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## Communications.

For the Lutheran Visitor.  
General Synod--A Defence.

We propose a few articles upon the general subject which forms the caption to this paper. None can deny that an apology (using the word in its proper sense) is needed, seeing that we are thrown in times of divisions and ecclesiastical strife. There is such a fault as that of being too forward to defend the principles or organization with which we stand connected. This may have its source in mere selfishness, or fondness for party controversy. And there are also those who trouble themselves little about the opinion entertained of them by others, thinking it a show of weakness, or an implication of their own want of firmness and confidence in their position to thus set about a defence of it. Such a view most likely has its real ground in indifference to what is consistent, if not indeed in open disregard of enlightened convictions of truth and duty. Truth is consistent, eminent, and no man who truly has a high regard for it can rest satisfied in any relation where his conduct or position conflicts with what he professes and conscientiously holds. Such would be a standing inconsistency, alike exposing the man to the suspicion of others, as well as to self reproach. But to be plain. To a Lutheran minister who honestly accepts what is distinctive to Lutheranism, this matter of a profession and conduct agreeing therewith is a most important one: the truth as held by the church he has pledged himself to defend. He conscientiously accepts the confessional utterances of the church. In the exercise of his judgment and liberty he is led to embrace that system of truth embodied in the *Augustana* as throughout Scriptural. The vows of the Lord and of His church are upon him to hold, defend, and teach accordingly. *He loves the truth*, thus apprehended and sincerely held, will control his life public and private. He can not do that, either openly or secretly, which would be a denial in word or work of the confession which he has made. His obligations to his ordination vows are paramount to any other, and he would be alike false to his conscience and false to those holy relations which he sustains to God and his church, to occupy a position inconsistent with these. Connection with any ecclesiastical organization or Synod that denies the faith he holds would be a compromise of the truth, a standing inconsistency of which he could not be guilty.

These considerations will exert a controlling influence upon every earnest Lutheran minister. The Lutheran church is rent by divisions. In the past score of years this tendency to separation and independency has manifested itself to an alarming extent. Some of these divisions are largely influenced by mere party spirit, though standing on a solid doctrinal basis. Others possess but a medium of Lutheranism. Others still have nothing save the name, and with no more of charity than those whom they so loudly condemn. None of us can cast the first stone, though some are as intent upon throwing them as if that were their special vocation. But our object is not to attack any of these, much less to show that we are better than all others. What we wish to make of these divisions now is this point: That a Lutheran minister can not, in this rent condition of the church, connect himself with any of these organizations bearing the name *Lutheran* without an honest consideration of their doctrinal differences. It has upon him the vows of a Lutheran minister, and has taken them in sincerity of heart and honesty of purpose, he can not but investigate the grounds of each in order to determine for himself this question: Will my connection with this or that Synod be a compromise of the truth which I hold? His conclusion concerning this should determine the forming of his synodical relations. All may not attach the same importance to these considerations, but those who desire to be consistent because truth is consistent will do ponder them.

It may be *apropos* to this discussion, and in place here to consider the question of a union of Lutheran Synods. Who that loves the church of Christ does not grieve over her divisions, and pray that they might be healed? He who has no concern for this or is not willing to give up

mere synodical names, erase mere geographical boundaries and forget historical prestige, has little of the christian spirit. But should the union of our Synods be a controlling consideration? Ought we to labor for this end pre-eminently? Should this be in the foreground of our activity? Very far from it. Union, affected at the sacrifice of truth, is nothing worth; nay, more, it is positively pernicious, and in the end can not but be attended with a greater loss than gain. No union should be thought of save on this basis: *the confession as the churchly embodiment of the truths of God's word.* We can not go back of this and regard as non-fundamental whatever is distinctive to the Lutheran confession, and thereby seek for a basis for union in what all receive in common. This would be to say that the Lutheran church has no system of doctrine, nothing distinctive; and would prove indeed that she never had a right to separate existence. Such union would be merely external, both in its nature and effects, and violative of the spirit of genuine Protestantism. It would be more like the union of Romanism. For some wise end the Head of the church permits these divisions of his body. Though they have their cause in human imperfection and perversity, and often start from the most wicked motives, yet they are permitted by God, who will overrule them for his greater glory. And through the agency of this rent body of Christ the gracious designs of God are being carried forward. "The kingdom of heaven cometh," notwithstanding these apparent hindrances, and cometh through them as the organ. But when this kingdom stands forth in its perfected glory then we all shall be one even as he is one. But even now the church is moving towards this glorious unity. That revealed truth, through which cometh salvation, is continually accomplishing this end. We can not see it. How millennial order and harmony can come out of this apparent confusion and ecclesiastical strife, we can not now understand, but such is the will and purpose of God, and it shall be accomplished. These Synodical organizations are no more than instrumentalities employed by the church for establishing the kingdom of heaven on earth. They have and will change. And with them will go individual names, and forms of government and geographical boundaries, and all shall be one. But the truth will abide forever the same. But the time is not yet, and until then our duty is to bear faithful testimony to the truth, and not to waste our time in fruitless efforts at union. He labors most certainly in the cause of unity who is most faithful in defence of truth, and his work will abide longest. In the light of these facts how many labor foolishly, and spend their misguided zeal in fruitless endeavors!

These are general principles which we will now proceed to use.

In making this defence of the General Synod, (we, of course, write only for ourselves, and are a *self-constituted defender*.) we wish to be clearly understood by all who read us. We are in the General Synod *from choice*, though originally thrown here providentially. The controversies through which the Lutheran church of this country has passed imposed upon us the duty of investigating for ourselves the questions so much agitated. This cost us no little disquiet of mind. We would gladly have turned from them, but could not. The result has been a settled conviction that the Lutheran Church holds the pure truth of God's word, as contained in her distinctive confession--the *Augustana*. Here then what is clearly taught in that confession, or can plainly be inferred from it, can not consistently be required of any one in order to his full Lutheran orthodoxy. This criterion is a good one, and the General Synod tried by it is sustained. From this position then it follows:

*I. That we defend the General Synod because we regard it more Lutheran than others.* We claim, that tried by its confession, it is *Lutheran*--unequivocally so. There may be those among us who do not heartily accept of this doctrinal basis, but these do not claim that their views are sustained by it. If pressed they would dissent from the doctrinal statements contained in the constitution of Synod. Under this the most rigid Missourians might preach the most distinctively Lutheran views, touching baptism, the person of

Christ and the Lord's Supper, with out any conflict with our doctrinal basis. Others might desire a modified wording of our acceptance of the Augsburg Confession, making it more full and explicit. But concerning the question: Does the General Synod receive honestly that confession, there can be but one answer, and this affirmative. This is the mark by which we claim recognition from those we account brethren; and let them beware how they withhold such recognition, lest they by their conduct show themselves less worthy of the name they bear than those whom they accuse. That the General Synod does not carry its views so far in the domain of mere usage as others, we acknowledge. But is not usage to be left to circumstances and individual liberty and conscience, regulated by the word of God? The truth faithfully preached will finally eradicate error, if there be such in mere practice, much more effectually than ecclesiastical legislation. Usage bears much the same relation to doctrine as works to faith. There may be genuine faith without a full complement of good works, and there may be honest acceptance of doctrine combined with no little erroneous practice. A member of the church is not excommunicated because he does not perfectly live up to his profession, neither should a Synod be treated as an Lutheran which in some of its parts has faulty practices. The illustration is good and sustains our position. Nor are we now disposed to find fault with those who can conform in usage to their doctrinal views. But to elevate practice to an equality with faith, to make that a test of orthodoxy is in principle an error to which we can not for a moment assent. It is a fundamental transgression, more pernicious and far-reaching in its evil consequences than many imagine, aye, more, it is *un-Lutheran* to a greater degree than any matter of mere practice can well be.

*From our position it follows:*

*II. That we defend the General Synod not because it is a union with larger bodies we would lose our influence. There are those who so conclude. Nor do we say that it might not be a consequent. But it is unworthy of ourselves, and injustice to our brethren, to put this forward as a reason for our continued separate Synodical existence. If nothing weightier than this were in the way we could not justify our position. There are weighty reasons in favor of union when this can be accomplished, and to oppose to such union, arguments so much less conclusive, is very bad logic. That we may labor with the best heart and confidence in that field where Providence and inclination have thrown us, we wish a sure foundation on which to stand. This we have.*

## Selections.

**The Mercies of God.**

Of all things we think the mercies of our God towards us are the better calculated to create in us great love for him, and to cease astonish us!

Just think of God's great mercy that he would even tear the Son of his bosom away, and send him to this sin stained world to suffer torture, and to die the terrible death of the cross!

Did he not show his mercy marvelously when he had mercy on fallen man? Suppose he had cursed man with a terrible curse--that he had doomed him to an inheritance of Hell? Horrible as this may seem to you, dear reader, was it not probable that a pure, holy and undefiled Being as God is, would have had no mercy at all on a being who had so offended him? Here we see his great mercy, and here we should think of our sad condition as lost sheep, who most need the mercy of God.

Behold the heathen! They are yet mostly in the dark, "having eyes they see not, and ears they hear not." While these poor benighted people are undone, we live in a gospel land--a land of christianity. And now does it not become us to look at the manifold mercies of God, and with bended knee seek him before he will cease to have mercy forever?

God's mercy will not last always toward you if you harden your hearts and refuse him love.

This is an advanced age. When we go forth over the world how are we struck with the many advancements of science. And in the advance of science God's kingdom has not stood still. We see now heathen lands christianized that a few years

ago contained savages. If God has granted the heathen an entrance into "the pearly gates," will he not also grant you an entrance now, poor despising sinner? Behold your Father has mercy yet; flee to him ere that mercy fades away.

What ought the mercy of God toward us to teach us? Ought we not to awake and have "mercy" on the heathen. Ministers should be encouraged to go to these heathen lands by a generous bestowing of the pocket book strings of all christians.

*God does not give food and clothing things to those who will not stand the most severe test. As God has mercy on you, have mercy on your fellow creatures.*

**Mercy.**

In answer to the church's prayers, great and manifold gifts have of late been poured into the treasury of the Lord. These sums, invested and secured in his name, will return great profits. But refined civilization and high prices, running side by side with *extraneous* profligacy and need, call for agencies, methods, and appliances to meet pressing and immediate demands. These demands are known only to such as go into the haunts of our tens of thousands of poor in large towns, cities, and rural districts.

If millions have been given, there is need for millions more. God grant that those who have, in his profusion, the gold and silver may use it so as to do and to get great good thereby!

The views and opinions of George Herbert (born 1333, died 1333) upon money, its value and use; also concerning almsgiving and charity, may interest and instruct us now:

"Never was sinner born man. Got to live; then live, and see it; see it is not true that they last gotten. Surely, we alone make money not a comfortable stone."

"Never exceed thy income. Youth may live with the year; but if it will be, 'Tis a stake, and his life with it. Thy children, kindred, friends, upon thee call. Before thy wealth fairly part with all."

"Whom, when he thinks he hath, the devil hath him. Gold thus may't safely touch; but, if it unto thy hands, it wendeth to the quick."

"What skills it if a bag of stones or gold about thy neck to draw thee?"

"In alms regard thy means and other's merit. Think heaven a better bargain than to give Only the single market-money for it. Give to all something, to a good poor man. Till these change names, and be where he begins."

"Man is God's image; but a poor man is Christ's stamp to boot; both images regard. God reckons for him--counts the favor his. Write, so much gives to God. Thou shalt Let thine alms go before, and keep heaven's gate Open for thee; or both may come too late."

[The Church Parch.]

"Who shuts his hand, hath lost his gold; Who opens it, hath it twice told."

In Herbert's "Parson's Charity," he says:

"Charity is his predominant element. For many and great things are spoken of thee, than great virtue. It is the body of religion. He first considers his own parish, and takes care that there be not a beggar or idle person in it. The parson by continued and fresh bounties, unexpected to them, but resolved to himself, wins them to praise God more, to live more religiously, and to take more pains in their vocation, as not knowing when they shall be relieved; which otherwise they would reckon upon and turn to idleness. At hard times and dearths, he even parts his living and life among them, giving some corn outright, and selling others at under-rates; and when his own stock serves not, working those who are able to the same charity. Yet in all his charity he distinguishes; giving them most who live best and take most pains, and are most charged; so is his charity in effect a sermon. Those at his door, whom God puts in his way, and makes his neighbors, he helps not without some testimony, except the evidence of misery being testimony with it. For though these testimonies also may be falsified, yet he allows his charity some blindness, especially since we are more enjoined to be charitable than wise. But evident miseries have a natural privilege, and exemption from all law."

"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He repay him again."--Prov. xix: 17.

## The Pledge of Safety.

A ship had been wrecked off an island in the South Seas. To the horror of the sailors, they found it was the same island where a ship's crew had been killed and eaten by the natives. Wary with the struggle in the storm, their clothes drenched, they hid themselves as best they could, with the scanty stores, in caves along the shore. When they could endure no longer, they crept stealthily up the hill between them and the town. Every crackling limb and rustling leaf was a fearful tale to their minds, and when they reached the summit, the terrors of death came over them, and they dared not go on.

But one of their number, more hardy than the rest, kept on, and at the very point where they expected his courage to fail, and that returning he would bring upon them the man-eaters, just then he rose from his knees, and swung his hat and shouted, "Safe, safe, all safe!"

He had not seen a band of soldiers from a christian land, nor a troop of his own countrymen, nor even a single living soul; but he had seen a little church spire which rose from the village, and among their rude homes was pointing toward heaven.

The christian missionary had been there, and God's work among the people was the pledge of safety to all the world; and so the words came true--"The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him."

**Excuses.**

Men neglect religion, and often offer excuses that, judged in the light of the facts of an eternity to come, are not only foolish, but most reprehensible. When we remember that the Son of God came forth from the glories of heaven to this world of sin and sorrow, and gave years of humiliation, and months of wearisome pain and anxiety, and days of bitter anguish and suffering to secure the way of salvation for sinful man, how sinful must it seem in the sight of God, to have men offer this and that careless excuse why they are not christians.

It would be well for each one to ascertain as far as possible the reason why he remains at enmity with God and refusing the reconciliation offered in the Gospel. A thinking man ought to be able to discover the reasons why the ministrations of the sanctuary are to him unfruitful and in his life there is a practical rejection of the truth preached. How will it seem when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed.

The fact is that many are not christians because they do not want to be. Excuses for not attending to a matter of such serious importance are a mere subterfuge. He who cares to have his soul saved attends to the matter, as he, who when his life is in peril, is thoughtful and careful to guard against the danger. The young seek to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; mature life is pressed with the cares of this world and so finds excuse; and old age, weak and hesitating, is so darkened by sin, that it is difficult indeed to find the way to Christ.

There are no circumstances in life that can really excuse any one from becoming a christian. The entanglements of earth should never fetter the soul in its reaching after God. Christ is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him. He who places his hand in that of Christ and keeps it there will be led safely and certainly home to God. All these excuses of youth, of middle life, and old age, for not coming to Christ are indeed worthless in the sight of God.

Life is a great fact. Religion is the only guide that can lead us out of the labyrinth of its mysteries into the clear sunlight of God's presence. The evidences of christianity are more than probabilities, and these great truths are joined to the destiny of the immortal soul. Is it wise then to excuse ourselves from becoming christians? Nay, the close of another year reminds many of our readers that the time of excuses is fast passing away. We press the thought of personal duty and obligation upon each one who has ever found in Christ the hope that maketh not ashamed.

Indeed, from what do many seek to be excused? From the hope of heaven through Christ! From loving God and keeping his commandments! From the joys of religion now, and from the comforts of

## Often and Regularly.

There were no cows in all the town so famous for giving milk, for making butter so yellow and sweet, and cheese so creamy and rich, as the cows of Deacon Stockton. I will not say that Mrs. Stockton, the deacon's good wife, had nothing to do with this. I will not say that the milk room on the north side of the house, so beautifully fitted up by the deacon and always kept so clean and sweet; that the long row of bright pans every day set out in the sun, so cheerful that their very faces reflected the light of day; that the large, cool churn, with its thermometer attached to it, had nothing to do with this everywhere coveted butter. Be that as it may, it is certain that one hundred pounds of the deacon's butter were wanted where one could be had.

There was Joe Hunt, who lived in a small, unpainted, window-broken house, about a mile from Deacon Stockton's. Joe was a good-natured, easy, careless creature, always wondering why he had such poor luck in the world. This was a puzzle. He would spend half the forenoon, with a short, black pipe in his mouth, and his hands in his pockets, leaning against the sunny side of his house, pondering on the question why he had such bad luck. At last, casting his eyes upon the hill-side far away, he saw the deacon's cows feeding at their leisure. Slowly, but surely, the thought broke in upon him, that if he had but one of those cows, he would be made. Why, he would have butter equal to the deacon's, milk to sell, calves to raise, pigs to turn into fattened hogs, and who knows what besides! Full of the grand scheme, he laid down his pipe till he had put on his coat and hunted up a little more tobacco, when he resumed the pipe and went puffing straight on his way to Deacon Stockton's.

He soon found the deacon, busy as usual, but not hurried.

"Good morning, deacon. I want to buy one of your cows."

"Indeed! And where would you pasture the cow?"

"Oh! in the street, almost anywhere."

"And how can you pay for her? for you talk about buying."

"Why, I'll work for your price, deacon, for one of your very best cows? I don't want any but the best, mind ye."

"Very well, Joe. If you will come and work for me faithfully for two months, beginning to-morrow, you shall have your pick of all my flock."

"It's a bargain, deacon; I'll do it."

Sure enough, Joe was on hand the next morning bright and early; and so delighted was his wife that she urged and coaxed and held him up to his duties. The two months passed away, and Joe drove his selected cow home in great triumph. They set to milking her and feeding her in the street. For a few days she did pretty well, but gradually the cow grew thin, her bag shrivelled up, and her milk grew less in quantity and poorer in quality.

Almost two months after he had become owner of the cow, Joe met the deacon.

"Deacon Stockton, are you sure there was no mistake about that cow? You didn't cheat me, did you?"

"Why Joe, you had your choice of all my cows; and I told you then, and assure you now, that I have no better cow in the world."

"Well, she don't give much milk and she's almost dried up."

"Where do you pasture her?"

"In the street, to be sure; and fine long grass, too, she finds there."

"How often do you milk her?"

"Oh! at first I milked her twice a day; but when she kind o' fell away, I milked her now and then, when

she showed a big bag. I thought I would get a painful in this way, but she gives less and less."

"Why, Joe, the best cow in creation would dry up if not milked regularly and often! Mind you, of ten and regularly."

Poor Joe hung his head and left with a heavy heart. He knew that it was his laziness that had ruined his cow, and disappointed his hopes.

But he left the deacon standing alone in his field, with his head also hanging down. "Ah!" said he to himself, "I see how it is. Milk your cow regularly and often or she is ruined. I myself have stopped working regularly in our Sunday-school, and though I go in now and then, occasionally, yet I have lost my interest in it. The cow has dried up. Then I used to set apart so much in charity and gave it regularly, and since I bought that last pasture lot, and hurried to pay for it, I have given only occasionally. I feel less like giving, and do give far less than when I gave regularly. The cow has dried up. So with our church. We used to contribute steadily and frequently to the cause of Christ. Some of us, I among the rest, thought that these collections came too often, and so we have them only now and then. O dear! our charities since this change have not been half what they were formerly. The cow has dried up! By God's help, I'll see that the cow is milked often and regularly."

The next Sabbath the deacon was in the school, with a large class of boys whom he had gone out and hunted up. The next contribution was the heaviest they had had for a long time. The church collections returned often and regularly ever since, and are growing larger every year. They have all found out that if a cow is to give much milk, it is absolutely necessary that she be milked often and regularly.--*Rev. John Todd, D.D.*

## Paying and Praying.

**A SHORT DIALOGUE.**

"How do you do, Deacon A.?" said his friend, as he met him in the street; "and how is your church prospering?"

"I am well, sir," rejoined the Deacon, "and so are our people. But we are in a miserable condition. We are cold and lifeless, and what is worse, our minister seems to be discouraged."

"Perhaps your difficulties," replied his friend, "have their origin in the fact that you do not pray enough."

"They may be," added the Deacon; "but I fear a greater difficulty is that we do not PAY as well as pray."

They are in debt to their minister the salary of nearly a whole year, and how could it be expected that he could be otherwise than discouraged! Could he expect a people would be profited by the Gospel when they would not pay for it?

And there are other congregations besides that of which this good deacon formed a part, which are laboring under similar trials for the same cause. No church can expect their minister to be a benefit to them unless they remunerate him for his services. "The laborer is worthy of his hire," and it will be ill with those who withhold it.

## Two or Three.

"Ane stick'll never burn! Put more wood on the fire, laddie; and a stick'll never burn!" my old Scotch grandfather used to say to his boys. Some times, when the fire in the heart burns low, and love to the Saviour grows faint, it would grow warm and bright again if it could only touch another stick. We are weak and imperfect. A hundred things--health, digestion, anxieties, little frets and cares--hinder our souls' progress. The spirit can not soar, for the flesh constantly keeps it down. There is a true life begun in us, but it flickers like a candle in the wind.

What we need, next to earnest prayer to God and communion with Christ, is communion with each other. "Where two or three are gathered together," the heart burns; love kindles to a fervent heat. Friends, let us frequent the society of those who are fellow-pilgrims with us to Canaan's happy land. "Ane stick'll never burn" as a great, generous pill will be sure to.--*Christian Banner.*

Nature and the law say, "Do some difficult thing." Faith in the Gospel says, "See what the Lord has done for me."