

WHY IS THERE NO CHURCH UNITY AMONG NORWEGIAN LUTHERANS IN AMERICA?

Ulrik Vilhelm Koren

[As printed in the Clergy Bulletin, V. 12:1, pp. 3-6; V. 12:2, pp. 19-24; V. 12:3, pp. 39-42; V. 12:4, pp. 49-52; V. 12:5, pp. 63-64. (Printed in Kirkentidende in 1905, and in Koren's Samlede Skrifter, pp. 454-498 - translation by C. U. Faye)]

Answer to Mr. Ulvestad and to many others.

Mr. M. Ulvestad has, in several periodicals in January of this year, written an article with the heading, "Church Union," and asks: "What separates Norwegian Lutherans in America?" He subscribes to what has often been said, that "most people do not know what is at issue in the conflict." He says that "there are some (among the uninitiated) who believe, that this is merely a conflict among the leaders, while the majority do not know what they are to believe." He says that "what is needed is a straight-forward explanation and comparison of the doctrinal differences that are said to exist." He says that he has diligently tried to find the difference between us, especially by reading our respective periodicals, but has found no essential difference. He "has come to the conclusion, that it is our Christianity, and not our doctrinal concepts, that has suffered the most." He says that "if this were the main issue about which there was disagreement, namely, the way to life in God and the way to salvation, then there would be no talk of uniting. One cannot compromise the Word of God. The way which God has prescribed seems, however, to be clear enough, if only we would follow it."

Mr. Ulvestad's article seems to me to be written in a seemly and serious vein, and he is right in that people who lately have come to this country from Norway have reason to see the matter as he does.

When Mr. Ulvestad says that "they ought to come before the public and say: 'The United Church teaches thus, the Synod thus, the Free Church thus, etc.,'" then I am of the opinion that I, as member of the Synod, may venture to say that the Synod has given as straightforward a presentation as it has been capable of, particularly as far as the last and longest doctrinal controversy is concerned. This presentation is found in "An Accounting" [*En Redegjørelse*] (*Grace for Grace*, p. 173). See also the article, "What the Norwegian Synod Has Willed" [*Hvad den Norske Synode har villet*].

There are two reasons why most people do not know what is the issue in the conflict. The one is that so many have not followed the controversies from the beginning, and it easily becomes impossible for most people to read the numerous contributions from the various sides. The other reason is that there are certain authors who have the peculiarity of blowing up a cloud of words out of which the only thing the reader gets hold of are some accusations which they then believe and appropriate, partly because many have a tendency to believe accusations, partly because they who make them have a name and prestige.

I

If the deplorable condition among Norwegian Lutherans in America is to be understood thoroughly by persons who have come to this country in later years, then it is my conviction that this can be attained in a historical way, and since the author of these lines has been in the service of the Church longer than anyone else, there could then be in this fact an invitation to me to try to recount what my experience has been in regard to the controversies.

Twenty-eight years ago I delivered a lecture to the pastors of the Norwegian Synod on "The Church Parties among Our People in America" ["De kirkelige Partier blant vort Folk i Amerika"]. This lecture was printed at the request of the Pastoral Conference. It begins with the words: "Since the church parties among our people are contemporary with the immigration, their root must be sought in the church conditions in Norway, of which ours are but a continuation under other outward circumstances." For this I adduced proof in the above-mentioned essay. The alignment in this country by parties began thus: The greater part of the immigrants attached themselves to the Norwegian pastors who were ordained in Norway and came to America to serve their countrymen and to establish church order among them, while a lesser part did not want to have anything to do with the "Norwegian Pastors."

This lesser part in the beginning permitted itself to be led by Elling Eielsen, a lay preacher already well known in Norway, who had come here some years before the first Norwegian pastor, W. Dietrichson. The latter had come here through the support of a churchly minded laymen in Christiania, a tanner, Sørensen, who had given \$1,000 to help his emigrated countrymen establish church order. Another churchly minded man, a young Dane by the name of C. L. Clausen, known also by many in Norway, worked together with Dietrichson. Clausen was ordained in this country by a German Lutheran pastor. In 1848 a third young man arrived, the Rev. H. A. Stub, who settled in Muskego. These three pastors, Dietrichson, Clausen and Stub, now sought to organize a church body and drafted a constitution. But, since both Dietrichson and Clausen held Grundtvig's views on the baptismal covenant as the living Word of God, the Constitution, of which Dietrichson made the draft (but which was not submitted to any meeting), naturally favored this view. Dietrichson soon tired of the work, and in 1850 the Rev. A. Preus arrived in Koshkonong to take his place. Among the documents left behind by Dietrichson, Preus found his draft of a Constitution. Now, although neither Preus nor Stub was a follower of Grundtvig, nevertheless they did not discover that error in paragraph two of the original draft, with the result that the Constitution was, for the time being, accepted and the church body formed.

In 1851 three new pastors came from Norway, H. A. Preus, Brandt, and G. Dietrichson. When these pastors met with those who were already here, and the Constitution was submitted, they noticed the Grundtvigian paragraph. This they would not accept; and in order that they now could proceed prudently, they dissolved the association (it could scarcely be called a body) which had already been formed, and in 1852, at a meeting in Muskego, they composed a new genuinely Lutheran paragraph on the Bible as the sole rule and norm, thus definitely vindicating the Lutheran principle of Scripture. In 1852 the Rev. J. A. Ottesen was added, and in February, 1853, a meeting of these pastors and a considerable number of laymen was held for the purpose of drawing up a regular synodical constitution, to be submitted for consideration to

congregations already organized. This was done, and, accordingly, the Norwegian Synod was founded in Rock Prairie in Wisconsin in October, 1853.¹

In the meantime, Elling Eielsen, during all these years, had diligently traveled around in the settlements, preaching and warning the people against the “Norwegian pastors in long robes.” A need for a constitution was, no doubt, felt also among many of Eielsen’s friends, but it was not in the personal interests of Eielsen to establish a real church order. He preferred to rule himself (Hatlestad’s *Hist. Medd.*, pp. 59-60). Among the men who attached themselves to Eielsen for a while was O. J. Hatlestad (who came to America in the fall, 1846). He became a pastor later on, and was for ten years president of the Norwegian Augustana Synod. In 1887, he issued a publication, *Historical Communications* [*Historiske Meddelelser*], in which he gives noteworthy information on the pioneer days of the church in this country.

The Rev. Hatlestad relates (p. 37ff.) that already in April, 1846, a meeting was held at Jefferson Prairie in order to draft a church constitution, and he appeals to the testimony of the Reverends Brohaugh and Eistensen, in their book *E. Eielsen’s Liv og Virksomhed*, that at this meeting “Eielsen dictated and O. Andrewson wrote.” The document that resulted in this manner became the basis for the so-called “old Constitution” [“gamle Konstitution”]. This was at Koshkonong “again accepted and signed by thirty-seven brethren in the faith” in October, 1850. It is extant in print from June, 1851. It was in force for the Eielsen body till 1875, when the name Hauge’s Synod was adopted, and some changes were made in the Constitution, which were approved at a meeting in Chicago in 1876.

That there in 1846 were “organized congregations” in the settlements among the people, that Eielsen served as pastor is but a loose assertion which lacks all foundation. In vain, indeed, may one search for documents in the oldest settlements, which can prove that congregations even “in a way” were organized at that time. The people who permitted themselves to be served by Eielsen, he called “*sine*,” “his own,” or “*de er med os, de*,” “these people are with us” (*Hist. Medd.*, p. 59).²

The above mentioned “old Constitution” contains remarkable things. In paragraph 1 it is said that the body is and shall ever continue to be “built on the Word of God in the Holy Scriptures in conjunction with the apostolic and Augsburg articles of faith, which, together with the Word are the rule for our church order and for our faith and confession” (*Hist. Medd.*, p. 38). In the well known Article 2 it is said: “According to the order and manner which the Holy Scriptures teach and convince us, that nothing common or unclean can enter into the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:27 and many other passages), so no one can be admitted as a member into our body, unless he has experienced a true conversion or is on the way of conversion” (*ibid.*). In Article 6 it is stated: “We will not have anything more to do with papal authority, as well as with the usual priestly vestments, since proof is not found in the New Testament that Jesus or His apostles have used or commanded it” (*ibid.*). With regard to the education of pastors for their vocation, Article 9 determines first that teachers and pastors are chosen by the congregations, and adds that “they, who are gifted with the talents of learning must acquire the

¹ I was, at that time, on the way to a call in Iowa, to which I was ordained in July of the same year, and I came to Wisconsin about a month after the founding of the Synod.

² See the Rev. Rasmussen’s letter to Norway, Mdstd. 1870, p. 250 at the bottom of the page.

necessary knowledge as far as circumstances permit it" (*ibid.*, p. 41ff.). The Rev. Hatlestad remarks, that "not in a word or syllable is anything mentioned about officials of the body, such as president, secretary, etc. There is no provision for annual meetings or other gatherings" (*ibid.*, p. 42).

A meeting of the "body" organized in 1846 was held in LaSalle Co., Ill., in Sept., 1848. The Rev. Hatlestad remarks that "it must, most likely, have been according to private agreement that Andrewson arranged for this meeting; for in the Constitution not a word is to be found as to either annual meetings or representatives of congregations" (*ibid.*, p. 43). This meeting, at which the Rev. Paul Anderson acted as chairman, became ominous, says the Rev. Hatlestad, who himself was present. In a lecture delivered at the annual meeting of the Augustana Synod in Rushford, Minn., in 1879, the Rev. Paul Anderson says, *inter alia*, that at this meeting

there was discussion also concerning many complaints against Elling Eielsen; and the upshot thereof was that the meeting declared that we could have no confidence in Eielsen until he cleared himself of the accusations by means of a Christian settlement with the proper persons concerned. But instead of conforming to this and endeavoring on the basis of the truth to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, Eph. 4:3, he withdrew and began from that time to work by himself. Here again is to be seen an error of our accusers, who accuse us of having separated ourselves from Elling Eielsen. The fact is that he separated himself from us, and that for the sole reason that he could not tolerate the least reprimand of his faults. (*ibid.*, p. 47; Rasmussen in *Kirketidende*, 1870, p. 243)

At this meeting it was unanimously resolved "to adopt the church rule and discipline of the Frankean Ev. Luth. Synod of New York and to unite ourselves with the same, though with the reservation that our childhood religious instruction is not to be taken from us, and that we will not be bound to any church body any further or longer than they walk in accord with the Word of God and teach the way of God correctly" (*ibid.*). From that time is dated the name "the Frankeans" for those who were separated from Eielsen's friends, a name against which, however, they have correctly protested. For, in spite of the unanimous resolution which has just been quoted, there was, according to information from the Rev. Hatlestad, only one pastor, Paul Anderson, who together with his congregation let himself be received into the Frankean Synod, and even these left it again in 1851 (*ibid.*). In this year the Northern Illinois Synod was founded. The Rev. Paul Anderson, O. Andrewson and their congregations, which before had had no connection with any church body joined this Synod (p. 61), and in addition to these, the Swedish pastors, Esbjørn, Carlson and several others. The Rev. P. A. Rasmussen says in a letter to *Luthersk Kirketidende* in Christiania:

From now on [that is, from that meeting in LaSalle Co.] E. Eielsen turned with far greater bitterness against these former brethren of his, than against the few Norwegian pastors who were here at that time; and by pointing out their aberrations, particularly as to Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and by writing to Olaus Nielsen in Fredrikshald and in his *Tidende* getting them designated as 'devils in human form,' as apostates, for whom one should not pray, etc., he succeeded in winning back again more and more of them and in frightening the newcomers from joining them.

This was before Clausen, Stub and A. Preus had made the start toward founding a Norwegian Synod (*Kirketidende* for 1870, p. 243).

Thus the Norwegian Lutherans were, then, already from the earliest time, divided into three hostile camps: “the Norwegian pastors,” the followers of Elling, and the Norwegian members of the Northern Illinois Synod who had separated from the followers of Elling (the so-called Frankeans), whom we later called the Norwegian Augustana Synod.³

One of the reasons which, for a long time, has had to do service in explaining why the original schism in the Norwegian church in this country came into being, is the circumstance that the two first pastors, W. Dietrichson and C. L. Clausen, were Grundtvigians. That this was the cause is not true. That is a later invention. How far the fear of Grundtvigianism was from being the cause is shown by Elling Eielsen’s Constitution, Article 1, which places, as norm, the Confession of the Church, alongside of the Word of God. Nevertheless this contention has had to do service later on, and that although the Norwegian Synod, at its very foundation, was grounded in opposition to Grundtvigianism. The Rev. Rasmussen, who at that time and long thereafter adhered to Eielsen, says in his letter to *Luth. Kirketidende* in Norway: “The Grundtvigian leaven in Article 2 [of the temporary Constitution of 1850] was not even noticed by the opponents of the Synod (at any rate I never heard anything about it) and for that reason was not the object for any attack whatsoever” (*Kirketidende*, 1870, p. 245). Rasmussen relates that Eielsen had confided to him that the real reason for the schism was that they (the Norwegian pastors) were unconverted people. Eielsen adduced as something impiously presumptuous and dreadful that the Rev. Clausen asked the communicants: “Do you believe that my forgiveness is God’s forgiveness?” “One can well be a friend of Eielsen,” says Rasmussen, “whether one is Grundtvigian or Methodist or Baptist, just so one is agreed with him in the great main point, namely, condemning ‘the Norwegian pastors’” (*ibid.*, p. 250).

The “Vexel-doctrine” was no doubt occasionally spoken of, and it was feared, since the old Haugeans in Norway had (and that correctly) come forward against “the recast Explanation” [“den omarbeidede Forklaring”]; but I—and, as far as I know, the other pastor—used only “Saxtorph’s Epitome” [“Saxtorphs Udtog”] of “Sandhed til Gudfrygtighed” [“Truth unto Piety”] in the instruction for confirmation, and in that there was no “Vexel-doctrine.”

How difficult it has been to find reasons for the schism may be seen, among much else, from the circumstance that, as one of the causes of the schism which took place in the forties and fifties, there was adduced, in the seventies, “the controversy over slavery, which was carried on in the sixties, long after the schism had occurred” (*Hist. Medd.*, p. 45).

I recollect well from my first years in this country (from 1853), how I was met with suspicion and ill-will by many, just because I was a Norwegian pastor. I was not and never had been a Grundtvigian, but I was met with suspicion by those who followed Eielsen and by the,

³ After considerable conflict, caused especially by the unionistic position in doctrinal matters of the American members of the Northern Illinois Synod, the Swedish and Norwegian pastors stepped out of this Synod and founded, at a meeting in Jefferson Prairie in Wisconsin in 1860, “the Scandinavian Evang.-Luth. Augustana Synod.” Since this Synod grew rapidly, it was decided after several years of brotherly negotiations, at the meeting in Andover, Illinois, in 1870, to have it divided into two independent synods, each with its officials, the Swedish Augustana Synod and the Norwegian-Danish Augustana Synod, which were to look upon each other as sister synods, send delegates to each other, etc. (*Hist. Medd.*, p. 62ff.).

then so-called, Frankeans, who already then had established themselves. I came to see how confused a part of them was, when I learned that one of their best beloved books was an extremely un-Lutheran and fanatical publication on "The Church" ["Kirken"] by the, in his time, well-known Olaus Nielsen in Fredrikshald, Norway.

II

However, the first original schism into three parties was not to suffice. In 1861 a conflict had broken out within the Norwegian Synod, occasioned by the unanimous declaration made, upon demand, by the pastors of the Synod at the Synod Convention in Rock Prairie in 1861, concerning their doctrine regarding slavery. This declaration read thus: "Although, according to the Word of God it is not in itself sin to have slaves, yet slavery is an evil and a punishment from God, and we condemn all the abuses and sins which are connected with it, just as we, when our call requires it and Christian charity and wisdom demand it, will work for its abolition."

The controversy began with the Rev. C. L. Clausen, at that time again pastor in St. Ansgar, Iowa, revoked his vote for the declaration and attacked it in the newspapers. The pastors, who all were opposed to slavery, as the declaration shows, and, besides, were for the Union and, with perhaps one exception, also were Republicans, could not depart from what it was easy to see was the teaching of the Word of God, and they did not yield either, however heartily they deplored this controversy especially under the circumstances of those times.

What the pastors at that time did not know and what many of them would scarcely either have known except they were informed of it through the investigations of the Rev. A. Bredesen, is that a similar church conflict had been carried on for a long time among just about all the Protestant church bodies here in the Northern states: among Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists and Episcopalians, and that all these bodies, through their representatives and conventions, had declared themselves in the same manner as the pastors of the Norwegian Synod. Although the pastors of those church bodies were for the Union and opposed to slavery, yet they stood just as firmly on the teaching of the Word of God as we did. Only the fanatical and relatively few Abolitionists demanded absolutely that slavery should be acknowledged as sin in and of itself, and, therefore, be forthwith abolished. How Abraham Lincoln again and again disavowed the accusation that he was an Abolitionist is historically well enough known. He demanded that the laws be obeyed also as regards slavery, but that bad laws be replaced in a lawful manner by good laws.⁴

Had our people known that we had just about all Protestant bodies in the Northern states with us, the controversy might, perhaps, have been averted.

The Theological Faculty in Christiania was requested to declare itself on the disputed question. It issued a declaration, but one worded so ambiguously that it made bad worse. Both parties could appeal to various parts of it. The Faculty later issued a declaration on what was actually the main point, namely, whether the slavery mentioned in the New Testament was a real slavery. There in the second declaration it is stated that those who will not acknowledge this have no right to appeal to the first declaration of the Faculty. The second declaration has

⁴ When Lincoln in 1863 issued the Emancipation Proclamation, it was as a military measure.

long since been made public. Nor was it known among our people during that controversy that the Norwegian Mission Society has had slave owners among the members of its congregations among the Christians of Madagascar, without demanding that they should set free their slaves or be excommunicated from the congregations if they did not do so, only that they treat them in a Christian way, according to the Word of God. The Superintendent of the Mission in Madagascar, Borchgrevink, has personally expressed himself to this effect to me while we were together at the synod convention in our Eastern District in 1900.

The controversy had this result that the Rev. C. L. Clausen and his congregations left the Synod, and a few other congregations were split.

In the meantime, this division in the Synod, although so insignificant numerically considered, came to have exceeding great importance, owing to the fact that it gave occasion for the foundation of a fourth body among the Norwegian Lutherans: the Norwegian-Danish Conference. At the founding of this body events took place in a strange way. It represented a maneuver in church politics, the like of which we have not experienced except in what has happened in some of our congregations in the controversy over Election.

The meeting in St. Ansgar was called together in accordance with an agreement, made in Andover, when the Norwegian Augustana Synod was constitutionally separated from the Swedes. The plan, as can be seen, was essentially arranged by C. L. Clausen, Prof. Weenaas, and the Rev. Müller-Eggen, together with some of their friends in the Augustana Synod (*Hist. Medd.*, pp. 77 & 276). To give the historical connection, Prof. Weenaas was called by the Norwegian members of the Augustana Synod, while they still were connected with the Swedish Augustana Synod, and he came to America in 1868 to become a teacher at the school of the Scandinavian Lutheran Augustana Synod, at that time in Paxton, Ill., later in Marshall, Wis.⁵

The meeting in St. Ansgar was essentially a meeting between the pastors Clausen and Gjeldaker on the one side and a number of pastors of the Augustana Synod on the other side. The congregations were not represented. It was hoped by means of the disturbances set in motion by the Rev. Clausen to bring about a connection with the presumed large dissatisfied party within the Norwegian Synod, and thus assure themselves of the desired future. Although the congregations of the Augustana Synod were not represented at the meeting and were not consulted, the majority of the pastors there present resolved that the Augustana Synod now was

⁵ Prof. Weenaas had been pastor in Loppen in the Tromsø Diocese in Norway when negotiations with him were started from pastors in the Augustana Synod. The Rev. Hatlestad relates (*Hist. Medd.*, p. 76) that "Weenaas demanded, and we agreed to pay him, a stipendium for a journey to Germany, traveling expenses for him and family from Loppen to Christiania and from there to New York and Paxton, and \$1000 annual salary and free house. Weenaas came to America in the summer of 1868, traveled about in the Norwegian congregations and was everywhere received with open arms, and he was shown much good will. Great expectations were connected with this man's activity among us." To what extent these expectations were realized is shown by the history of the Augustana Synod. The Rev. Paul Anderson has him in view when in 1879 at the convention of the Augustana Synod in Rushford, in the course of a survey of the earlier history of the Augustanians, he says: "But the wolf in sheep's clothing soon came and scattered the sheep. I need not now, however, talk about this, for the wrong suffered by our church body is too fresh in our recollections" (*Hist. Medd.*, p. 50). "The following winter he let us understand that he was not satisfied in Paxton, but that we Norwegians would have to see to getting our own institution of learning established. If not, he would either go back to Norway or accept a pastorate in America" (*Hist. Medd.*, p. 77). Thus, then, they separated from the Swedes and bought a school building in Marshall, Wis.

to be dissolved. It was asserted that the meeting in Andover (at which it was organized as an independent synod) was merely tentative, which, however, its president, who was present, denied, and that no doubt correctly.

Thus, then, the Norwegian Danish Conference was formed. It consisted of the pastors, who accepted the constitution that had been examined at the meeting. The congregations remained apart, but could send delegates to the meetings. The Rev. Clausen was elected President, and the Rev. Müller-Eggen Secretary. At a following meeting, the year after, it was realized that it would not do to have the body consisting of pastors alone, and it was then resolved that the congregations be permitted to take part. The Augustana Synod, however, continued nevertheless to live. The pastors and congregations, who would not put up with the arbitrary methods employed in the meeting at St. Ansgar, continued their work. In a meeting at Jefferson Prairie in October the same year the members of the Augustana Synod present declared "that the St. Ansgar-Resolution should be considered invalid and void" (*Hist. Medd.*, p. 220). "We were left," says the Rev. Hatlestad, "with the empty school building and a debt of \$4,000, which had been incurred together by those who seceded and by us" (*ibid.*, p. 78). The Augustana Synod, then, still continued to live and made progress. It acquired a new school in Beloit, Iowa, opposite Canton, S. D., and it had (according to a report of the Rev. Haltestad) ninety-one congregations (not pastorates) in 1887. He does not mention the number of pastors, but since he records by which pastor each congregation was served, it can be seen that the Augustana Synod at that time had thirty-three pastors.

It was essential for the new church body, the Norwegian-Danish Conference, first and foremost to strengthen itself by getting teachers from Norway to prepare its clergy. They had acquired a building – Augsburg Seminary – erected already in 1872, but had only Prof. Weenaas as teacher (apart from some temporary assistant teachers). After various unsuccessful attempts, Prof. Weenaas and the Rev. Falch Gjertsen were sent to Norway in 1873 to get a theological teacher, and they found such a one in the Candidate of Theology, Sven Oftedal, who accepted the call and entered upon his new office the same year. The Professors Oftedal and Weenaas now attempted, with a violent blow, to crush the Norwegian Synod, which, however, they did not succeed in doing. What they did was to issue the well known and infamous "Open Declaration" ["Aaben Erklaering"] (see *Kirketidende* for 1874, p. 102). In this we read among other things: "By the Norwegian Synod or Wisconsinism we understand an anti-Christian tendency and a dangerous organization which, sustained by a papistical principle, works toward dissolving Christianity into universalism and hierarchy. Sprung from the most catholicizing school of Grundtvigianism" etc.

Prof. Gisle Johnson in Christiania expressed in his *Luth. Kirketidende* his "deep regret that such a declaration could see the light of day," and he says that it is guilty not only of palpable exaggerations, but of downright untruth (*Kirketidende*, 1874, p. 392ff.). Another author in Norway writes: "With consternation I read...Messrs. Professors Oftedal and Weenaas' 'Open Declaration.' I could almost be tempted to felicitate the Norwegian Synod on having such opponents" (*ibid.*, p. 393ff.). The judgment of Norwegian laymen on it can be found in the volume for the same year, p. 499ff., sent in by the Rev. P. A. Rasmussen. In Prof. Gisle Johnson's *Luth. Kirketidende* for the 12th of Sept., 1874, we read:

This deplorable document has again powerfully contributed to arouse attention, within the Norwegian mother church, to what is happening among our brethren across the Atlantic. And, perhaps more than anything else of what for a considerable time has been seen and heard from over there, this has certainly shown itself to possess the faculty of reviving interest in and sympathy for that church body, which is treated in it in a downright revolting manner, the Norwegian synod....

While the 'Open Declaration' thus bodes everything but good for the future, it does (not?) serve either to throw any happy light over the present, over the churchly character of the body from whose leading men it has issued. Many had certainly expected that the Conference, or, at any rate, parts of this body, pastors, congregations or congregation members within the same, would have been possessed of so much of a sense of justice, of so much Christian conscientiousness, that they would have protested against their theological professors' bull of excommunication, solemnly disclaimed for themselves all part in the therein expressed assertions and expressly disavowed the two gentlemen as far as this point was concerned. Where there are found within the Conference such pastors or congregation members, lay or learned, as possessed that much Christian and churchly enlightenment that they could see and understand, and did see so much of the truth that they would have to disapprove of the endless exaggerations of this publication, its injustices and untruths, to hear protests or, at any rate, reservations against having silence taken as a sign of consent. But no! No such voice has been heard. Deep silence from all the congregations and pastors of the Conference has attended the behavior of the two professors. From this one may with full right draw the most serious conclusions as to the Christian and churchly character of the whole Conference....

It is with pain that we are compelled to express ourselves to this effect. We—and certainly many with us—believed for a while that also the Conference could have its legitimate place within the Norwegian congregations of America, yes, that it, at the side of the Synod could have its mission, its significant share in the work of the Church. However great sympathy had to be felt for the Synod and for its church battles, which were carried on with such competence and such unshakable loyalty to the Confessions, yet there was, mixed in with the sympathy, some concern that the zeal for the pure doctrine would degenerate into a lust for contention, which for every theological problem established a concept that was to be accepted as an article of faith, and that the enthusiasm for the age of the Reformation and for the classical period of the Lutheran Church would degenerate into an exclusive, petrified orthodoxy, barring all further development and progress. We will readily admit that such misgivings for a very essential part were owing to the fact that we here at home in the distant Motherland were not sufficiently well acquainted with American church conditions, which well could make necessary a high degree of clarity and firmness in the doctrinal concept and untiring attention to purity of doctrine even in more peripheral (subordinate) points. We will also readily admit that, in so far as there was lacking in us a full understanding of the zeal of the Synod for the pure doctrine, this was surely, for a large part, owing to that we here at home in our Norwegian State Church are entirely too much accustomed to taking it carelessly and loosely in this regard; we could, perhaps, indeed be in need of having communicated to us a part of that zealous fire which burns within the Synod. The fact is, however, that we were not seldom inclined to shake our heads when we, from afar, were witnesses of the eagerness with which the Synod—scarcely always dispassionately—carried on the doctrinal controversies. It was natural, then, that we were predisposed to have the thoughts about the other church body, the Conference, that it here could have significance and be of benefit as a counter weight, which could serve to limit and keep within the proper bounds the one-sidedness which we thought to find traces of in the Synod....

These fair dreams—other than thus we scarcely dare designate them—have been unmercifully disturbed for us by the 'Open Declaration.' That has shown us that the one of the two bodies, the Conference, has, for itself, altogether renounced the basic prerequisite necessary before there could be any question of church cooperation....

But while this unfortunate 'Open Declaration' surely has thus shown itself powerful in opening our eyes here at home to a most questionable side of the nature of the Conference, it will,

on the other hand, not fail in mightily influencing us to turn with increased sympathy and enlivened interest to that part which here has suffered such palpable injustice, namely, the Synod. 'The Declaration' has all at once thrown a light on the relation between these church bodies which has clarified the matter for us more than all that has heretofore been spoken or written about it. As far as the church public in Norway has perhaps, up to the present, been in some doubt about which of the two church bodies it should adhere to with the warmer sympathy, this doubt will assuredly now be removed for the greatest number concerned....

There must have been 'another spirit' in the one church body rather than in the other. For 'The Open Declaration' does say quite bluntly that the Conference can no more be reconciled with 'Wisconsinism than Christ and Belial, than fire and water.' How were the opposing differences to be expressed in a sharper and harsher way? To the extent that now it is not, nor ought or can be a matter of indifference to the Synod how it is looked upon and judged here at home in the Mother church, to that extent we do not believe that it will have to suffer on account of 'The Open Declaration'....

It has here at home, in the old country, a numerous host of warm friends, who, animated by true brotherly love, reach out unto it, in the Spirit, the hand of brotherhood.

I have dwelt so long upon this matter, because an excerpt of this kind from a periodical such as Prof. Gisle Johnson's *Luth. Kirketidende* throws a light on such expressions so frequently used by the Conference: "the Mother church" ["Moderkirken"], "catechetical instruction" ["Barnelaerdommen"], "Struggle for spiritual life" ["Kamp for aandeligt Liv"], etc. Prof. Weenaas later (1876) withdrew his signature to that "Declaration," but the manner in which this happened rather made bad worse (On this, see *Kirket.*, 1876, p. 298ff. and 381ff.). In the early days of the Conference Prof. Weenaas was, as has been said, the only theologically trained teacher. Those were the good days for young people desirous of becoming pastors in a hurry (On this, see Rev. P. A. Rasmussen's significant information in *Mdstd.* for 1873, p. 34ff.). At the annual meeting of the Conference in 1874 it was announced that the theological candidates Georg Sverdrup and S. A. Gunnensen also had declared themselves willing to become professors at Augsburg Seminary (*Annual Report [Aarsberetn]*, 1874, p. 62).

The doctrinal controversy of most essential import carried on by the Synod with the Conference (an inheritance from the controversy with the Norwegian Augustana Synod) was the controversy regarding Absolution. For one wishing to see a sample of how this controversy was carried on, I will refer to *Kirkel. Maanedst.* for 1873, p. 290ff. One of the weapons most commonly used by members of the Conference was to prove at great length what we had never denied, and with great earnestness to deny what we had never asserted, so that the readers would have to draw the conclusion that we denied the former and asserted the latter.

III

There were, accordingly, now (in 1870) four parties among the Norwegian Lutherans here in this country. A small fifth party arose when Elling Eielsen and some few of his adherents would not follow the other pastors and congregations who in 1875 assumed the name Hauge's Synod and corrected some of the errors from which Eielsen's old constitution suffered. The few dissatisfied ones established a separate little church body under the name, "The Evangelical Lutheran Church." This little church body still exists.

Hauge's Synod does not seem to have been particularly eager to engage in the various attempts to bring into being an agreement, which the other church bodies have toiled with. It

has been busy by itself, perhaps a little less bitter against the Norwegian Synod than the others. They did, however, work against the Synod, and even pastors of the Hauge's Synod, in the places of which I have knowledge, have not omitted to proselytize within the congregations of the Synod, and have without investigation accepted members from them, when they had become dissatisfied with something or other in the Synod congregation and did not get what they wanted. While, Eielsen, as before said, was rather afraid that the pastors would acquire too much knowledge, Hauge's Synod, on the other hand, has exerted itself seriously to get its future pastors properly trained. Their school for pastors is in Red Wing, Minn.

It was quieter from 1870 also in the surviving part of the Norwegian Augustana Synod. It had enough to do in overcoming the results of the blow inflicted upon it at the meeting in St. Ansgar.

In the Conference it was all the more lively. I wrote about it in 1877 in the above mentioned lecture, "The Church Parties among Our People in America," *inter alia* as follows:

What is to be the basic character of the Conference it is not yet easy to say. For the time being it has scarcely any, unless hostility against the Norwegian Synod is accounted such. The church political expectations to which it owes its existence and upon which it was built from the beginning have not been realized. Its two founders seem to have left it in disgust, and he who in the beginning most industriously wrote its advertisements has laid down his pen.

The church body is composed of many different elements, and it is therefore no wonder that it furnishes a desirable field for experimentation for such emancipated men as they who from Minneapolis have taken over its leadership, and from whom the church body seems to tolerate anything whatsoever, even if it conflicts, considerable with what many of its pastors and congregations have before confessed and perhaps still confess. The Conference counts among its congregations the most various elements: partly old Haugian-minded Augustana congregations,⁶ partly portions of old Synod congregations as well as some entire ones. The greatest number is, as far as I have been able to ascertain, small, newly formed congregations with a liberal tendency with regard to both doctrine and life. This tolerant liberality, however, does not extend to the Norwegian Synod; for the bond of union in the Conference is hostility toward the Norwegian Synod.

The leaders of the new church body had insight enough to see that their future, to a great extent, would depend upon their being in another and better relationship with the Church in Norway; it was therefore necessary to acquire for themselves, if possible, the advantage which the Norwegian Synod had had in this respect. Those who had followed the development here in this country thus got to see something strange to behold. A church body, whose most essential element was congregations, which had come into being in hostility toward the Church in Norway, and which formerly had subsisted on this hostility, now inscribed with great assurance upon its banner: 'The true daughter of the Mother Church.' Ground had to be won in Norway....An entirely new element, which probably is of the kind that it must either dominate or disappear, has come into the Conference through the three new professors at the institution of learning in Minneapolis. Their manner of proceeding is well known, as is that above mentioned attempt to crush the Norwegian Synod with one blow.

The three professors, arrivals from Norway, took the reins into their hands and asked little about what the others, who had long been in America, had to say. Even Prof. Weenaas was passed by and not long after left both the Conference and America to become a pastor in

⁶ About half of the congregations, which before had united themselves with the Augustana Synod, followed their pastors into the Conference, and a couple of congregations were split (*Hist. Medd.*, p. 220).

Norway.⁷ Inner peace in the Conference did not last long. Little by little two schools of thought were formed within its pastorate, “the old” and “the new school.” This did not, perhaps, come to light so much outwardly, but the grew more and more, until finally it was apparent that they could not endure each other, so that they now (as will be pointed out later) belong to different church bodies. One thing Hauge’s Synod, the Augustana Synod and the Conference had in common, and that was the hatred of the Norwegian Synod and their contention against it.

In the meantime the Norwegian Synod had grown large. A strong unity prevailed among its pastors and congregations, a unity which became the object of taunting from the opponents, who called it “spiritual straight-jacket.” The Synod had acquired a considerable number of pastors from Norway, and it had acquired an even larger number trained in this country. It had from the first realized that no matter how desirous it was of having pastors from Norway, it would, nevertheless, be unreasonable to hope that we could get pastors sufficient for the great need from the University of Christiania. The Synod at that time did not have the necessary strength nor the means to conduct a regular school for training pastors. In 1857, after careful investigations, it established a connection with the Missouri Synod, which was founded ten years earlier, and which had schools for training pastors in St. Louis and Fort Wayne. The conditions were that our Synod, in return for appointing and supporting a professor at the Missouri Synod school in St. Louis, was to have the opportunity of having its students admitted there.

This was the beginning of the Norwegian Synod’s connection with the Missourians, through which so much blessing has flowed to us, but also so many attacks and so much mocking. The two men who in 1857 were sent to Fort Wayne (where the Missouri Synod then was assembled in session) were the Rev. J. A. Ottesen and the author of these lines. Much has been said about the effect which our connection with the Missourians has had upon the Norwegian Synod. It is also true that this effect has been of incalculable importance—only not in the manner that a great many people who know neither the Missourians nor us have conceived it to be. We have not learned anything new from them, i. e., any new doctrine or any doctrine other than that which we had with us from the University of Christiania.

What we found in them, and what in those unforgettable days in Fort Wayne moved my soul to its depths, was that here was found a great assembly of pastors and laymen, a multitude which was “of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32), full of burning enthusiasm for the divine truth in the Holy Scriptures, full of the deepest love for the Kingdom of God and for each other, willing to make the greatest sacrifices for the cause of the Kingdom of God, not selfishly seeking their own, but content with the poorest circumstances, ready for the most tireless work, unutterably happy in their Christian faith, for they were certain of the forgiveness of their sins for Jesus’ sake—and for all this also willing to suffer ignominy and derision, which indeed fell abundantly to their lot. They stood also at that time still in the glow of the “first love” [Rev. 2:4].

I said that we learned nothing new from them, and after I came home I wrote that also to Prof. Cråmer, whose guest I had been. “We learned nothing new from you,” I wrote, “but what we had already learned in Norway, theoretically—the two great Lutheran fundamental

⁷ Afterwards he came back again to America and was for two years teacher at the theological seminary of Hauge’s Synod at Red Wing, but returned then anew to Norway and again became pastor there.

principles – this we saw here for the first time plainly and victoriously appear alive throughout the whole church body.” We saw it manifest itself at once with deep earnestness and childlike joy, plainly, without any pretentious ado, but as a power which, owing to the free church conditions here, asserted itself in a manner which could not be found in state church, without an entire overturning of the prevailing order of things. We saw the glory of the Lutheran Confession, already well-known to us by word, actually carried out as we had never seen it before.

IV

I have said above that the Norwegian Synod has much to thank the Missourians for. In the front rank of these things I will place the earnest, basically Christian and basically Lutheran character which, during the studying in St. Louis, was instilled in the Synod’s future pastors in the many years during which, to a large extent, it recruited its pastorate from that institution. This influence has been continued with loyalty and capability by the present theological professors of the Synod, who have all studied in St. Louis, and who, God be praised, harmoniously work together in the same spirit.

The Synod has been criticized as having learned from the Missourians to put all stress upon doctrine and to neglect Christian life. In other words: the Missourians and the Norwegian Synod have been accused of orthodoxism. They themselves have rejected this accusation. That the danger lies near, both these church bodies have always acknowledged and confessed. Orthodoxy signifies “pure doctrine.” Orthodoxism may be translated “pure doctrinairism.” This last consists of making pure doctrine the end, although it is only to be the means to the proper end. The end is to be the true, real, living faith. For that is the life in God. As one believes, so he lives.

If, however, by that complaint it is intended to accuse the Synod of considering as highest and most important the possession of the Word of God in its purity, then, I think, it will acknowledge this. It will not rest satisfied with phrases and mouthings about catechism instruction. The divine truth is the source of a genuine Christian life, and the source must, of course, first and foremost be kept pure, if what is to flow from it is to be as it should be. If, on the other hand, it is intended to intimate that the congregations of the Synod have had great infirmities, and have been very imperfect in Christian life, then this is true. The fact is that many and various things from other sources than the Word of God will flow (and have flowed) into the stream of life, which make it impure, and there is, therefore, always danger. When, then, such people as do not strive to live according to the Word of God nevertheless boast of having “the pure doctrine,” the danger and the scandal are so much the greater. The leaders of the Synod have been aware of this and have earnestly contended that they who “have the Word of God in its truth and purity” also “lead holy lives in accordance with it.” They have constantly, again and again, reminded their hearers that he who lives an ungodly life, and who lives for the world alone, has no true faith, even if he considers himself ever so orthodox.

Relative to these matters I can refer to the annual reports from the presidents of the Synod and the published transactions of our Synod meetings and pastoral conferences. Thus, for instance, in 1878, in 1888, and many other places. I might also venture to refer to my own papers at these meetings. If the Synod passed by or did not attach serious weight to the

insistence of the Word of God upon conversion and upon a holy life, then it would not have "the pure doctrine," at any rate it would have only a part of it, which then would be of no avail.

That we in the Synod should have done better, and would have done better if we ourselves had been better, that is all too true. My observations during the many years have not, however, made me believe that, as far as this was concerned, it was any better in other Norwegian church bodies, so this, then, cannot be cited as reason for there being no church unity among the Norwegian Lutherans in America. Certain sins may be more predominant in one church body, others in another.

No, the reason for the lack of unity is, as shown above, historically to be sought in the different religious schools of thought which were brought along as an inheritance from Norway, and which here manifested themselves in the formation of parties. These again occasioned various doctrinal controversies, which were carried on between the various parties in order to justify their existence. The formation of parties indicated that a great part of our people had not realized that parties are one of the fruits of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). Had our people conscientiously realized this, then they would not have set up first one, and then the other party, but would have adhered to the continuation of the Norwegian Church here in this country.

Partly before the founding of the Conference in 1870, and partly thereafter, various doctrinal controversies were carried on between the different church bodies on the one side and the Synod on the other, in particular concerning Sunday, concerning lay preaching, concerning the Gospel, Justification and Absolution (these last three were really only one controversy under different names). In these controversies the Synod was always the party attacked. The attempts that were made by means of negotiations in free conferences to attain unity were not successful. It is my conviction that the Synod in these controversies has strictly adhered to what the Lutheran Church has taught in its Confessions (the *Book of Concord*). Perusal of the Synod's publications will establish this.

The opponents of the Synod were not even ashamed to assert that the Synod pastors had abolished or would abolish the Third Commandment, that they taught that all who hear the Gospel are saved, that one can be justified without faith, that he who has gotten absolution has the forgiveness of his sins, and other things of this nature.⁸ One was accustomed to such in those times; for, when the purpose was to frighten people away from the Synod, such weapons were used without further ado. That a doctrine concerning slavery which they never had held was attributed to the pastors of the Synod, and that they were made the friends of slavery, and other such things, has been pointed out above.

How one of the spokesmen of the Conference, Prof. Oftedal, depicts the pastors of the Norwegian Synod, can be seen in *Skandinaven* for the 30th of March, 1875, where he says:

I knew that the Norwegian pastors in America, worm-eaten by Latinism, washed out by monarchism, and frozen stiff by orthodoxism, impelled by hunger for an official position and morbidly thinking of home, had been swallowed by Missouri and were in the act of imposing the

⁸ See, for instance, *Kirketid.*, 1874, p. 69 and other places.

bonds of slavery and papistical darkness upon a people whom the Lord had chosen to be the champions of Christianity and freedom. (*Kirket.*, 1875, p. 270)

I have said above, that in the Conference, little by little, two parties were formed which went under the name of the "old school" and of the "new school," and that the rift between these two parties steadily widened. One of the Conference's own pastors, the Rev. J. A. Bergh, has given an account of "The Controversy in the Conference" [*"Striden i Konferencen"*] in a pamphlet, printed in 1884 with the title: "The Old and the New School" [*"Den gamle og den nye Retning"*]. To the "old school" belonged those who from the first had founded the church body and a number of pastors who had come into it later, chiefly, perhaps, such as had grown up here in this country.⁹ To the "new school" belonged the professors that had come later from Norway and their disciples, who soon had become a numerous host. The Rev. Bergh himself belonged to the "old school" and, at the end of his publication, he gives a truly remarkable survey of the peculiarities of the "new school." The controversy between them was bitter.

In the Synod there had been, during all this time, a happy unity. By this it is neither said nor implied that there might not be both here and there certain persons who for some reason or other, most likely personal, could be dissatisfied. In so large a church body this would have to be expected. In one case there could be one to whom it seemed that he had not received the honor due to him; in another case there might be some who had not been elected members of committees at Synod meetings; another person, again, might have been sharply overruled during a debate; in other cases there could have been some who wished to have the financial matters arranged otherwise than was done; then there might be complaints about entirely too costly building projects, and the like. Especially this last probably was, at times, the occasion of serious disharmony. All such indeed were heard of also in the Synod from time to time, but parties were not formed, and there was unity and good understanding right from the foundation of the Synod in 1853 till the end of the seventies. (The comparatively few who left the Synod on account of the controversy over slavery have been noticed above).

The first serious discordant note was heard in the unhappy relation between the two theological professors, O. Asperheim and F. A. Schmidt, which broke out into the open during a meeting of pastors in Milwaukee in February, 1878. The fact is that Prof. Asperheim had found sundry things to complain about in the Missouri Synod, and Prof. Schmidt could not stand this. He feared, he said, "that a false tendency would arise with Norwegian dogmatics, Norwegian pastoral theology, etc., this everlasting harping upon Norwegian nauseated him." The relation between the German professor Schmidt and the Norwegian professor Asperheim soon became intolerable, and Prof. A. resigned.

A year later Prof. Schmidt was himself a bitter enemy of the Missourians and proceeded violently first against the Missouri Synod and later against the Norwegian Synod. Thus the controversy concerning Election by grace was thrown into the Synod. This resulted in the formation of a new party, namely the United Church (through union of two of the former

⁹ The late President Hoyme belonged to the "old school" in the Conference. At one of its meetings he had once confessed that he had been "brought up in fanaticism." We were together in Red Wing in a meeting of delegates from the various bodies to prepare a free conference. I had given a presentation of the Scripture principle as it is maintained by the Norwegian Synod. President Hoyme said after the meeting: "I have been brought up in hatred of the Norwegian Synod. Now, for the first time, I understand what the Nor. Synod has stood for."

parties with Prof. Schmidt's adherents, who left the Synod). For a while there were thus only three parties among the Norwegian Lutherans, but, after the passing of some years, there were again four, since the now so-called Free Church separated itself from the United Church. Concerning this we hope there will be more in the following.

V

When Prof. Schmidt, without warning, threw the controversy concerning election by grace first into the Missouri Synod and then into the Norwegian Synod, most of the pastors of the Synod were not prepared for it.

In the Missouri Synod the matter was soon settled, for, against some few votes, it voted to adhere to the Old Lutheran doctrine. In the Norwegian Synod things went otherwise, where the conflict was carried on in seven or eight years, from 1880 to 1887.

In their "Accounting" to the congregations the pastors of the Synod have said, and that correctly, that the doctrine concerning election by grace is not a chief article in the Christian faith, and that one can be a true Christian even if he does not know anything about this doctrine or has not apprehended it. Also Luther has said that in his Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. The claim was made that a new doctrine had come into being in Missouri. This frightened many. How untrue this was has been demonstrated by Professors Frich and Stub, by President Halvorsen, the Rev. J. A. Thorsen and other pastors, and, besides, by several laymen. The Norwegian pastors had this doctrine with them from Norway. It was taught at the University and, in the main points, just as in the Missouri Synod. As proof for this I will make the following observations:

Dr. Guericke's *Kirkehistorie*, translated by U. Sverdrup, 1842, was used at the University at the time we older pastors studied there. In this there is taught briefly, with regard to the 2nd and 11th Articles in the Formula of Concord (concerning Conversion and Election) essentially the same as the Norwegian Synod has taught (see, for instance, *2den del*, p. 291). The Rev. Halvorsen and J. A. Thorsen have demonstrated in *Nødtounget Forsvar*, pp. 79 and 125, that the doctrine of the Missourians and of the Norwegian Synod was current in the publications commonly used in Norway. References, in the same trend, to Johan Arndt, Chr. Scriver, and several of the old Lutherans, have several times been sent in to *Kirketidende* by various laymen. Prof. Stub, in *Nødtounget Forsvar* (p. 79), has demonstrated that exactly the same is taught in Sweden by Prof. (Bishop) v. Scheele.

Long before this conflict broke out, the late President H. A. Preus, in a review of Dr. Masius's book on the difference between the Lutheran and Reformed Church (with regard to the 2nd Chapter, 7th Question, on Election), had recommended adhering to the Old Lutheran form of doctrine (see *Kirketidende*, 1875, p. 237).¹⁰

¹⁰ When at Columbus, Ohio, in 1879, before the conflict broke out among us, I was present and took part in a colloquium concerning the certainty in faith as to salvation, Dr. Walther said to me, when we went from the meeting: "You are, then, clear in this matter." "How do you know that?" I asked. "I know it," he answered, "from this that you use your own proofs." For we older Norwegian pastors had not learned this doctrine from the Missourians. My manuscript note books taken from the dictation of Prof. G. Johnson, when I was a student, show that. That the pastors of the Norwegian Synod, during the conflict, received much valuable information and development from the Missourians has often been gladly acknowledged.

The conflict began with Prof. Schmidt's and the Rev. Muus's attack on the doctrine concerning the Christian's certainty, in faith, as to salvation and as to election by grace. These questions later yielded place to the doctrine concerning Conversion and the teaching appertaining thereto, which form the basis for the doctrine concerning which the conflict began.

This is not the place to go closer into the conflict or the doctrine. Little by little there developed a disagreement as to several of the most important questions of faith, such questions as there formerly in the Synod had been a complete agreement about, and the conflict ended after the Synod meeting in Stoughton, Wis., in 1887, with the eventual withdrawal of a considerable number of pastors, together with their congregations, from the Synod.¹¹

The anti-Missourian pastors, who had withdrawn from the Synod, got into touch with other Norwegian parties, and, after various preparatory meetings, the United Church was founded in 1890. It consisted of the Conference, the Anti-Missourian Brotherhood and the Norwegian Augustana Synod.

Unity in this church body did not last long. The bond of union was opposition against the Norwegian Synod. This opposition was powerful enough to cause a lapse in memory of the mutual doctrinal controversies which formerly had separated the parties. Thus the United Church itself became the proof that the attacks of which the Synod had been the object during the conflict concerning "Sunday," "Slavery," "Absolution," etc., had not been the real reason for the opposition against it. For none of the former Synod pastors which now are in the United Church have, as far as I know, declared that they on these points now teach otherwise than they did when they were in the Synod.

In the meantime, there came into the new church body another disagreement instead, and, after a very bitter conflict during several years, the church body was again split in two, namely the United Church and the Free Church. The essential part of the Free Church were the men of the so-called "new school" in the Conference, with Professors Oftedal and Sverdrup and the Rev. Gjertsen as leaders. It was founded in 1897.¹²

There were, then, thus again four parties among Norwegian Lutherans in America (in addition to the little handful of Elling Eielsen's adherents).

Several efforts have been made toward the goal of attaining a better understanding among the church bodies and a reconciliation among them, but these efforts have not brought happy results. The most significant attempt was a colloquium between the theological faculties of the United Church and the Synod and the presidents of both church bodies. It was decided

¹¹ As a single example of the means by which the congregations were influenced, I can adduce a declaration by a number of congregation members in a congregation in Minnesota: "We undersigned testify herewith that Rev. — [here is mentioned the pastor's name] has said that the Missourians teach, that they who are elected unto salvation must and will be saved, no matter how they live [...haas dem lever]" (See *Kirket.*, 1888, p. 248). Remarkable information could be given concerning the manner in which large congregations were voted out of the Synod.

¹² As an example of how Free Church pastors already from the beginning "freely and without embarrassment" strove to intrude themselves into other, preferably Synod, congregations can be looked up in an account in *Kirketidende* for 1897, p. 462.

that this colloquium should be continued. But this was foiled by Dr. Schmidt publishing a distorted account of the negotiations. He also published some theses, of which President Hoyme was the author, but which he had requested should not be made public. Dr. Schmidt declared that these theses contained a compromise "for concealing a great cleavage between truth and error," and that they "evidently enough incline to the so-called Missourian doctrine."

The Church Council of the Synod declared on that occasion that since there had, during the 8-year doctrinal conflict, been so many proofs of Dr. Schmidt's unresponsibility, and that, since he through his own report of the colloquium shows himself to be unchanged, then "we consider him to be an essential hindrance not only for unity, but also for understanding between the church bodies."

The Joint Synod in Minneapolis in 1902 resolved therefore "to recommend to the United Church that it appoint a man in Dr. Schmidt's place for a continued colloquium." Since, on the part of Dr. Schmidt, proofs were demanded for the complaint made against him, the Church Council of the Synod accordingly, after a careful examination together with the Theological Faculty at Luther Seminary, submitted a presentation of the matter: "Features of Dr. Schmidt's Conduct" ["Traek of Prof. Schmidt's Faerd"]. This contained a careful specification of things upon which the Church Council had based its declaration. All the proofs could not be included, lest the presentation should be too long.

The United Church chose a committee to investigate the submitted proofs. This committee arrived at the result that the proofs presented by the Church Council of the Synod were not valid, and published a rejoinder entitled "The Church Council Has Spoken Ill" ["*Kirkeraadet Hart Alt Ilde*"].

The result of it all is that such a method of proceeding as the men of the Synod find unreliable and entirely unjustifiable, that is by the leading men in the United Church found to be good enough and justifiable.

But when the trusted men of the two church bodies have a so basically different manner of regarding such questions as what it is to speak the truth and what it is to speak untruth, or what is a reliable presentation and what is an unreliable presentation, then it stands to reason that all further negotiation concerning the teaching of the Word of God cannot be of any use.

In order now to give Mr. Ulvestad and many others an opportunity to see which doctrines the various church bodies are disagreed on, I propose in a final article briefly to point out the most important ones, so that the readers can judge whether these are things of indifference, concerning which there should be no conflict, and whether they are matters which are, or are not, clearly and evidently taught in the Word of God.

VI

When I now, finally, after this historical presentation, am to answer the question under consideration as far as it concerns the present time, then the answer is easy and obvious with regard to the relation of the Norwegian Synod to Hauge's Synod and to the so-called "Free Church."

The Norwegian Synod has not, properly speaking, carried on any public correspondence of major significance with Hauge's Synod. Hauge's Synod is, as shown above, an heir of the party which Elling Eielsen formed against the "Norwegian pastors in the long robes" and in opposition to the continuation of the Norwegian Church, which was organized in this country by the establishing of the Norwegian Synod. Hauge's Synod has, in the course of time, corrected a great many of the faults which from the first prevailed in Eielsen's party. The congregations of the Norwegian Synod were, at that time, looked upon by them as "the great mass," from which they, who would be the children of God, had to separate themselves, if they would be true Christians. Whether Hauge's Synod now judges in the same manner, I do not know, but I scarcely believe it does. It has, as earlier remarked, worked mostly by itself and has not allowed itself to be moved into being along in the efforts for union, which, in the course of time, occasioned the various free conferences which now and then have been held. It has not lost much by this. Where a Hauge's congregation exists alongside of a Synod congregation, the party strife between them may be violent enough, and in the admitting of former members of the Synod congregation, the Hauge's congregation has, according to my experience, been less scrupulous than the Synod, which demands that valid reasons be given for such a step.¹³ It would hurt neither the Norwegian Synod nor Hauge's Synod, if they, excluding church political plans, could learn to know each other better.

As far as the Free Church is concerned, it pains me to have to say that I do not envisage any prospect for a better understanding. The Free Church is heir of "the new school" in the Conference. This had, as shown earlier, the fixed goal of combating the Norwegian Synod and of annihilating it. Subsequently it entered the United Church. When the men of the new school did not get to retain power there, then they, after a very offensive conflict, went out of the United Church and founded the Free Church. None of the Norwegian Lutheran bodies can, as far as I understand, wish to unite itself with the Free Church or admit it into fellowship. The Free Church itself certainly does not desire it either. Its chief teachers' conceptions of the Church, of the Office of the Ministry, of Regeneration, and such like (see *Kirket.*, 1875 and the Rev. Bergh's quoted publication) remind one but little of "the instruction for confirmation - and they who would seriously follow the instruction for confirmation become rather the object of mockery; as an example, I will here just adduce how the Synod has been mocked because it, in accord with Luther's explanation of the First Petition in the Lord's Prayer, has considered it necessary, first and foremost, to strive after that the Word of God may be taught in its truth and purity. According to that kind of free church principles which formerly has been advocated among the leaders of the Free Church, a pastor has to preach what his congregation desires to hear. In other words: he must preach "as the ears itch" (II Tim. 4:3). If he will not do that, then he can go his own way. He is not to have any authority as the messenger of God or as the minister of the Word of God through the call of the congregation (cf. the Rev. J. A. Bergh's cited publication, p. 63ff.). Furthermore: "When the congregations carry out what the annual meeting resolves, then that is the true liberty," says *Folkebladet* according to the Rev. Bergh's account in the cited publication, p. 58.

When, then, it is finally asked: Why is there not unity between the Synod and the United Church, there could be those who would hold that it was doubtful whether I, who myself have

¹³ I cannot definitely say whether all the pastors of the Synod have acted according to the rules that have been set up with regard to this.

taken not a small part in the conflict, could present this as impartially and reliably as it should be done. I am, therefore, happy that I am so fortunate in this case as to be able to let the opposing part speak.

There have, as a matter of fact, been set forth by the spokesmen of the United Church some definite and understandable reasons, which give answer to the question. These are, to be sure, twenty years old, but the matter stands today entirely as it stood then.

A meeting was held in 1885 in Red Wing, Minnesota, at which the men who now are the spokesmen of the United Church formed the following resolution concerning the doctrine which the pastors of the Synod had presented in their so-called "Accounting": "'Accounting' contains false and soul corrupting doctrine, for instance, in III, points 15 and 21 (the antitheses). The doctrine that a person's conversion and salvation at the time when he is worked upon by the grace of God do not, in any sense, depend upon man is false and soul corrupting."

To elucidate what consequently, according to this, separates the two bodies, I will transcribe the two mentioned points in the "Accounting."¹⁴ It reads, then, in III, 15 (the doctrine of the Synod's pastors):

- a. (Thesis) "The cause of election of grace is alone the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ, and there is in us no cause for the sake of which God has elected us unto eternal life."
- b. (Antithesis or thesis of rejection) "We reject the synergistic doctrine that God in electing a man has been 'determined by' or has 'taken into consideration' or 'has been guided by' man's conduct. For a man's good conduct denotes something which man 'does or omits doing,' or a work of the law; and when one refers to election unto salvation and the attainment of salvation, we confess that 'our best works are of no value whatever to that end.' On the other hand, when one refers to damnation, then we confess that a man's evil conduct is the cause of it."

Since the purpose of these articles is merely to indicate why there is no church unity between the parties, I considerate it not be the place here to go more closely into the doctrine itself. It is, moreover, briefly and clearly presented in the Thesis and the Antithesis. I will just call the attention of the reader to this that also the United Church accepts the Thesis (a). It could not well forbear doing so, for it is the public confession of the Lutheran Church in the *Formula of Concord, Epitome*, XI, 20, p. 334 in the Lisbon edition (*Concordia Triglotta, Formula of Concord*, XI, 20, pp. 836-37).

The Synod's teachers have not been able to understand how anyone can honestly accept this Thesis without also accepting the Antithesis. In particular, I will refer to Professor Stub's and Ylvisaker's declaration there anent in *Kirketidende* for 1885, where also they declare that

¹⁴ It is true that there is an "for instance" in that declaration from Red Wing, which is an indication that there could be more points. But, for the one part, one can, in advance, be certain that those concerned have cited what was most important for them, and then, for the other part, it is certain that if there was agreement in these points, then agreement in the rest would follow of itself. The judgment pronounced by those who were assembled in Red Wing was that they who had signed "Redegjørelsen" ought to be deposed from their offices.

“One can only then reject the Antithesis when one rejects the Thesis itself and consequently denies that the cause of election by grace is alone the mercy of God and the most holy merit of Christ” (See the quoted place, p. 741).

In order to understand the situation it should be noted that the same persons who have declared the Synod’s above cited Antithesis as being “false and soul corrupting doctrine,” for which the pastors of the Synod should be deposed, they have themselves accepted and without objection expressed their adherence to, and in their “Confession” [“Bekjendelse”] subscribed to, the following doctrine of the celebrated Lutheran theologian, J. Gerhard (see *Bekjendelse, A, c.*): “With audible voice we confess that we teach that God has not found anything good in the man who was to be elected to eternal life, that He has taken into consideration neither good works nor the use of free will, yea, what is more, not even faith itself so that He either moved by these or on account of these has elected any men. But we say that it is wholly and solely the merit of Christ, whose worthiness God has taken into consideration, at that He of pure grace has formed the resolution of election (or has made the decree of election).¹⁵

The men of the Norwegian Synod have not been able to perceive what real difference in doctrine there might be between this Gerhard’s Thesis, which the spokesmen of the United Church have accepted, and “Redegjørelsen’s” III, 15, which they have declared to be false and soul corrupting. My well considered conviction is that there is no difference.

The other point in “Redegjørelsen” which the spokesmen of the United Church have rejected is III, 21 (the Antithesis). This point reads as follows:

- a. (Thesis) “According to Scripture it belongs to the essence of grace to be free; for if grace is not free, i. e., undeserved by any kind of merit whatsoever in the one who is favored with it ‘then grace is no more grace’ (Rom. 11:6), and a man cannot then trust in the grace of God alone.”
- b. (Antithesis of thesis of rejection) “We reject the synergistic doctrine that the election in Christ has not taken place in accordance with a free purpose of grace in God, and that ‘salvation in a certain sense does not depend on God alone.’”

The United Church has, then, through its spokesmen declared this last Antithesis to be false and soul corrupting doctrine. The Synod’s pastors, who have accepted it, declare that it is a straightforward Catechism truth¹⁶ and that it has the support of the Word of God,¹⁷ the Lutheran Confession¹⁸ and our fathers in doctrine.¹⁹

¹⁵ If anyone wishes to see a fuller treatment of these questions, I will refer to my little publication: *Mødet i Red Wing, Minn.*, 2det Oplag, 1887 (*The Meeting in Red Wing*, 2nd edition, 1887).

¹⁶ In our Catechism the First Commandment is explained to the effect that we should fear, love and trust in God above all things. (Translator’s note: The Norwegian text reads: “...og forlade os paa ham alene.” This may be translated literally: “...and trust ourselves on Him alone.”)

¹⁷ For instance in Eph. 2:8,9: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast.” Phil. 1:6: “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

¹⁸ For instance in the *Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration*, XI, 34, where the Lutheran Confession says that “God in His counsel, before the time of the world, decided and ordained that He Himself, by the power of His Holy Ghost,

The Norwegian Synod confesses that we are to trust in God alone, because our salvation rests in the hand of God and depends upon Him alone. The Synod teaches that if our salvation “in a certain sense does not depend upon God alone,” then, in a certain sense, we cannot either “trust in God alone.” If our salvation in part depends upon us ourselves, then we must also in a corresponding part trust in ourselves (in our conduct).

I shall append a formulation of the object of the conflict (between the Synod and the United Church) from my above mentioned little publication on “The Meeting in Red Wing”:

The issue in the conflict is not how man ought to conduct himself. About that both parties teach the same. Nor is the issue in the conflict whether there is an order and method of saving souls, to which God has bound salvation. About that both parties teach the same. Nor is the issue in the conflict as to whether it is necessary for salvation that a man comes into the order of the saving of a soul and continues in it unto the end. About that also both parties teach the same. Nor is the issue in the conflict as to whether a man of his own strength can do and perform all that pertains to conversion. Both parties teach that a man cannot do this. Nor is the issue in the conflict as to whether God in the Word gives and offers the power that is necessary for conversion, and that this power always accompanies the Word. About that also both parties teach the same. Nor is the issue in the conflict as to whether a man can withstand the grace of God and thus hinder his salvation. About that also both parties teach the same.

If anyone will say that the issue in the controversy is any one of the here mentioned things, then he does not tell the truth, and if he has said it, then he has told an untruth, whether he himself has known it or not. He could, at any rate, have known it. I have said this so elaborately, in order to hinder, if possible, the use of the method of proving elaborately what we have never denied or of denying elaborately what we have never maintained, in order to get people, by this means, to believe that we denied the former and maintained the latter. The Synod has all too much been the object of that kind of dishonest polemics.

That which has been and still is the issue in the controversy may be formulated thus: “Has man’s conduct been cooperating or had anything to do with the decision with God in election or conversion?”²⁰ (All are agreed that man’s conduct can be hindering).

The teachers of the Synod say NO to this question, for the Lutheran Confession says: “God in His counsel, before the time of the world, decided and ordained that He Himself, by

would produce and work in us, through the Word, everything that pertains to our conversion” (*Conc. Trigl., Thor. Decl.*, XI, 43, p. 1077).

¹⁹ For instance, J. Gerhard, who says: “Therefore Scripture ascribes man’s election completely and wholly to God; for upon no other principle depends this, the greatest work of divine grace, than upon God and His eternal resolve, which is founded in Christ and determined by a certain order of means; – but the same Scripture puts the cause of damnation in men themselves” (J. Gerh., L. VII, c. X, 188).

²⁰ I omit the words which the opposite party likes to have along, namely: “when it is under the influence of the Spirit of God,” partly because they are obvious and, therefore, superfluous, but especially because they can be a “trick” by which the thought in the less conversant person is led away from what they would put forward, concerning man’s cooperation. (In other words: It is possible that they insert this (about the “influence of the Holy Spirit”) in order to mislead the reader, who might, by this trick, not realize that he is being deceived into passing over the essential error, which thus is being covered up, namely, the error of human cooperation. – C. U. F.)

the power of His Holy Ghost, would produce and work in us, through the Word, everything that pertains to our conversion" (*Con. Triglotta, Thor. Decl.*, XI, 43, p. 1077).

In this one point depend all the other individual parts, concerning which, at various times and in various manners, there has been conflict between men of the United Church and the Norwegian Synod.

For, if the Gospel is not free and is not of grace alone—if conditions are set up which man himself is to fulfill—if thus salvation more or less is to be determined by man's conduct, then man must, more or less, trust in himself, but then all is wavering, and then the Lutheran doctrine is no more. Then, as a matter of fact, the chief doctrine of the Lutheran Church is no more, namely that man is justified by grace, through faith alone, without the works of the Law. Then is no more also the Christians' certainty in faith as to their salvation, which the New Testament teaches us and which we confess in so many of our church hymns. Then we are again "in bondage under the elements of the world" against which St. Paul warns the Galatians (Gal. 4:3). No wonder, then, that the Lutheran Confession says: "And this, experienced consciences can easily understand and would not, for a thousand worlds, have our salvation depend upon ourselves" —"*auf uns stünde*" (*Conc. Trigl.*, *Apology*, Art. IV (II): 84, p. 144,145; German text, Müller, p. 102).

The issue in the conflict has been the things which we in the Third Article confess as the work of the Holy Ghost. Here the teachers of the Norwegian Synod will not mix in the work (conduct) of men, but they believe that all, from beginning to end, is the work of God the Holy Ghost, just as the work of God the Father is everything in the First Article, and of God the Son is everything which belongs to the Second Article.

But—this will certainly be said by many—is there, really, such great difference in faith among people in the United Church and in the Synod? To this I must, for my part, answer: No, I do not believe it. The spiritual trend had, indeed, become not a little different between the more pietistically colored parties and the Synod, but, nevertheless, they had essentially the same text books for doctrinal instruction and the same hymns, and the hate against the Synod, of which President Hoyme spoke, was more party hate than one based on doctrinal difference. Also at the establishing of the new party it was, for a great deal, fanatical party leaders who were active. I have personal experience of how some few leaders have succeeded in bringing about schisms or withdrawals from membership where this, if calm deliberations had taken place, would never have happened. We in the Synod know well that we have a great many warm friends in several of the large congregations, which, in a manner I here will not discuss, were withdrawn from the Synod. We have not striven to get such congregations split, no matter how painful it has been to know that they, against their wishes, were in a party hostile to us. Besides, they could also there be effective as a salt. For, in accord with many testimonies, it is my conviction that a great many also of them who willingly left us nevertheless did not follow their leaders into their errors, which they did not see through, and which it is likely they scarcely understand to this day.²¹ At any rate I have no doubt that a very great part of the members of

²¹ They ought, nevertheless, to know that they bear responsibility for how the men that are teachers in their church body have brought the conflict into the church and have kept it going.

the United Church and perhaps a part of its pastors believe as the Synod does in the above mentioned Catechism questions.

But all this conflict and these schisms have brought upon us bitter sorrow. Families have been divided. Friends have become alienated from each other. They who had laid the foundation for the congregation and built its church have been turned away from it. Faithful teachers have been forsaken. There have been fanatical opponents blind to that Word of God that parties are one of the fruits of the flesh. Deep wounds have been inflicted upon the body of Christ, and great confusion brought about among them who before had rejoiced themselves in the house of God with each other.

It is not the Norwegian Synod which has started this sinful and inexcusable conflict. He who started it desired to punish the Missourians. He did not succeed in that. They are as united now, as before. Then there was hope as to the Wisconsin Synod. They also made short work of it and agreed with Missouri. Then it was the German Minnesota Synod. It was said that it was as good as unanimously against Missouri. As a matter of fact it was almost nearly unanimously with Missouri. As good as all, then, of the western German Lutherans (Ohio and Iowa excepted) held with Missouri. The issue then became the Norwegians. They were to go against Missouri, even if everything went to ruin.

I have, in the preceding, demonstrated that the church controversy from the first was opposition against the Norwegian pastors, who had come over from Norway to continue the work of the Norwegian Church among emigrated Norwegians. I have demonstrated how this opposition has propagated itself by means of new parties right up to the last: the United Church and the Free Church. An involuntary testimony has been given the Synod, from the first, that it has been and is the legitimate continuation of the Mother Church under free church conditions.

While the parties among our people have brought upon us in the Synod great sorrows by their judgments, yet they have also served us as stimulus for self-examination. Were we ourselves as we should be? Did we not lack much of the true zeal for furthering true piety, living faith, love for the Word of God and zeal in sanctification? I hope that there has constantly been evidence within the Synod that its ministry has not been blind to its own shortcomings and those of its congregations.

But this fruit of the parties does not justify them. Both they who have brought discord into being and they who have suffered under it are in duty bound to strive to heal the wounds. But how? The method of proceeding proposed by Mr. Ulvestad is of no use. Committees of that kind have been tried and shown themselves fruitless. I have no proposal to make. If I know the Synod, than I know that it in this matter is bound in the simple truth of the Word of God, and I know no teacher in it who will swerve a hairsbreadth from the confessed old truth.

KOREN : VITA

“Born Dec. 22, 1826, at Bergen, Norway, he was graduated from that city’s cathedral school in 1844, and from Christiania University as a candidate of theology in 1852. He taught for a year at Nissen’s Latin School but soon became interested in America. Accordingly, in 1853, he was married to Else Elizabeth Hysing, was ordained, and emigrated to America, where he took up his abode at Washington Prairie, near Decorah, Iowa. Here he lived until his death in 1910.

He was secretary of the Norwegian Synod, vice-president and president of the Iowa District of the Norwegian Synod, and from 1894 to 1910 president of the Norwegian Synod. For years he was the chief champion of the Synod's position and has been called the ablest statesman of the church up to the time of his death in 1910" (*Norwegian American Lutheranism up to 1872*, p. 128).