path. They readily acknowledge what a terrible desolation nationalism and rationalism have reeked on our church. They look horrified as the awareness of being a member of the one, holy, Christian church of all times and in all places is vanishing more and more; how everywhere the bonds of the church are breaking more and more; how everything is splitting into sects, some obviously fleshly and some that are super spiritual; how what is externally bestowed in Christianity is more and more placed into the background and one’s own experiences and one’s own inventions are replacing them; how everything old is being more and more discarded as outdated and everything new is being more and more accepted uncritically, as if they were newly discovered treasures; as now any least appearance of subjection to authority of others is forbidden more and more, while subjection to one’s own authority is supported and valued just that much more; while the holy office is more and more laid

⁴¹Baseley, Joel R., ed. and translator. *Missouri Synod in Formation (1844-’47): Essays of the Founding Fathers* (Mark V Publications. Dearborn, Michigan. 2012) p. 292 from *DL* vol. 3 p. 35.

bare of its divine honor, it is demoted to the status of a human institution and, thus, is robbed of its saving efficacy: All this, I say, this last group of people see with dread. They are determined to help, to help get to the root of the problem. – Only what do these people do now? Exactly because they want to be and become true, strict Lutherans, they extend their efforts, not intentionally, but without suspecting it, way beyond what is Lutheran. With the best intentions, in order to seek to exhume again the trampled pearls and the treasure chest of our Church from the dust, they themselves once again introduce things which Luther, with great effort and a hard fight, once had removed, to purify the church, as offensive disgraces; and with the best intentions, to cleanse our church from a new pile of refuse and garbage, they throw away the little jewel of holy doctrine and order, for which our fathers once gladly risked property and blood to secure. To oppose the relinquishing of the concept of the one holy Christian church and the syncretism of our day they turn, without knowing it, back again more and more to the concept of the church as one visible, well organized external institution. To oppose the devaluation of the Means of Grace and all the objective gifts, they once again draw themselves around the teaching that the power of the Sacraments works *ex opere operato*. To oppose the despising of what is ancient and the rejection of all authority of others and of attested institutions in the church they now seek to bind consciences to many human institutions and churchly ceremonies (*Ordnungen*). To oppose the dishonoring of the office of preaching they fight against the important and equitable rights of the spiritual priesthood of all Christians as a chimera of spiritually proud enthusiasts (*Schwaermer*), and they revoke the right of the so-called laity itself to elect their preachers and the right of a voice in synodical and churchly matters. In this opposition they, further, derive the preaching office from the power of ordination through preachers, which (ordination) they explain as an ordinance from God. They make the office and those who serve in it, who must be sole stewards of the divine mysteries, into a special privileged station (*Stande*) before the priesthood of the laity. They admit a power and lordship *de jure divino* to the preachers of the Gospel also in matters which are neither commanded nor forbidden in the Scriptures. Thus they transform the Christocracy (*Christokratie*) of the congregation of the saints and the elect, the free, who is the mother of all, the Jerusalem which is above, into the aristocracy (*Aristokratie*) of a church state, and they ultimately make the power of the Word and the Sacraments dependent upon the office of those who administer the Means of Grace.

Now although this last situation has been evident in the Lutheran Church in Germany, as well as in America for a long time, until recently it has not had any great influence upon our synod. Yet, in recent times we have finally, as you know, been harangued from both sides of the conflict. The time when the members of our Synod could be silent spectators of this battle, which this report has presented, is, therefore, past. The call to arms, for us to be for or against, has also been issued to us.

Now naturally it cannot be my goal to defend this report against any misrepresentations, yet I cannot refrain from adding a few things that we, according to the limits of my understanding, must never remove from what we support in the decisions our fellowship makes about these matters.

The first is this: This is in no way dealing with matters of adiaphora, with discipline, traditions, ceremonies and organization, over which Christian wisdom makes the decision. It, much rather, deals with doctrine, and, thus, with something that does not belong to us, but to God, God's name and God's glory itself. It is not something that is in our authority to forgive or to tolerate for the sake of love or peace. It is something whose smallest detail is worth more than the whole world with all its wisdom and all its treasures. Its something which the true church alone will acknowledge. Its her highest treasure, in which every one of her other treasures is contained. It's the talent that is entrusted to her and of whose faithful use and preservation she will have to give a detailed accounting some day to God. It's the purity of that heavenly seed upon whose purity the purity of faith and life, all the light of the soul, every comfort of the conscience and the hope of eternal life depends. Here applies, therefore, that old saying: "*Amicus usque ad aras* – the friend to the end" –; yes, above all, therefore, the apostolic admonition applies to us: "A little leaven leavens the whole loaf," Gal. 5.9., and what Luther writes of this in the following words: "As in philosophy, if there is a little mistake in the beginning, in the end it will become a very great and immeasurable error. This is also the case in theology, that a little error must ruin and falsify the whole Christian doctrine. For the doctrine is so exactly designed and exactly measured that it can neither be added to nor diminished without great, notable harm. Therefore, the doctrine must be as a whole golden ring, in which there is no flaw or break. For as soon as such a ring receives a flaw or a chink, it is no longer whole. All the articles of our Christian faith are one, and, again, the one, all. And if one of them is allowed to go, the others will, altogether, in time fall after that. For they are all connected to the others and belong together." So far

Luther.

But as this is so – and who among us would deny it? – so it follows from this, secondly, that although a church, in weakness, might not remove those erring from itself, nevertheless, in a particular orthodox church, so also in our synodical churches, it is impossible for that church to maintain that tolerating different doctrines, in any specific point of doctrine, is their right. If churches should assert that it is their right, they would, thereby, be compromising themselves. They would no longer be able to apply to themselves the Word of the apostle, that they must be a pillar and a ground of truth. By that she would place herself into the list of union churches, whose distinguishing characteristic is judging truth and heresy as equals in her midst, despite every hypocritical protest which such a disheveled church raises against this charge as unfounded. In this, above all, that apostolic Word also applies to us now: “I exhort you, dear brothers, by the Name of our LORD JESUS Christ, that you all speak as one and let no division be among you, but cling fast one to another in one mind and in one judgement.” 1 Corinthians 1.10. Therefore Luther is quite correct when he writes: “Life can certainly be unrighteous and sinful, yes, it is altogether unrighteous; but the doctrine must be rightly measured and certain, with no sins. Therefore nothing must be preached in the church but only the certain, pure, single Word of God. Where that fails it is no longer the church.” (*Halle, Vol. XVII, 1868.*)

The third thing which I feel compelled to add, further, is that the doctrine which is now being dealt with must not be included with those which the church, at large, has never discussed, but to those which have not only been clearly and definitively set in right order by the Word of God and by our most enlightened doctors of divinity in their private writings, but they have also been presented to all the world by our whole church in her public symbols, in her definitive common confession. Yes, we are dealing here with doctrines over which the great war at the time of the Reformation had been waged and in which the real character of our church is truly reflected. So if we want to yield these points, we must also consider whether we are, thereby, declaring ourselves liberated from the Lutheran church; whether we, thereby, are not ceasing to be servants and members of the same; whether we, thereby, are not breaking our precious vow to follow the confessions of our church and admitting that those confessions are actually enemies of our church, that the war of our fathers three hundred years ago had been, at least in part, an over reaction, a war to promote errors, and against the truth.

The fourth thing of which I would want to remind you, finally, is this: Even if the disputed point does not concern a fundamental article of the Christian faith and we, therefore, are far from wanting to lovelessly and mischievously call those that embrace them rank heretics, yet these points still stand closely bound, along with the most important doctrines, with the foundational articles of our Christian faith, and we can expect, as a direct consequence of weakening the same, that the foundation of the faith will ultimately and necessarily be ruined.⁴²

B. Penance and Individual Absolution

As the constitution had boldly advocated the introduction of individual Absolution and discouraged the use of the General Confession, and insisted upon the retention of announcement for confession (*Beichtmeldung*), the fourth year of *DL* issues the first reports of the pastoral conferences held during the first year of synod. Each features discussion of private absolution and references Rev. E.G.W. Keyl’s article on private confession and absolution. As the reader will observe in this article, the founding fathers are here asserting that they have identified in the Lutheran Church’s practice of penance (an adiaphoron) an attenuation of a better tradition and practice for a worse one. Data is produced to prove that the confessions and the reformers did not know of a tradition being received of declaring absolution to more than one believer at a time. In fact, Luther and the Wittenberg theologians advise the consistory to defrock a pastor engaged

⁴²Walther, C.F.W., Baseley, Joel R., ed. and translator. “Address to Synod from 1850.” *Treasury of C.F.W. Walther, Volume 7, Sermons and Addresses to Synodical Conventions and Voters’ Assemblies.* (Mark V Publications. Dearborn, Michigan. 2008) pp. 138 f. From *Lutherische Brosamen.* pp. 528ff.

in this (not for the practice itself, but for trading a better use of the absolution for a worse one, that destroyed the *propria*, or the particular property of the mean of grace referred to as Absolution. It was, thus, for the sake of Absolution (not an adiaphoron) that penance (the custom, tradition of the church) was maintained (CA XI and XXV). The article also traces this negative slide in the tradition of the Church as general penance almost totally displaced private penance from Church practice during the 18th century due to, according to Keyl, rationalism, pietism and unionism (Evangelicalism).

On Private and General Confession

by E.G.W. Keyl, translated by Joel R. Baseley
Der Lutheraner, Vol. 4, pp. 15f, 18f, 34f

One of the encouraging signs of life in the Lutheran Church, is that most recently here, as well as in Germany, many questions that had vanished for so long are being asked again anew in view of the present stance of the Church with respect to private and general confession, the great advantages of the former over the latter, and the desirability of a return to private confession.

It would be even more encouraging if in response to these questions not only an ever more frequent participation among preachers and their hearers would occur, but it would be a healthy influence on the whole life of the Church, so that the number people in whom the powerful witness of the rich experiences of our forebears would increase and awaken a deep longing for the excellence of private confession, their having become acquainted with it by their own experience.

It must now first be demonstrated that in the best age of the Lutheran Church private confession alone had been the usual custom, with no general confession along with it, must less general confession being used exclusively.

Secondly, the reasons must be refuted which are raised for the retention of general confession along with it, as well as those raised against introducing private confession.

May the following remarks serve for a better understanding of what follows: In the witnesses quoted, they are almost always referring to private absolution and, indeed, as its most important part, has, as the actual goal of private confession, so that the mention of the confession is employed almost exclusively for the availability of the absolution.

That in the best era of the Lutheran Church private confession was practiced exclusively is illuminated by the frequent and unanimous witness of her public confessional writings.

In the 11th article of the *Augsburg Confession*, that especially treats confession, it says this: "On confession it is also taught, that in the church private absolution is to be retained and must not be allowed to be discontinued." With the latter two expressions the charge of the papists was being refuted that Lutheran doctrine was producing purely harmful innovations, since it was generally known then that Carlstadt had rejected confession which Luther had completely purified. To the contrary, the Lutheran Church bore witness with those words that she wanted to hold fast (*retinere*) to private absolution and the model of the ancient Christian church. For traces of the same are even found in the 3rd century, and, indeed, it was carried out at the desire of the congregational members. From the 5th century on this means came more and more to be the custom especially through Leo the Great and, by the 7th century, it had been introduced almost everywhere, whereupon later, of course, it became very leavened with more and more false doctrine that changed a medicine for the conscience into a torture of the conscience, under the name "auricular confession." The latter half of the 11th article of the *Augsburg Confession* protests against this with these words: "Although it is not necessary to state all transgressions and sins, since that is not even possible. Ps. 18: Who knows all his transgressions?"

In the 25th article of the *Augsburg Confession* reasons are also given for private confession and absolution, but it even treats more extensively and specifically the abuses that had insinuated themselves. It even says right in the beginning: "This part of confession is not abolished by the preachers, for the custom is retained among us that the sacrament is not distributed to those who are not previously examined and absolved." That latter, often recurring expression could only and exclusively be referring to private absolution, since only this and none other was known and customary in the Lutheran Church at that time. At the conclusion of this article it is proved to the

spiritual opponents in the papacy that confession is not commanded in Scriptures, but rather is an institution of the church, but this is also added to this: "Yet this part is diligently taught by the preachers, that confession is to be retained for the sake of the absolution, the chief and foremost benefit being the consolation of troubled consciences, and also for a few other reasons."

In the defense of the aforementioned 11th article of the *Augsburg Confession* (*Apology* p. 159) this is one of the things said: "If the people all run at once at a certain time (as was previously done) to the altar, they would not be able to be so thoroughly examined and instructed as they have been instructed by us." Just after that it is noted that it would be good if the preachers train the people "That they should name several sins that bother them so they can be more easily examined." This also cannot be understood as any other custom, for example, the unusual practice of announcement for confession, much less general confession that was unheard of at the time, but rather only of private confession.

In the *Apology* article 12 (p. 181) it is repeated and stated at the beginning that private confession be retained for the sake of private absolution, "which is God's Word by which the power of the keys frees us from our sins." But the short but powerful, yes, no doubt the strongest witness against abolishing private absolution is laid down with the following words: "Therefore it would be to oppose God to remove absolution from the church" In the Latin original it says it even stronger: "*Impium est*", it would be impious, but the absolution is made even more specific by the addition of "*privata*". This sharp judgement was directly applied to the unreasoning initiatives of Carlstadt, who famously included it in the practices that were part of the leaven of the papacy, and wanted to completely abolish it, which is also how the adherents of the doctrine of Zwingli, for example in Switzerland and in Frankfurt on the Maine, and other enthusiasts then heaped their added ridicule against the Lutheran Church, as they also frequently do now.

In the *Smalcald Articles* Dr. Luther begins with the following words: "Because the absolutio, or the power of the keys is also an aid and comfort against sins and an evil conscience, instituted by Christ in the Gospel, so not for one's life (Latin: nequaquam, absolutely not) should confession or absolution be allowed to cease in the church, especially for the sake of the dull conscience, as well as for the sake of the wild and reckless youth, so they are examined and instructed in the Christian doctrine." Then it goes right on to say: "Since *absolutio privata* proceeds from the office of the keys, it should not be despised, but rather held in great honor with all the other offices in the Christian church." Now if she does not desire it, can she be valuing it and holding in high regard?

One of the most concise and clearest proofs that private confession, and indeed the exclusion of the general confession, must be firmly held in the Lutheran Church, is the excellent instruction of Dr. Luther in his *Small Catechism*, which unfortunately most Lutherans do not know, treasure and employ, since for a long time now private confession has been squeezed out by the general confession. Every word of this instruction is permeated with private confession and absolution, like receiving forgiveness from the (father) confessor, we should confess our sins before the father confessor that we feel in our hearts; going on to the address: Dear honorable sir, etc., the formula of the question addressed to the one confessing: Do you also believe that my forgiveness is God's forgiveness? Finally the imparted absolution according to the prescribed formula, – this all applies solely and only to private confession. Whoever reads through this instruction attentively and without prejudice will already be moved thereby to say that only private confession, but not general, is the Lutheran tradition. This conviction will only become stronger through the appendix of Luther's *Larger Catechism*, which is found in several editions of the *Book of Concord* that contains a "brief admonition to confession." Indeed this admonition doesn't have such a churchly perspective as the catechism itself, but nevertheless it has a consistently clear explanation of the article of confession and has been considered a warning against the abuse of the same. Right in the beginning are named therein the three chief benefits that we have received in view of confession through the reformation, that is "that we may not use it out of compulsion or fear, nor be burdened to enunciate every sin so exactly. In this we have the advantage that we know how one should use it blessedly, to comfort and strengthen our conscience." But in this admonition when it talks about "secret confession that only takes place from one brother to another," it says that certainly every believing Christian, with the prerogatives of the Christian priesthood has the right to absolve his brother desiring it, as this is done by the ordained servant of Christ. Only for the conclusion of this aforementioned text, as well as from the 14th article of the *Augsburg Confession* it is sufficiently illuminated that this secret confession (as received in an emergency) but when made publicly, in the church, only should be done by those "who have the ordinary call to teach and to preach, or to administer the sacrament."

A passage from the *Formula of Concord* should prove a good conclusion to these witnesses, where it says this in the 11th article on p. 808: "For this reason also Christ does not only present the promise of the Gospel in general, as in preaching and in the general absolution after the sermon, but rather does the same through the sacrament that he has set as the seal of his promise and thereby affirms it to each believer specifically, as takes place in private absolution. Therefore we also retain private absolution as article 11 of the Augsburg Confession states, for it is God's command that we believe such absolution and hold it as certain that we are in fact atoned to God whenever we believe that Word, as if we had heard that Word from heaven, as the Apology states in this article." . . .

That the Lutheran Church at that time had held fast to private confession is also illuminated "from the many sorts of witnesses in the writings of Dr. Luther." The citation of such witnesses apart from those out of the symbolical books already shared (of which the first ones were expressly approved by Luther, but the others, with the exclusion of the last one, were composed by him), is not done as if the public confessional writings were not sufficient themselves, but rather because these writings themselves, and most especially frequently in the *Formula of Concord*, appeal to Luther's doctrinal and polemic writings with deepest respect. They thereby give his writings preference over those of all the other Lutheran doctors, which he also retains to this day and will continue to retain, since for all that they teach this is right and salutary, they have this unsurpassable master teacher to thank.

Luther had treated this doctrine of private confession and absolution in several sermons of his Church Postils, for example on the Gospel on Quasimodogeniti Sunday, on the 19th Sunday after Trinity, on the Feast of Mary Magdalene, but besides that in special compositions, that is, in his *Pamphlet on Confession* (from the year 1521), and his *Sermon on the holy LORD's Supper against the Enthusiasts* (from the year 1526), but in the most concise and impressive way in his *Warning to Those in Frankfurt* (from the year 1533).

Dr. Luther bears witness how highly he prized and valued private confession in his 8th sermon that he preached in the year 1522 against Carlstadt's innovations, where he says this: "No one knows what holy confession can do but one who must often contend and battle against the devil. I would have been long since overwhelmed and slain by the devil if this confession had not preserved me. For there are many confusing and erroneous matters, with which a person is incapable of dealing alone, that still seize him."

Among the most compelling in this are the famous and excellent passages from his writing to those in Frankfurt: "If a thousand or thousands of thousands worlds were mine, etc." which passages still make quite an impression when they are considered in their context. That is, after Dr. Luther has spoken of the abuses which were previously taking place in confession, that threatened to ruin the soul, he proceeds: "Now that we have again encouraged this, the devil and his apostles want to strike it down again completely. But not me. Whoever does not want it for himself, let him go. Yet he must not take nor abolish them for us and for other pious people (who need it and understand its usefulness). That's called *qui ignorat, ignorat* (whoever wants to be ignorant, may he always be ignorant). – If a thousand or thousands of thousands worlds were mine, I would rather lose everything than to want to let the least aspect of this confession depart from the church. – Yes, I would rather put up with the papistic tyranny of fasting, observing feasts, clothing, shrines, plates, caps and whatever else that I could endure without damaging my faith, than that confession be taken from the Christian. For the Christian it is the prime, most necessary and useful school where one learns to understand and employ God's Word and his faith, which is not as powerfully done in public lectures and sermons." Just this one witness of Dr. Luther is more weighty than a host of witnesses of later teachers who spoke on behalf of private confession, and overwhelms the many 'if's' and 'but's' that have been screams against the same.

Now if a man like Dr. Luther so abundantly pours out from his mouth and pen what so filled his heart in such high praise of private confession, should not, therefore, every Christian not only employ it, if they would also be counseled and invited by him, but rather also give it a ringing endorsement out of love for his neighbor and for other Christians?

Luther so often and seriously recommended that private confession and absolution be steadfastly maintained by and for every Christian for this very reason, that is, out of love for the whole church of Christ. For example he takes this up in his advice for the meeting in Smalcald which he had composed in the year 1531 and in which he also justified the practice of private absolution with the example of Christ who had usually only absolved individuals. Thus he writes: "There must be a

formation and grooming in the church which will not be able to be retained without confession. And it is certainly good counsel when people are not used to confession to give attention to their sins and to patiently anticipate absolution or forgiveness, for in the course of time if absolution and forgiveness should be forsaken, the whole thing will be perverted and the people will run to the sacrament as if it were from their own devotion like they did before. So the comforting, free Gospel must also be given an opportunity to be declared to individual people as well as to many at a time. But what else is the absolution but the Gospel told to a single individual person, who receives thereby comfort for the sins he confessed? So notice here Christ's example, Mt. 9, where he absolves the paralyzed individual and in Lk. 7 he absolves the sinful woman, also, individually."

Dr. Luther also speaks of how very valuable private confession and absolution are in many passages, of which we shall only be sharing a few. Both of them should be, especially for every Christian, an exercise in both the chief parts of Christian doctrine, the law and the Gospel. He shows this in his letter to those in Frankfurt with the following words: "So we now employ confession as a holy practice. In the first we employ the law, in the second the Gospel. For in the first part we learn the proper use of the law (as St. Paul says), that is, to know and to hate our sins. In the second part we apply the Gospel to ourselves, learn to rightly grasp God's promise and comfort, and thus apply what is preached from the pulpit. For although the preacher in the pulpit also teaches the law and the Gospel, he lets it go at that, he applies, inquires, explores no one as to how he grasps it and also cannot see where it's not, whom he should further comfort or rebuke, because he has no particular person before him to whom he can apply it. And although the hearers hear all of both in the sermon, he grasps much more powerfully and surely whatever is addressed to him as an individual person."

Now Luther teaches that even for this reason every Christian should seek comfort in private absolution in his House Postil for Quasimodogeniti Sunday: "Now so that faith would become firm that sins are forgiven you and me, Christ has ordained that one is not baptized nor does he go to the Sacrament for another, but rather each should do so personally. So also each individual should hear the Word, and seek and desire the absolution, if he might not find sufficient comfort in the common sermon. For he must not doubt as he hears the Word of forgiveness of sin in the Name of JESUS that thus his sins are taken away from him and he has been loosed of them even in heaven and in the eyes of God." In another place Dr. Luther speaks briefly, powerfully and comprehensively (in the sermon on the Sacrament from the year 1526) of the three fold benefit of private confession, that is, that it serves as the verdict of innocence, instruction and comfort of every single Christian in particular, by which he immediately notes that only a pious Christian is able to rightly confess, but they should not so much pay attention to their confession as to the Word of absolution as foremost. It says specifically: "In the secret confession is much that is comforting and useful. First, the absolution, that your neighbor declares you free in God's stead, that is, just as if God had declared it himself, so that should certainly be comforting to us. If I knew that God were at a certain place and wanted to declare me freed, I would not want to be there just once at that place, but as often as I could I would return to the same. Now this is what he has placed into a person's mouth, which is why it is so comforting to return there often, especially to a troubled conscience. Secondly it is a service to uneducated children. For while it is for most folk an annoying thing to ever hear a sermon and they learn nothing, and this is also true in households that no one puts what's preached into practice, therefore even if it served no other purpose it would still be good for people to be instructed and heard, to see how they believe, pray, learn, etc." (Such instruction is necessary these days even for the so called educated people, since these days even amongst the educated the ignorance of the *Catechism* is great. In Dr. Luther's time a child of seven years knew what the church is, but today even many grown people don't, even those who go to the sacrament.) "That's why I've said," Luther proceeds, "the sacrament must not be given to anyone unless he give notice as to what he's receiving and why he's going. Now this can be most appropriately done in confession. But thirdly, a comfort is therein for whoever has an evil conscience or who had some other oppression or need and would like to have counsel so he can ask for advice. Therefore we could not despise confession, for there it is God's Word that comforts us and strengthens us in faith and also instructs and teaches us what we're missing and also gives counsel in afflictions. Therefore no one can even do this confession rightly but pious Christians. For it must be that such people feel that they would gladly get counsel and comfort. But where this goes wrong is when people have diverted their attention from the absolution, to our own work, how well or purely one confesses, and also wanting to innumerate sins, which no one can do, which is too much and too great a work for hearers."

"Two reasons should incite us to willingly and gladly confess. The first, the holy cross, that

is, the scandal and shame of a person willingly denuding himself before another person to charge and accuse one's self. That is a precious part of the holy cross. O if we only knew what chastening such a willing shameful blush would bring, and how it would make such a gracious God, as a person thus denigrates and humbles himself to his glory, we would exhume confession from its grave and travel over a thousand miles to get it. . . The other reason and motivation to willingly confess is the precious and noble promise of God in the four passages: Mt. 16.19: What you loose shall be loosed; Mt. 18.18: What you loose shall be loosed; John 20.21: Whose sins you forgive, they shall be forgiven; Mt. 18.19,20: When two or three agree together on earth, whatever it is, it shall be done for him by my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my Name, there am I in their midst. Whomever such lovely and comforting Words do not move, must obviously have a cold faith and be a dismal Christian. (In the Pamphlet on Confession.)

Because of the perfect Scriptural agreement of this doctrine of the Lutheran Church even the greatest and most significant portion of the Reformed Church had at that time become convinced and accepted the same, while only just previously many of these preachers had declared their opposition to it with mocking and ridicule. Among the three chief articles of doctrine, that is, in those where the Reformed and the Lutherans united (in what is usually called the *Wittenberg Concord* of the year 1536), besides on the two sacraments, was also absolution, about which the following was set down in writing: "Here all wish and desire that private confession be retained in the church, not only for the sake of the comfort the conscience finds therein, but also since in every way this discipline by which the people are heard and misunderstanding is instructed, is beneficial to the church in many ways. So it will also benefit coarse and ignorant people in every way so they are questioned and spoken to. Yet the old, papistic confession with its enumeration of sins is to be neither justified nor required, but rather the kind of cordial instructing and counseling questioning should be retained for the sake of absolution and for the sake of instruction."

Unfortunately the Reformed soon destroyed this legitimate union, yes, even a majority of the Lutherans also later apostasized from the doctrine of Dr. Luther and made an illegitimate union with the Reformed. Melancthon had authored a powerful witness against such falsifications of the article of private confession and ones like it in the so-called *Wittenberg Reforms* of the year 1545, though already at that time he was showing his very strong leanings towards the side of the Reformed. This reformation had been signed by Luther and other Lutheran theologians. But the relevant passage says this: "For since all who are informed know that just this article (on repentance and confession) must be purely and faithfully taught and explained in our Churches, and it is an absolute necessity in the whole of Christianity that it be retained in its purity, we will not and cannot consent to or allow any alteration, darkening, or patch work on the doctrine of the article. – and although the recent jugglers have painted, ruminated and sought new shades in which to paint the old heresies so they could rebuke our doctrine, yet everyone who has understanding knows that this article, in all its aspects, is taught by us rightly and beneficially. So we are ourselves determined to retain confession in its true Christian form, to instruct the people in this, to examine them, that this understanding remains and this witness of the church that the holy Gospel, the forgiveness of sins, is certainly proclaimed, in general and in particular – and if a salutary reformation is to be undertaken it would be especially necessary to preach and to put into practice the whole article on repentance and the doctrine of confession, private absolution commensurate with the faith, as we now have often reported in a detailed and Christian manner."

In all this Dr. Luther was still far from wanting to force such a wholesome reformation upon anyone. He writes: "We force no one to go to confession, as all of our writing have born witness. . . Our doctrine is practiced by those who are serious about their salvation, etc. (In the *Letter to Those in Frankfurt*.)

Yet among those who had accepted Dr. Luther's catechism and doctrine, private confession and absolution was so universally introduced that without it no one would be admitted to the holy LORD's Supper, so that this, as well as the reason for this, is seen in a second passage of the just mentioned writing which says this: "Since we plan to bring up Christians and to leave them behind us, and in the sacrament we distribute Christ's body and blood, we will not and cannot give this sacrament to anyone unless he is first examined as to what he has learned from the *Catechism* and if he wants to depart from his sins that he has sinned against it. For we do not want to turn Christ's church into a pig sty, and let every unexamined person run to the sacrament like pigs to the trough. We will leave such a Church to the enthusiasts."

That the Lutheran Church at that time had steadfastly held fast to private confession and absolution and especially in her Praxis, is finally also proven in the Lutheran Church Orders and Agendas that are still extant.

The number of these publicly confirmed church orders and agendas runs into the several hundreds and it would become too tedious to relate their pattern from the very extensive sections that would have to be quoted. Therefore let the reader be satisfied that the true result of the survey is that in all these pure Lutheran Church orders, from the first one written by Dr. Buggenhagen in Braunschweig in the year 1521, up to the so called lower Saxon agenda from the year 1585, and therefore specifically in the time period when the Lutheran Church was still pristine, that is, up until Luther's death, only private confession and absolution was customary, and had been introduced through these ecclesial prescriptions for preachers and congregations in all those places without exception, that it was valued, not, indeed, as necessary for the sake of the conscience and salvation, but as good, as in all church traditions, for the sake of discipline and good order, as then St. Paul also admonishes all Christians: Let all be done decently and in good order (1 Cor. 14.40) and St. Peter: Be submissive to every ordinance of man for the sake of the LORD. (1 Pet. 2.13)

Now even if since that time (1585) into the centuries since (1750) each church order and agenda would often be altered in successive editions, yet these alterations were usually for isolated circumstances, but specifically the earlier prescriptions regarding private confession and absolution remained unchanged and stood constantly until the time when the apostasy from the pure Lutheran worship became more open and widespread.

These passages quoted from the symbolic books, the writings of Dr. Luther and the pure church orders express sufficient proof that the Lutheran Church had held fast at that time to private confession and absolution in her doctrine and practice. . . .

Proof, that in the Best Times of the Lutheran Church Public Confession was not Practiced along with Private Confession, much less Exclusively

The symbolic books mention not a single syllable about this public absolution. Whoever only looks for himself will be convinced. Indeed, in the *Small Catechism* the "general" confession is mentioned just once, only obviously this is understood in context of the universal customary churchly penance that the individual presents to his father confessor. According to that the answer to the question of what the symbolic books teach about the general confession must be given: They teach nothing explicitly about it. And had they approvingly mentioned it, they would thereby have been contradicting history as well as her own doctrine; history, because in the Church of the papacy up until the time of the reformation only private confession alone was practiced. So when the Lutherans declared in the 11th Article of the *Augsburg Confession* and in other places that they in no way were departing from this lovely Church practice, but rather wanted to resolutely hold fast to it, this was the only way they could disprove the charge that they were innovators. But had they sought to institute such a completely unknown ceremony into the Church, which is what general confession was at the time, then the charge of being innovative could certainly be made against them. But the symbolical books would also have been contradicting their own doctrine. For they expressly teach that confession be retained for the sake of the absolution, by which the authority of the keys specifically frees each one from sins, announces what is preaching in the Gospel to each one specifically, that each one specifically be examined by his father confessor and should be advised and comforted (see the instruction for confession in the *Small Catechism*), and that it would ultimately be godless to abolish private absolution from the church. They would have contradicted this doctrine had they ascribed the same value to the general confession as they had to private confession just as the general confession cannot be justified from out of the symbolical books as an ancient ceremony of the church, but even so little in the writings of Dr. Luther, in which, indeed, he speaks a few times of "public" confession, only refers to what is done with our offended neighbor before God in the LORD's Prayer, in contrast to the secret confession, or private confession before one's father confessor.

Yet in the works of Dr. Luther a composition issued by him and his colleagues to the Council of Nuernberg about general and individual absolution from the year 1539 appears to state their perfect assurance that he had actually affirmed the custom of public confession right alongside private confession. Only with a closer consideration of all of the circumstances involved it is revealed that this interpretation has many important reasons lined up against it, which might allow one to practically

completely dismiss this idea. But even if one admitted this were actually true, it would still be wrong to conclude from this particular case that it applies to the whole Lutheran Church in all times and places. Now, in connection with this writing of Dr. Luther this must now be clearly proven, but first the occasion and the main contents of the same will be briefly presented.

In the year 1539 there arose a division among the Lutheran pastors because Andreas Osiander refused to employ public absolution for a number of reasons as it was used by Wenzeslaus Link and his other colleagues, since he insisted upon the exclusive use of private confession. Upon asking his counsel, Dr. Luther with his colleagues now composed a theological opinion in which he says the following: "Although we regard private absolution as very Christian and comforting, and that it should be retained in the church, . . . yet we cannot and will not so harshly burden the conscience, as if there should be no forgiveness of sins except exclusively through private absolution." To prove this he offers the saints of the Old Testament, who would have preserved themselves by the general promises of the Gospel, as those must also do who can have no preacher. He goes on to teach: "The Gospel itself is a general absolution, for it is a promise that all and everyone in particular should receive from God's command and order. Therefore we could not forbid nor condemn the general absolution as unchristian since it still also serves to remind the hearer that each one should receive the Gospel, that it is an absolution and belongs also to him, as your formula is of the form of such a reminder." At the charge that the absolution must not be declared to a group since there might be found therein such people as belong to the binding key, Dr. Luther replies that the later (the ban) would only be applicable to manifest sinners, but secret sinners would be bound, as is the case with the office of preaching. "So the sermon binds all unbelievers and then again, at the same time, gives forgiveness to all believers. . . . That also that absolution is *conditionalis* (conditioned), is otherwise also the case for a common sermon and each absolution. Both the common and the private has faith as its condition (*Bedingung*). For without faith it does not free them but is not thereby a faulty key." Finally Dr. Luther gives this advice: "Osiander must not be forced to use the public absolution, as this would be against his conscience, but he should also not attack others who use it, for the sake of freedom, and, on the other hand, he should remain unassailed by them, and both parties alike should admonish the people to private absolution. In this writing not a single word is mentioned of either private confession nor public, but rather it speaks throughout only of the absolution; there is also nothing about the sacrament or of communicants, but rather only of hearers. Even just for that reason, no conclusive proof can be made from this that this has general confession in mind. This also does not prove that Dr. Luther had regarded public absolution as being just as good as private absolution. For he had declared that the latter was "very Christian and comforting," he desires that both parties should admonish the people to it; but only says of those who use it in public that he could not forbid and condemn it as unchristian. His chief goal is obviously this, that the conscience not be so severely burdened as if there should be no forgiveness of sins without, but only through private absolution, which was just what Osiander asserted. But here this is not a matter of what a conscience deems as what must be necessary, but rather of holding fast to a church usage that has been practiced for centuries, not as an exception, but as itself the rule. But that Dr. Luther was not counseling that the public absolution be retained forever is specifically illustrated in a letter to Osiander in which he wants the same to know he should only retain the same "until in this matter souls can be again mildly encouraged to stop doing it without thereby causing any offense."

Apart from these internal reasons there are also external reasons at hand that stand in the way of accepting that Dr. Luther is saying anything in that writing about general confession. Namely, he mentions a customary formula for public absolution among the pastors in Nuernberg, only such is not to be found in the Agenda of 1533 used there, which does contain two formulas for private absolution. On the other hand, at the conclusion of the admonition to the communicants before the holy LORD's Supper a "reminding" formula of absolution is presented, which are perhaps the very words that Dr. Luther may be referring to. Seckendorf suggests that this controversy might have arisen over an absolution declared from the pulpit after the sermon, only no trace of any such custom is found in the whole Nuernberg Church order. It may easily be possible that this famous history detective may have known of such a specific formula, or had drawn from other sources this closer verification of the nature of the controversy. This and similar uncertainties hinder any extensive proof by the evidence from this writing that Dr. Luther had counseled the retention of any general confession.

But even if it were granted that this might have been done in connection with the congregations of Nuernberg, it would still in no way follow that this theological opinion could be seen

as a rule and norm for other Lutheran congregations. For this composition speaks only of one exception while, on the other hand, the symbolical books speak of the rule. This writing contains wise counsel in a controversy arising in isolated congregations, and, indeed, only until it was further resolved, but the symbolical books, on the other hand, contain the public confession of the whole Lutheran Church.

So it is impossible that this writing of Dr. Luther could be decisive if it is asked if retaining general confession along side private confession would be in keeping with the ceremonies of the Lutheran Church up to that time.

Even that being said, according to two passages from the *Instruction to Visitors* from the year 1528, § 53 and § 68, which treat this, it does not mean that the private confession must be left, as merely an option, to each person and that those well instructed would be allowed without any confession to the holy LORD's Supper, from which it would follow that for that reason the ceremony of general confession would be even more necessary. Only in both passages it is speaking of freedom of conscience in contrast to previously being forced in the papacy, and even for that reason no reference is made of this counsel of Dr. Luther in any Lutheran church order.

Now even if in this writing and in both of those passages which have, for the most part, the appearance of certainly justifying the general confession, that old saying applies, looks are deceiving. So on this topic there are a host of others, already in the first excerpt of the passages mentioned, that collectively address the sole use of individual confession, that so overwhelmingly refutes this and even through Dr. Luther's last and decisive explanation, and by such sheer volume that there can obtain absolutely no further doubt of his thinking on this matter. – For in the articles of the consistory in Wittenberg, composed by Luther and other theologians in the year 1542, it says this: "You must see to it that the parish pastors retain a uniform ceremony and order in confession and that each person as he laments of his sins, be imparted individually a Christian absolution. And lest in isolated places it were practiced that a parson let those who had planned to commune the next day arrive in a group and declared to them a corporate absolution, this must never be allowed to take place." Finally here is also proof in ...

The Lutheran agendas, and, indeed, up until the year 1739, that the general confession and absolution has been decisively disapproved and never approved. For although in individual southern German congregations the ceremony took place, which the second Pommeranian Agenda from the year 1563 – originating from Dr. Bugenhagen – allowed for the parson to read aloud a general absolution, yet even there the absolution was done privately every time, so that after the confession was made the confessor individually came to the confessional chair in order to, when necessary, be instructed and comforted particularly by a Word of God, whereupon, then, each one individually would be imparted the absolution under the laying on of hands. May the following passages serve as proof of how strictly the general absolution was forbidden, even threatening one's being removed from office, from the Pomeranian Agenda just mentioned: "Therefore the parsons must be most seriously forbidden to absolve people corporately in groups, so the superintendents in *synodis* must pay serious attention to this, so that no one declare absolution over those he does not know in a group out of greed, to please the people, or out of laziness, because he is overwhelmed by the task, whom, after the superintendent has been warned and not stopped doing it, he must depose from his preaching office as an unfaithful hireling."⁴³

Similar prohibitions of the general absolution are also contained in other agendas, for example of Gotha, Magdeburg, Ulm; but the following passage from the Braunschweig - Luneburg Agenda from the year 1739 shows that these are also repeated in more recent agendas: "The *Pastores* should absolve the simple people individually and not two, three, or more at the same time as is sometimes experienced, for that should not be tolerated." The subsequent departures from this salutary order always had their foundation in the falsifications of the pure doctrine, and the more this got the upper hand the more universally it occurred that the general confession was not only allowed

⁴³Naturally this is not a proof that in itself it must be rebuked if the general confession is retained, if in the order of the congregation it is given legitimacy. So it is only worthy of rebuke when, as in the case being referred to, a salutary Church order that has already been received is broken. Ed.

alongside private confession, but rather it was allowed to almost entirely exclude the existence of the latter. Namely, the pure Lutheran doctrine of private absolution would be falsified by unionism, pietism and rationalism; through unionism, since to please the Reformed, more and more manifest concessions to their opposition to it were given; through pietism, since through the perversions of the nature of repentance they brought forth, the whole use of the same become despised; through rationalism, since the preachers and then, naturally, their hearers also denied that they were repentant sinners and in need of penance, but especially that the servants of Christ would have the authority to forgive sins.

The evil fruits of this abdication were a lot of regulations among which, no doubt, the one that is first and foremost was issued in electoral Brandenburg in the name of Friedrich I in the year 1798. It would thereby indirectly abolish private confession, in that it made of it a 'scruple of conscience (?)', or made it allowable for one who had not led a manifestly offensive life style to go to the holy LORD's Supper even without private confession. Such needed only to register eight days before with the preacher and then take part in a general admonition to penance, at which neither confession nor absolution took place. Similar orders appeared more repeatedly and forcefully until finally salutary private penance vanished completely, especially in the last third of the last century.

Indeed, general penance took place earlier in a few southern German congregations, and later in Denmark, Sweden and Holland. Only this does not prove that this was taking place in the golden age of Lutheranism, but much rather partly under the influence of crypto-Calvinism, and partly, even chiefly, that these are only isolated exceptions, standing in contrast to the model of the overwhelming majority of Lutheran congregations. Now when, as was previously said, it is, on the one hand, easy to explain that with the increasing falsification of the pure doctrine salutary ceremonies like private penance came more and more into disuse, and, on the other hand, general confession could gain more and more prestige in the Church so that it almost completely displaced private penance, so on the other hand for the sake of its many benefits which private penance has over general penance, this is a compelling appeal to all Lutheran preachers to get to work through teaching and instruction, so that the use of the same would become more and more universal. This worthy effort will meet many obstacles on the way which will seem insurmountable; only faithful preachers and willing hearers will be all the more convinced at length to the contrary. **Now for their sake in the installment that follows the chief reasons for retaining general confession and against the introduction of private penance will be refuted.**

Given this history and the LCMS strict adherence to and guidance from the doctrine of Christian freedom, there was no way a legalism would be allowed at the point of this despair (as in Grabau-ism). Rather, as the doctrine prescribes, the weak are to be educated and not to be forced to do that which they're not certain is right and pleasing to God. It is interesting to note at this point that the promised following installment of this article is not to be found in skimming over the fourth year of *DL*. And the first LCMS Agenda published in 1856 contains the general confession and absolution. But if this practice did not ultimately displace the general confession which seemed desirable, the admonition to retain announcement for confession (*Beichtmeldung*) was yet the remnant in practice for the penitent's faith could be heard and instructed. This part of the current practice was serviceable as a forum for private confession and absolution as Loehe's offering in the third year of *DL* suggests:

Announcement for Confession⁴⁴

A Sketch As To Its Nature

by W. Loehe (1808-1872)

Vol. 3, pp. 43f, 47f

First Discussion.

Balthisar: Good day, Parson.

Parson: Good day, Balthisar, what do you want?

B. I want to announce for Confession this Saturday and the LORD's Supper Sunday.

Pn. So why do you want the LORD's Supper now?

B: Why? I think it is now the time to have the LORD's Supper again.

Pn: Why now? Is it because you do that every year at Advent?

B: Yes, in my family we've always thought we should observe that, so if it's Pentecost or Christmas day or in Advent we go to the LORD's Supper. So I do that, too.

Pn: So you are going because of that custom?

B: Sure, why not? I don't agree with the tradition many hold, who go but once a year.

Pn: You're right there, B., but going merely because of a custom isn't good. Tell me, what does one do in confession?

B: Well, I think you acknowledge and confess your sins there.

Pn. Now actually you must acknowledge your sins prior to that, so that you are also able to confess those sins in the confessional; that is, you must already know beforehand where your shoe pinches, so you can thereby tell and lament to God your troubles and your pain and seek his help for them. To confess your sins is nothing but telling God your sins and admitting them. So then, why must a person confess his sins there in the confessional?

B: That they be forgiven.

Pn: Right! As David says in the 32nd Psalm: "When I wanted to keep silent, my bones did grow old –

B: – "through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me, so that my moisture was turned into the drought of summer. Sela."

Pn: See that? There he witnesses that he could find no peace or rest so long as he was silent about his sin, so long as he'd not confessed them to God. But now he goes on: "Therefore I confessed my sins, and –

B: – "and did not hide my iniquities. I said: I will confess my transgression to the LORD –

Pn. & B: (together) - and you forgave me the iniquity of my sins. Sela."

Pn. So whoever won't confess his sins, they will not be forgiven him. But then will all his sins be forgiven that are confessed in the confessional?

B. So long as he's serious about them.

Pn: What do you mean by serious?

B. I think it's when his sins bring him sorrow, when he is contrite about them.

Pn: Quite right. But now tell me, B., do your sins only bring you sorrow every Pentecost and Christmas, but never any other time? Or, when you have come to the LORD's Supper every Pentecost and Christmas, was it really only the load of your sins making you come?

B: Parson, – I would be lying if I claimed that were true.

Pn: And if you did claim that I would have told you directly: That's not true, you are deceiving both yourself and me. One who goes to the LORD's Supper merely because of custom can't possibly be going with a repentant and contrite heart. But will anyone who confesses his sins without heartfelt regret truly have confessed his sins, and will he receive forgiveness?

B: Of course not, since that violates the 32nd Psalm.

⁴⁴Note: When I call this a sketch or outline according to its nature, this is by no means depicting an individual, specific person, but rather a general sense of what may very well often happen or what may typically happen. But I am sharing this to prove to the parsons what happens at an announcement for confession and what great blessing is therein, which they must not allow to slip through their fingers; and as a mirror for those who use it so they should learn how good or bad they look, or how people may be prepared to appear before God in a way that pleases him.

Pn: And if someone violates that and does not receive forgiveness of sins, can he worthily receive the holy LORD's Supper for his blessing?

B: Obviously that could never be.

Pn: Now consider, B., how often you have already received it unworthily! So do you want to come again now in that way?

B: No, Parson, I will repent of my sins. Otherwise I am certainly not rightly considering what I'm doing.

Pn: Only consider it rightly now. But if you now regret your sins, will you receive forgiveness for your sins?

B: I hope so.

Pn: Upon what do you base your hope?

B: Upon God.

Pn: But don't you know that God is just, and regards every person according to his works and according to the fruit of his nature? So when God regards you in that way, what prospect do you have of his forgiveness?

B: But God is also merciful.

Pn: But not at the expense of his justice. So then, are you worthy of his forgiving you your sins?

B: No one can say they are!

Pn: So then, how can you hope God will forgive you your sins?

B: I'm not sure, Parson.

Pn: Does no one come to mind through whom you can receive it?

B: (agitated) No, Parson, do tell me.

Pn: Don't you know the explanation of the Second Article? "I believe that JESUS Christ –

B: – "true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my LORD –

Pn: Pay attention, here it comes...

B: – "Who has redeemed me a lost and condemned person –

Pn: – "purchased and won me from all sin, death and the power of the devil." So who has redeemed you from all your sins?

B: JESUS Christ.

Pn: So through whom can you receive forgiveness for your sins?

B: Through JESUS Christ.

Pn: Why through him?

B: Because he has redeemed me.

Pn: With what has he redeemed you?

B: "Not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death." –

Pn: See, it has cost him so much to win the forgiveness of your sins, letting himself be martyred on the cross for you, and you are so ungrateful to him that it's never even occurred to you at all, even once, how indispensable he is for you to employ as the one forgiving you your sins.

B: Yes, Parson, but we just can't know those things if no one has told us of this.

Pn: Yet, even though you learned the Second Article you've never thought about it, and not yet ever rightly taken to heart what you've learned: That's the problem. Now look! As often as you've gone to the LORD's Supper it was without repentance, without faith on the LORD Christ, for it has never occurred to you that you also need him whose body and blood you still must receive in the LORD's Supper for the forgiveness of your sins. Thus you've always gone there unworthily. See to it that this time it is better.

B: I will do that, Parson. I wish someone had talked to me about this long ago.

Pn: See, that's why it's good you have come to me and have come personally to announce. Now keep this in mind and pray God that he kindle the true light and give you a rich blessing in his holy LORD's Supper.

B: I will do that, Pn. I thank you for telling me these things.

Pn: Bye, B., the best thanks is if you let my words bear fruit in your heart.

B: May God grant it!

Second Discussion

Margaretta: I would like to come to the confessional.

Parson: That's good, why do you want to?

M: So that I confess my sins.
Pn: So, even you have sins?
M: We are all sinners and fall short of the glory we should have before God.
Pn: Do you also know your sins?
M: We know some and some we don't.
Pn: But one must still know those that are known, else, there wouldn't be known sins, so do you know them?
M: I've never done anything wrong, and no one can say I have.
Pn: So have you no sins?
M: No one is without sins. I'd never say I am without sins. One often sins and is completely unaware of it.
Pn: And yet you say you have never done anything wrong. Don't you know what the apostle John says: "Whoever commits sins does wrong, and sin is that wrong doing." If you still have to admit that you have sins, how can you then say that you have never done anything wrong?
M: I am not so learned that I can answer every question, but I'm not so contentious as some people, so I am really just as good as they. –
Pn: Here it doesn't depend upon education and knowledge, M., much less will one's lack of contentiousness help, for in this we stand before God, who tests the heart and reigns. Therefore in this it is a matter of honest repentance over one's sins.
M: Oh, but I don't have so many sins.
Pn: That will not justify you, M.. You certainly know what James says: "If anyone keeps the whole law and sins in just one point, he is guilty of it all." And so, who do you think is a better Christian, someone who finds few sins in himself or one who finds many?
M: (hesitantly) I just think a true Christian is pious and does nothing that's wrong, and because of that he can also not find many sins in himself.
Pn: I think David and the apostle Paul had been pious people and more pious than either of us, don't you think so, too?
M: Yes, certainly they take first place!
Pn: And yet the first one says: "who can know how often he falls short." "My sins are heaped over my head, they have become too heavy for me as a heavy load." and the other one said: "I am fleshly and sold under sin. I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells nothing good." That said, they must have found more sins on them than you do, yet they were more pious, yes, it is just for that reason that they were more pious. That's why I'm telling you: the better the Christian, the greater the sinner.
M: Hm!
Pn: So who do you think knows your heart better, you or God?
M: God, of course.
Pn: And who says: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Of whom is it written: "God looks from heaven at the children of men, if anyone understands and inquires of God: But they have all become wayward and altogether unfit, there is none that do good, not even one." Now certainly you are still a child of man with a human heart, so does what the holy and all knowing God is saying here also apply to you and your heart? And even if you've not also personally accepted this as true, then you must believe God in this and humble yourself and learn that even this alone is enough to condemn you, since up 'till now you've never acknowledged your sins. In your heart's self-justification of you are defiantly and thoughtlessly dismissing God's Word and witness. For if you had better taken God's Word to heart and if you had paid closer attention to the thoughts of your heart, your sinful corruption would have become obvious to you long ago. But since up until now you've never done so, that sin alone is enough to condemn you.
M: Ok, so now I'm supposed regard myself as condemned in God's Name.
Pn: I think I see that what I'm saying is angering you. You think I'm going too far. But do you believe what the catechism says?
M: As if I would not believe it! You always think people have no faith at all!
Pn: Then you must also believe you are lost and condemned for the sake of your sins; for that is written in the catechism and you have also confessed this often enough from your catechism, but you have not yet ever thought about what it says, and – don't let this make you angry because it's true – and therefore you have not yet ever believed it. Can you still say the Second Article along with its meaning, where

it says: I believe that JESUS Christ, true God, etc., etc., is my LORD, who has – now how does it continue?

M: Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me –

Pn: Far enough. Did you hear what you just said? Why do you call yourself a lost and condemned person there? Because you must learn by setting the Ten Commandments before you (if you consider them seriously and are honest), that you haven't kept any of them as you should, and therefore you are under God's wrath and curse.

M: One just does what he can.

Pn: And you imagine by doing what you can that's enough. You don't see that just by that you only make your condemnation worse. For those who go around with doing the works of the law are under the curse, as Paul says in Gal. 3: "For it is written: Cursed is everyone who does not remain in everything that is written in the book of the law, that he do it." Now you cannot say that you have remained in everything, in everything, else you'd be without sins, so you're under the curse. With that you are nevertheless going on with doing the works of the law, that is, you nevertheless want to be justified through your works since you claim people can't accuse you of doing anything wrong. Since you are deceiving yourself you must remain under the curse.

M: Oh, but I also believe that the LORD Christ has died for us.

Pn: You might now like to appeal to him to help you out of this predicament but he does not receive you.

M: Why would he reject me? Am I such a bad person?

Pn: No, you're too good. For he says: "I have come to heal the sick and not the healthy; I have come to save sinners and not the righteous.," but you are strong and feel nothing less than any infirmity in your soul. You're righteous. Even if you admit you are a sinner, you are in no way a poor, nor a needy, nor a lost sinner, but he has only come to seek the lost. You don't want your feet to be washed by him, for you think you don't need it. The mire with which you have muddied yourself in your walk isn't even worth mentioning, thus you have no part in him.

M: But that's why I've been going to the LORD's Supper, just to partake of him.

Pn: Dear Margareta, don't forget that the holy LORD's Supper is only instituted for sinners, for poor, repentant sinners, who acknowledge and feel their sins and hunger and thirst for God's grace. That is why it is said every time: Broken for your sins, – shed for your sins. Could those be paltry, insignificant sins that were the cause of the Son of God's body having to be broken, and his holy precious blood having to be shed? It's because you imagine your sins so small, that you think so little of God's grace. When you justify yourself you rob the LORD of his rightful place. Your self justification is your greatest sin. If you remain in it, you yourself are transforming the blessing of the LORD's Supper into a curse.

M: I think, Parson, I also want to have as beneficial a blessing as others receive.

Pn: Then you must also repent as much as any other sinner who wants forgiveness. Margareta, you don't believe everything I've been telling you, so at least receive a bit of good advice. Let God be the deciding judge between you and me, and say to him: Dear God, my Parson has said such and such, and always wants to make me into a greater sinner. So I pray you, dear Father, by your Word reveal to me if it is really so, if what he is saying is just. Search me and know my heart, test me and see my condition and see if I have been on an evil path and lead me to the eternal path! Amen. Pray this to God daily and especially in these next days before you go to the LORD's Supper. He will then certainly help you to learn what is right. Will you do that?

M: I can certainly do that.

Pn: Then go and do so, and God be with your spirit!

M: Farewell, Parson!

Third Discussion.

Kaspar: You must already know why I'm here.

Parson: Yes, obviously, Kaspar you were just here yesterday.

Kasp: Parson, I was not able to get any sleep at all last night.

Pn: Why Kaspar? Is anything wrong?

Kasp: Nothing at all physically, but I am just sick inside, I am so sick in my poor soul.

Pn: How so? Yesterday you were still hale and healthy and upright.

Kasp: That's just what has made me come back again. I just wanted to tell you that yesterday I lied to you when I told you I was getting along just fine with my mother. Then you said: That makes me glad for the sake of you and your mother, for it is written: The blessing of their father builds the house of his children but the curse of their mother destroys it again. Your mother is a widow and she no longer has anyone else but you; and you said that every tear that she must weep because of me would burn like a fire in my soul and God would also count them all. – I remember everything you told me and it's true, but it's not true that I've been getting along well with my mother.

Pn: I am glad, Kaspar, that you are being honest, for even yesterday I knew you weren't telling the truth.

Kasp: No, Parson, I have treated my mother badly. She can hardly say a word to me if she does not want to hear a crude response from me. She has to cook what I like to eat and when she doesn't I make a sour face all day long. And when the meat is set on the table I take it and carve it up and keep most of the best of it for myself. What I don't like I leave for my mother. And once when the cabbage seller had also come in, he must have thought he had come to a house where the whole ruined world had gone crazy, as I immediately pointed at the door and told him if he didn't make use of it immediately he'd find a bowl of cabbage flying at his head. My mother could do nothing but sigh and for a long time all she could manage were sighs. But last night, all at once, her sighs fell upon my heart and have become a heavy burden on my heart. Ever since. I have had no peace.

Pn: So what do you want to do now, Kaspar?

Kasp: Sure Parson, for this reason I have come here again that you might tell me what I must do to find peace.

Pn: Above all you must confess your sin to God and ask him to forgive you for Christ's sake.

Kasp: Parson, I have done that. Last night I had to constantly groan to God: O dear God, forgive me my sins, forgive me, that I have treated my poor mother so crudely! O dear LORD JESUS Christ, wash away all my transgressions and purify me of my sins. Receive even me. Let me be restored to goodness by just one tiny droplet of your blood, just one. I have groaned over and over again, just one! –

Pn: That's right, Kasp. But now you must also go and implore your mother.

Kasp: I have done that this morning. I wasn't able to eat anything. As she brought in my broth I took her hand and said: Mother forgive me for being so crude, I will change my ways. But I was not able to say anymore than that and she also could say nothing except: O Kaspar, God grant it!, but from me all shall be forgiven you. And each of us had tears running down our cheeks as we had our broth without saying a word to each other.

Pn: If only that is still how things stand.

Kasp: That's how it will be. God knows that I thoroughly intend, from now on, to take care of my mother, and I will do better, so much as I am able. O now, if only I knew for sure that God had pardoned my sins.

Pn: You have certainly confessed them, Kaspar, and it is written: "I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD. Then you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Sela." With that you have received your justification, taken your refuge in the only Refuge and Intercessor, and that cannot fail.

Kasp: O Parson, this matter with my mother is not the only thing. I have so many other sins. I am a good for nothing. I have transgressed every Commandment in thoughts, words and deeds.

Pn: The LORD Christ has become the reconciliation for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world, so also for yours, as many or as coarse as they may be.

Kasp: O, if only I could know that for sure!

Pn: Do you still know the Words about the Office of the Keys?

Kasp: Yes, I know them: "Our LORD, JESUS breathed on his disciples and said to them: Receive the Holy Ghost. Whosoever's sins you forgive, they are forgiven them, and whosoever's sins you retain, they are retained."

Pn: Now what does that mean?

Kasp: I believe when the called servants of Christ deal with us from his divine command, especially when they exclude manifest and impenitent sinners from the Christian congregation, –

Pn and Kasp: (together) – and again when they remit the sins of those who repent of their sins and want to do better, **that this is as valid and certain in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear LORD, dealt with us himself.**

Pn: Do you really believe what you have just said?

Kasp: Yes, Parson, I do believe it.

Pn: Now behold, I am also a called servant of Christ and I say to you at the command and in the Name of JESUS:

Your sins are forgiven you. Go, my son, and sin no more. And tomorrow I will declare to you publicly the Absolution at the confessional service, and when you hear it, receive it as if it applied to you alone, just as now, and be certain that it is valid in heaven also.

Kasp: I thank you, Parson, thank you. (He takes his hand, breaks out in tears and leaves)⁴⁵

What has this to do with unionism? Everything. The root of unionism is doctrinal indifference. The peculiar function of private absolution is the hearing the individual's faith and applying the gracious Word of God to that faith. In each of the vignettes Loehe offers, the sin of unworthily communing out of habit instead of faith; the sin of admitting one's sin in abstract without carefully examining one's self in fact before communing (this is not an adiaphoron but a Scriptural mandate); the sin of intransigence in sin rather than contrition are thus treated by the Pastor. This treatment is not simply forgiveness, though it is forgiveness, but it is restoration of the straying and wrong faith which could not be addressed in any other form. The parson uses the catechism that was learned and is being ignored to surface the faith problem that is giving rise to sin and this sin is specifically being targeted and healed with God's Word of Gospel. This use of doctrine is the routine way in which doctrine becomes significant to the individual and how he keeps from becoming indifferent to true and false doctrine by having his own false doctrine graciously addressed, forgiven and corrected as he grows into the fullness of Christ. This individual absolution and freeing from sin and error is the heart of individual absolution that cannot take place in the preaching the Gospel to a group, absolving a group of their sins or teaching a Bible study. For the sake of this individual absolution, Loehe is saying don't miss the opportunity the announcement affords to hear the faith of your people and use God's Word and right doctrine to heal the faith of your people. When this service is provided in God's grace, people will know the balm of the Gospel, become confident in their faith, and receive worthily the Lord's Supper. All Lutherans have vowed in their ordination also to conduct their ministry according to CA XXV, that we have not abandoned the custom (penance system) of examining and absolving people before they commune. That is to say, this practice is the church tradition's application of the appropriate Gospel antidote to doctrinal indifference, that is, the sinful root at the heart of unionism. Departing from the tradition severs the church from this tool (individual absolution being mandated) and allows the practice of admission to communion without examination, that is, irregardless of faith. This is the essence of unionistic communion (open Communion), and invites unionistic (doctrinal indifferent, therefore faith indifferent) faith to be expressed by that practice.

But what about those who relinquish CA Article XXV and practice open communion, that is, do not examine a person's faith before communing them? Walther responds, as open communion was being practiced in his day even amongst those who called themselves Lutheran. Here the practice of announcement, or private absolution, brings not only the salutary benefit of an opportunity for absolution, but also for curbing the sin of admitting people to communion to their judgement. What has this to do with unionism? Everything. For this practice is the custom of the church that curbs judgement for unworthy communicants and assures the church through her servant that they are taking precautions to protect others from incurring God's wrath through

⁴⁵Baseley, Joel R. ed. and translator. *Missouri Synod in Formation (1844-'47): Essays of the Founding Fathers* (Mark V Publications. Dearborn, Michigan. 2012) pp. 386 ff. From *DL* Vol. 3 as cited in the title.

unworthily communing. Removing this “tradition” opens an expressway for unionism to enter the church as the church exercises perfect indifference to the faith of those who commune, whether it be true or false. Omitting the practice and replacing it with nothing progresses a church by leaps and bounds on their way to becoming an Evangelical instead of a Lutheran Church as her practice expresses perfect indifference to faith and equates true and false faith through her don’t ask/don’t tell admission policies to communion. Father Walther shows no mercy or patience here for those who do so:

Something on the Custom of also Inviting Those who had not Done Penance to Take Part in the holy LORD’s Supper⁴⁶

“I would rather lose my own body and life than allow the body of the LORD to be given to anyone unworthily and would sooner shed my own blood than sanction his most holy blood be given to one who is unworthy.” Chrysostom (Hom. 83 in Matthew)

No few preachers in this country, so often as they set out to celebrate the holy LORD’s Supper have the habit of first turning to all who have gathered to invite all to partake, and this even includes those present who are members of other confessions. This is especially employed by today’s German Methodist preachers as a means to find entrance amongst the dispersed German Protestants living here. The latter have often had to do without the public preaching of the Word and receiving the holy LORD’s Supper for years. Now a Methodist preacher suddenly comes into their isolated area and he not only preaches to him but also doesn’t have any scruples at all about offering the LORD’s Supper to them, and to receive each one of them, no questions asked. He thereby very quickly wins the people over to himself. He uses the holy LORD’s Supper as his bait, that is, as an easy means of enticing souls into the net of his enthusiasm (*Schwaermeri*) and sectarianism. But there might even be many so-called “Lutheran” preachers following the same *Praxis* (practice)! We have, unfortunately!, had it brought to our attention that no few preachers who call themselves Lutheran (thinking that this would be truly evangelical), once they have prepared the holy table for the administration of the Sacrament now beckon all who can to come to this deposit of grace, even without having their faith and lives examined. Yes, it is to be feared that many do this out of impure motives, in order to be seen by all the different parties as truly being men who are “loving and big hearted” and to be praised as such. It is to be feared that many therefore account everyone worthy of the holy Sacrament and even openly give it to those who are godless, since they even want to be thought well of by the godless and do not want to bear the burden of the world’s scorn and hatred and don’t want to do anything at all to lose their lucrative pastorate. For it is obviously true: In the whole care of souls there is practically nothing that a faithful servant of the church sees as a greater need than to be conscientious when it comes to admission to the holy LORD’s Supper. When a rightly believing Lutheran preacher is given a new congregation, and he does not want to immediately allow any member of the same to the table of the LORD until he has spoken to each individual and has determined from each one’s own mouth that he knows what the holy LORD’s Supper is, that he acknowledges that he is a poor sinner, that he believes in his heart God’s Word, that he deeply longs for grace and the forgiveness of sins in Christ’s blood, that he also has an earnest intention to follow Christ in leading a holy life, unblemished by the world, and the like, in this he might immediately meet strong opposition that seldom then results in anything but an ensuing schism so that he often sees he might have not other option than to immediately hit the road as he’s being accused as if he had wanted to lord it over the congregation!

So then? Is it right for a preacher to rather suffer all those sorts of things, yes even to prefer to lose his office, than to have to allow everyone to the holy LORD’s Supper without examination? Is the liberality of many preachers in this country today in this regard really so worthy of blame? We

⁴⁶Walther, C.F.W. and Baseley, Joel R., translator. *Der Lutheraner* Vol. 4 #21

answer: Yes! But to be able to judge rightly about this, it is first necessary to bear in mind how this actually relates to the holy Supper.

This requires a totally different consideration than how we treat the preaching of God's Word. Namely, the Word is not only given to sustain a believer in his faith, but rather also to first awaken a sinner from his slumber of sin, to bring him to an awareness of his sins, to repentance and faith, and to convert him. Surely without the Word all this would be impossible. So obviously no one can or should be turned away from the preaching of the Word, for that would be called barring to him the only door of grace. But that is not the case with the holy LORD's Supper. One is not first brought to repentance and faith by that, but is only thereby strengthened in it. Through this means one does not receive grace for the first time or become a Christian, but rather the grace that should be received through the Word is thereby sealed and he is sustained, defended and strengthened in his Christianity. This food must not first awaken a person to life from God, but rather when he has already become spiritually alive he must be fed and refreshed. Therefore whoever would receive the holy LORD's Supper worthily and for his salvation must have previously come to repentance and faith. He must have already received grace and become a true Christian, must already be previously awakened to life from God and born again.⁴⁷ Therefore the holy LORD's Supper should only be received by one who has already become a child of God through the water of rebirth, that is, through holy Baptism, just as in the OT only those were permitted to receive the Passover lamb who had been received into the divine covenant of grace by circumcision. Receiving the holy LORD's Supper in and of itself does one no good as it much rather depends on how one receives it. It is not like a medicine that only needs to be ingested so that it works. It is much more like a treasure chest whose treasures are only able to be taken, grasped and held tightly by the hand of faith. Indeed, whoever has no faith also receives the actual and whole sacrament, namely, he does not receive mere bread and wine with his mouth, but rather really and truly, in, with, and under these elements the body and blood of JESUS Christ as a precious pledge of grace and forgiveness. But he gets absolutely nothing of the blessing for the salvation of his soul that lies therein. For what good does even a precious and valuable pledge of a man do, and how can it serve to assure a man of something, if he does not believe it pledges anything precious and valuable? – So whoever receives the holy LORD's Supper without the legitimate faith and, therefore, unworthily, will not only not partake of the grace laid therein, but rather he will find instead of grace – wrath, instead of blessing – a curse; he will, as St. Paul writes, “be guilty of the body and blood of the LORD. He eats and drinks judgement upon himself thereby, since he does not discern the body of the LORD.” So the sins are terrible that they commit and the destruction fearful that those heap upon themselves who eat the holy LORD's Supper unworthily. And those who say: “Isn't it great that all those people came up for communion,” reveal thereby the sad state of their knowledge of this holy sacrament.

The other thing characteristic of the holy LORD's Supper, and most important in this sacrament, is that it is integrally bound to the character, to the field banner, to the seal of doctrine. In whatever church there a person takes part in the holy LORD's Supper, he is confessing that Church and her doctrine. No more intimate fraternal fellowship exists than in the fellowship one receives in the holy LORD's Supper. “For,” says the holy Apostle, “as often as you eat of this bread and drink of this cup, you must proclaim the LORD's death ‘till he come,” 1 Cor. 11.26, and : “It is one loaf so we are one body, since we are all partakers of the one loaf,” 1 Cor. 10.17. So there is a great distinction between one's hearing a sermon once in a foreign churchly fellowship and his partaking in the celebration of the holy LORD's Supper. Sermons can be heard at times, perhaps to become acquainted with the doctrine of some party, without thereby taking part in false worship. On the other hand, Communion

⁴⁷Luther writes about his in his Church Postls: “As Christ had also acted as he sent preachers among all the people *en masse* and as also the apostles had later acted, so that all had heard it, both believers and unbelievers, so that whoever wanted it, wanted it, that's what we must also do. But the sacrament must not be cast so amongst the people *en masse* as the papists have done. Whenever I preach the Gospel I don't know whom it impacts. But here I must make sure that it is impacting the one who comes to the sacrament. There I must not be struck into doubt but rather be sure that the one whom I give the sacrament has grasped the Gospel and believes rightly, just as whenever I might baptize someone I must be sure the one who receives it should not doubt what he's receiving nor I have any doubts about the one being baptized there.” (On Easter: *On the Reception of the holy Sacrament*)

is an act of confession. If one communes in a foreign Church, by his action he is joining the same, is standing up as a witness to her doctrine and declaring that the members of the same are his brothers and sisters in faith.

Now having explained all that, how is the custom to be regarded of inviting to the celebration of the holy LORD's Supper everyone who is present without distinction and without allowing for their being examined? When those preachers who themselves do not believe that the body and blood of the Son of God are present in the holy LORD's Supper and are received by all who commune do this, preachers who regard the holy LORD's Supper as a mere memorial meal, as a mere ceremony, as do the Reformed, the Methodists and most of the Unionist - Evangelicals; this is all quite natural. But when those who want to be Lutheran preachers do that, and who are convinced of the truth of the Lutheran doctrine of the holy LORD's Supper, this is most irresponsible.

Such preachers first act against the command of God: "Do not become partakers in the sins of others." 1 Tim. 5.22. For whoever can impede sins and not only does not do so, but himself promotes it, he makes himself a partaker of their sin. Now if those preachers could just as well often hinder that frightful sin of unworthily receiving the holy LORD's Supper, but they rather promote those sins through their frivolous invitations so they even encourage them, oh, what great accountability will they bear for that someday! How terrified they will be someday when God will reckon to their own account all the guilt against the body and blood of Christ which those unrepentant and falsely believing people, admitted by them with no examination, have heaped upon themselves. Luther writes in his instructions for the church visitations: "No one should be admitted to the sacrament unless he is heard individually by his parson as to whether he is fit to go to the holy sacrament. For St. Paul says, 1 Cor. 11.27, that they are guilty of the body and blood of Christ who receive it unworthily. Now not only is the sacrament dishonored by those receiving it unworthily, but rather also by those who negligently give it to the unworthy."

To this we add that a preacher thereby sins especially severely since through this he makes himself an unfaithful, careless, unscrupulous care giver (*Seelsorger*) of souls. That Word of the LORD in the prophet Ezekiel 3.17,18 applies to every single preacher: "Son of Man, I have set you as a watchman over the house of Israel. You shall hear the Word from out of my mouth and be warned for my sake. When I tell the godless: You must die. And you do not remind him and don't tell him this, so that you defend the godless against his godless ways so he might live, then the godless will die for the sake of his sins, but I will require his blood from your hand." Further, the Word of the LORD spoken to Peter in Mt. 16.10 applies to each and every preacher: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Everything that you bind on earth shall also be bound in heaven. And everything that you will loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The apostolic Word applies to all preachers: "Be diligent to show yourself before God as a rightly fashioned and blameless laborer who rightly divides the Word of truth. And rebuke the unruly if God would grant them repentance to acknowledge the truth and be taken again from the devil's cords by which they are captive to his will." (2 Tim. 2. 15, 25, 26) It says of all rightly fashioned preachers: "They watch over souls as those who must give account for them." Heb. 13.17. Of all this that is obligatory for a preacher as a care taker of souls (*Seelsorger*), those who also allow everyone the holy LORD's Supper without examination do the exact opposite. He should announce to the godless: "You must die," but by allowing everyone to the table of grace he is saying to him, "You shall live." He should bind the unrepentant but he looses them. He should rebuke the unruly so they come to repentance, but he says they are righteous, so they only become more hardened. He should keep watch over souls, and he proves that he is a "silent dog," as Isaiah 56.10 says, "that won't bark, is lazy, lies down and wants to sleep." He should help souls out of sins and condemnation, but he strengthens them in their unrepentance, and only buries them deeper in their sins, God's wrath, death, hell and damnation. Oh most certainly, even if a preacher is, apart from this, most diligent, if he does not protect souls, as much as it depends on him, so they do not receive the sacrament unworthily, then this one thing is enough to make him reprehensible and bring upon him the heavy judgement of being a hireling, an unfaithful care taker of souls, as one who destroys souls. Therefore Luther writes in his incomparable *Admonition to the Parsons to Preach against Usury* from the year 1540: "If such usurers want to rail at you because you do not absolve them nor administer the sacrament to them nor bury them. . . then say: It is forbidden me, primarily by God, to regard any usurer as a Christian. . . So also why should I

put my soul on the line for you and to you, and condemn myself on account of your sin, for your being such a money grubber. . .It wouldn't even do you any good, and would damn me, if I would thus absolve you. For God and the emperor still do not accept this in their justice. Therefore repent and do the right thing. If not, you can just as well simply go to the devil without me and my absolution than that you should doubly go to the devil with my absolution and take me along with you, without making me guilty along with you. No, sir, you go ahead, I'll stay here. I am not a parson so that I can go along with everyone to the devil but rather to bring everyone with me to God."

But certainly a preacher must also bear in mind that he has been placed by God as a "Steward of the mysteries of God." 1 Cor. 4.1. But a steward cannot cause disorder or use what is entrusted him according to his whims without a severe accountability. He must much rather use them according to the instructions he's received for carrying out his office. But we preachers have only one such direction, and, indeed, a most applicable instruction for the legitimate administration of the holy sacrament in the holy Scripture. Clear words therein prescribe for us who is to be admitted and who is not. Christ says, among other things: "You shall not throw holy things to the dogs, and you shall not cast pearls before swine lest they trample the same with their feet and turn and rip you to pieces." Mt. 7.6. Further, Christ says: "If he will not hear the church then regard him as a heathen and a tax collector." Further, St. Paul writes: "If anyone among you claims to be a brother and is a whore monger, or greedy, or an idolater, or a blasphemer, or a drunkard or a thief; with such a one do not even eat. Expel from among you the wicked. 1 Cor. 5.11,13. The same apostle writes further: "And if anyone is not obedient to our word, note that person and have nothing to do with him." 2 Thess. 3.14. Finally, John writes in his second letter: "So if anyone approaches you and does not bring this doctrine do not receive him in your home and don't even greet him. For whoever greets him makes himself a partaker in his evil deeds." (v. 10,11; cf. 2 Thess. 3.6; Rom. 16.17; 1 Tim. 6.3-5, 2 Tim. 3.1-5; Tit. 3.10,11; 2 Cor. 6.14-18) According to that Christians should not consort with any manifest sinner, with any one who despises the Christian congregation, with anyone who will not let himself be chastened, or with any unbelievers or those with false faith, as if they were standing with them in a fraternal fellowship of faith. So then this gives every preacher a fitting instruction that gives him God's Word on the administration of the sacrament, for it is manifest according to God's Word that all those whom the Christians do not hold in fraternal fellowship in faith and whom they must exclude from amongst themselves should also not be allowed to receive the sacrament, by which the most intimate fraternal fellowship of faith is expressed and established. So what are those preachers doing who admit all without distinction? They prove themselves to be unfaithful, frivolous stewards over God's mysteries, they seize God in his office and promote themselves to be lords over his holy sacrament, when they are only his servants. Woe to them, if in time this does not occur to them, for ever and ever! A day will come when they will have to repent this in terror, that they have destroyed his goods and they have abused them for their own impure goals. Then the LORD will summon them before him and cry out to them: "What is this I've heard about you? Give an accounting of your stewardship, for you can no longer be my steward." Luke 16.

But some might now be saying, what should a preacher do in order to satisfy his conscience? On this I will now let our Luther speak here. Namely, this man writes on this in his paper: *A Christian Manner of Going to the LORD's Table* from the year 1523: "In this one must employ his manner, or follow the order that applies to Baptism, namely, that first he present himself to the bishop or parson, whoever they are, if he wants to receive the sacrament so that he might learn their names, and might know what kind of life they lead. Then, if they request it, he should not yet admit them until they have given an answer for their faith and especially the appropriate answers to the questions as to whether they understand what the sacrament is, what it gives and why it's needed, and for what use they employ it, namely, if they are able to say by heart the words of institution and their meaning, and show that they are going to the LORD's table for the sake of their sins, with a troubled conscience or a fear of death or plagued with other tribulations of the flesh, the world or the devil, so that they hunger and thirst to receive the Word of grace and salvation from the LORD himself through the office of the servant so they are comforted and strengthened; as Christ has given and instituted such things out of inexpressible love in the LORD's Supper with these Words: Take and eat, etc.

"But I would think it would be enough that one who desires the sacrament would be questioned and examined in this way once per year, yes he might have such good understanding that

he might only need to be questioned once in his whole life, or not ever be questioned at all. For by this order we want to guard against the worthy and the unworthy running together to the table of the LORD, as we had previously seen in the papacy, where people didn't want anything but only to receive the sacrament. But of faith, comfort and the right use and need for the sacrament they had neither spoken nor heeded, yet, they even had expended every effort to bury the Words of the sacrament, namely, the bread of life. Yes, in the height of thoughtlessness in this they tried to by pass them altogether so those who received the sacrament were doing the work and that for the sake of the work's own worthiness it would be good, and not that it preserved and strengthened faith through the wealth of Christ. But we want those who don't know how to answer about the matters mentioned above to, by all means, be excluded and kept away from the sacrament as those who are not wearing wedding garments.

"Then, when the parson or bishop sees they understand all this, he should also thereupon shift his attention to whether they prove their faith and knowledge by their life and their customs – for even Satan understands all these things and can also speak of them – that is, if he sees a whore monger, a divorced person, a drunk, a gambler, a usurer, a gossip or any others backsliding into some other public sin, those he must certainly exclude from the LORD's Supper, till he then prove with indisputable signs that he has changed and improved his life. But others who occasionally fall and return from their fall, saddened by the fact they have fallen, should not only not be denied the sacrament but they should be informed that it was instituted just for this purpose, that they be thereby refreshed and strengthened. For we all fail in many and various ways, James 3.2, and we rightfully bear each other's burdens, since one is burdensome to others, Gal. 6.2. But I am speaking here of blasphemers who sin unabashedly without shame and brag no less about how great is the Gospel.

"I still maintain on secret (private-) confession before Communion, as I have previously taught, that it is neither necessary nor should it be demanded, but is useful and in no way to be despised." (See *Luther's Works* Halle ed., X, 2764 – 67)

Besides what Luther declares here in private, we also find this in our public, confessional writings. For example it says in the 25th Article of the *Augsburg Confession*: "This custom is retained among us, that the sacrament is not to be given those who are not previously examined and absolved." Further, in the *Apology* in the 15th Article: "Among us the people use the holy sacrament every Sunday willingly, not by force, who are first examined if they've been instructed in Christian doctrine, if they know or are familiar with the Our Father, the Creed, the Ten Commandments. "

Unionism will always be the result of a brand of so-called Christianity that is not concerned about doctrine and which is satisfied with a Christianity that is glowing and superficial but which does not want to probe and explore deeply the eternal roots of faith in God's Word, nor the depths of error that Satan is clever to sneak in when he's not carefully being monitored in wariness. Proper Absolution and the use of the LORD's Supper belong to the sanctification of the Christian, that is, God's growing them into the fullness of Christ as the baptized die to sin and live again refreshed before God in newness of life. These are what Christians, who are true Christians, want as they know the length and the width and the depth of God's love in Christ. The Church, under God's sanctifying Word, wants this and gives it to her people.

Living in the last days, even back in the 19th century, Christians never forward to a future changing and innovation in the church. They looked (and looked) back and saw how the Church is on the slippery slope; that she is not what she used to be, and they try to restore her for the better by looking back to the apostolic model and the model of the Reformation, being careful to retain the deposit of doctrine given her, and holding on to what is good as they realize that due to her past discretions, she's lost much of what was better and is in danger of losing even more; in this context of unionism, that the attack on good church tradition was and is an attack on what is good and godly in the church and that the real target of these change agents is to dethrone the

central doctrine. That is why she cannot fight the loss of good tradition with laws (as in Grabauism that makes good tradition (ordination) into a sacrament and law, but with education and trust that the Word of God will lead God's people to want and desire that which is good and not lose the good already possessed (whether it be ordination in service of God's Call or private absolution in service to the absolution and individuals' faith). Violation of the doctrine of Christian freedom by making a law of things God has not is no better in the name of something good than doing so for the sake of something evil (Reformed or Catholic legalisms), in fact it is worse because it is more subtle. Christian freedom is a doctrine and cannot be violated in the name of some 'greater good.'

Unionism, doctrinal indifference, cannot be fought by outlawing it and its practices but by recognizing it's root by God's doctrine and guidance, recognizing our own sinful attraction to that root, and putting the indifference and then the error under the foot of the crucified One to be tread under his feet and forgiven. What God forgives he restores. What we withhold from his forgiveness (and correction) is what threatens our salvation, not because God will not forgive, but because we do not want it and refuse him. It proves we're unconverted and not his children. If we won't heed him its because we are listening to the other spiritual father who is at work in the sons of disobedience. But Christ must crush the head of the serpent and will do so until all things are put under his feet. Amen.