

Unity and Realignment, Part 3

Lutherans and Other Christians

1925 Life and Work Conference (Stockholm) – both United Lutheran Church and Augustana officially attended.

Lutherans interacted along vocational and professional interest. All such groups prospered and expanded greatly.

Intersynodical Committees (of Lutheran Synods)

Committees to discuss the problems. Meeting three times a year for three days at a time. All were determined to formulate a precise formulation of the various theological issues on which they could all agree. **St. Paul Theses in 1916** - Agreement was reached on election, conversion, the confessions, church fellowship, the church, the ministry, the Antichrist, the Last Things, the days and forms for worship, and “open questions.” (Many of these agreements were pleasing to Missouri, but there was a hesitancy due to the practice of those synods accepting the agreement. See p. 446) Finally Missouri’s 1929 Convention called the theses unclear, ambiguous, and inadequate.

When Iowa separated from halfway membership with General Council and rejected the United Lutheran Church merger, fellowship was declared by the Joint Synod of Ohio in 1918.

United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA) with their **Washington Declaration of 1920** tried to unite with others. Most Lutherans severely criticized it and charged it with unionism and lodge membership. By it the Norwegians and Ohio and Iowa were convinced of ULCA liberalism. Midwesterners said real Lutherans would be completely separate from non-Lutherans. The Augustana Synod was more cautious but still was seeking union with others.

Before the end of 1920, leaders of Ohio, the Norwegians, Iowa, and Augustana agreed to unofficially establish closer relations, though it didn’t act until 1925 at the Minneapolis Colloquy. They put together the **Minneapolis Theses (1925)**, which affirmed the Chicago Theses of 1919, and then added statements which showed that they were not in agreement with the United Lutheran Church. To their surprise the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible was a major issue. Michael J. Reu (Iowa) considered the infallibility of the Scripture to be limited to its message of salvation. Joint Merger Commission suggested that the constitution have “the inspired and inerrant Word of God.” Reu’s position did not prevail, as Ohio made total inerrancy a categorical condition for merger. Iowa wilted and conceded

American Lutheran Church, 1930 August

The 1930 merger included the **Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Iowa and Other States (Iowa Synod est. 1854)**, the very small **Lutheran Synod of Buffalo**, (original group, est. 1854) and the **Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States (Joint Synod of Ohio, est. 1818** from the Ministerium of Pennsylvania). And **Texas Synod (est. 1851)**

The American Lutheran Conference, established in Minneapolis October 29-31, 1930

Cooperation in those areas of worship, work, and witness where full unity of doctrine is a prerequisite. (Five church bodies 1. Augustana Synod, 2. the American Lutheran Church (1930), the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America, 3. The Lutheran Free Church, and the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church)

Augustana synod (though a heritage of pietism and conservatism) joined the American Lutheran Conference (1930)

1930 - 3 distinct camps, The ULCA, the American Lutheran Conference, and the Synodical Conference

The American Lutheran Conference bodies were ready to accept the Synodical Conference (but not the United Lutheran Church) as brother, but the Synodical Conference still had issues to be resolved. By the beginning of the 1930s, all the Lutheran churches were identified as Lutheran by their subscription to the confession writings of Lutheranism. But they were not united in their varying definitions of confessional unity and their practice of theological diversity.

What was to be the connection between confessional unity and theological uniformity.

Some answered that it was enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments (AC VII)

Others declared their needed to be agreement in theology and practice. (p.457)

Three Questions

1. The authority of the Bible
2. What constituted unionism
3. Secret Societies

However many said that inerrancy was neither Lutheran nor orthodox

-Word of God (concerning salvation) was found in the Scriptures

ULCA – evangelistic, not legalistic attitude toward lodge membership

