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Lutheran Unity and Union in Canada (Part 2)

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SPECIAL REPORT

LUTHERAN UNITY AND UNION IN CANADA

(Part 2)

Introduction

At the seven Canadian Lutheran jurisdictional church conventions held in 1974, delegates were given the opportunity of indicating their feelings about church union. Responses were received from 1107 persons (ELCC-314; LCA-CS-420; LC-C-373). Part 1 of the Special Report (January, CONSENSUS, pp. 25-30) focused on whether people favoured, opposed or had mixed feelings about a union of Canadian Lutheranism.

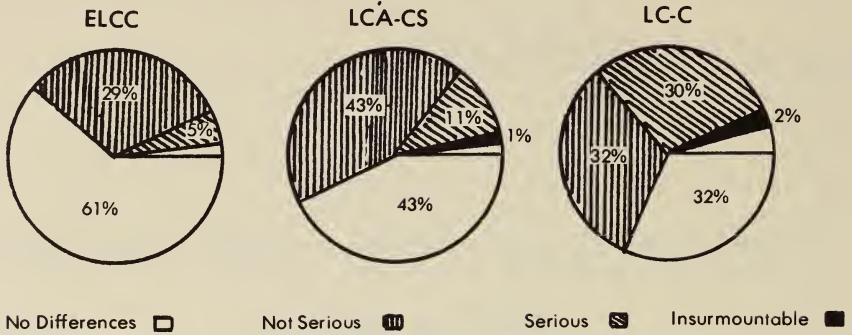
The survey shows that there are a considerable number of people, particularly within Lutheran Church-Canada, who have mixed feelings about Lutheran union. Yet the overwhelming majority of Lutherans (82%) favour union of the churches and only a very small number (less than 2%) actually oppose the union of Canadian Lutherans.

The analysis below reflects whether those who responded to the questionnaire perceived any differences in teaching (doctrine) between the various Lutheran bodies in Canada from personal experience. The respondents were asked to indicate what these differences were.

It should again be stated that respondents occasionally meant different things when they answered this question. Also the forum, which in every case listed the "hot issues" which needed to be faced by the JCILR, tended to condition people to become aware of differences whether or not they had actually experienced them.

Awareness of Doctrinal Differences

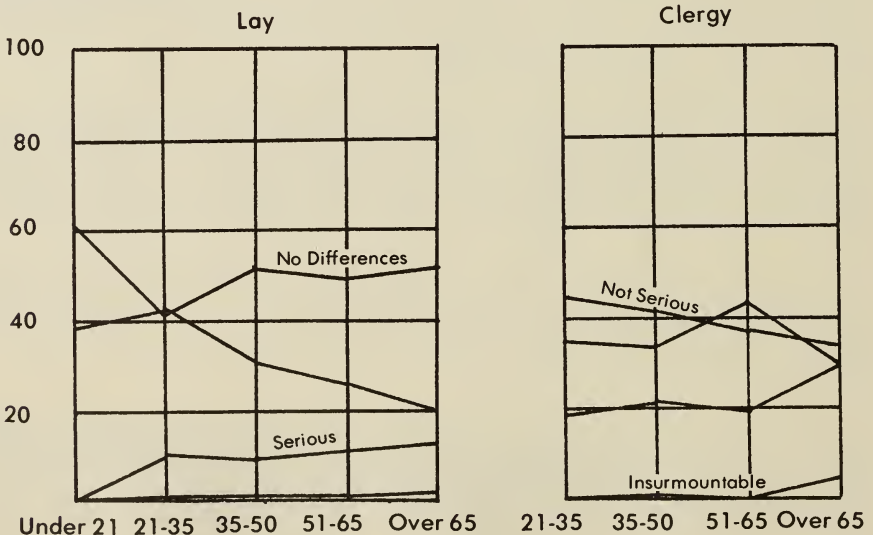
PROFILE BY JURISDICTIONAL UNIT



The graphs above indicate that, of the three Lutheran bodies, The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada has the least awareness of differences in teaching between the churches. 90% of ELCC respondents either felt that there were no differences in teaching or that the differences were not serious. Responses from the Lutheran Church in America - Canada Section and Lutheran Church - Canada show 86% and 64% respectively in these categories.

About 30% of LC-C respondents, 11% of LCA-CS and 5% of ELCC felt that the differences were serious. An additional 2% and 1% from the LC-C and LCA-CS respectively felt that the differences would preclude the possibility of Lutheran union in Canada.

PROFILE BY AGE

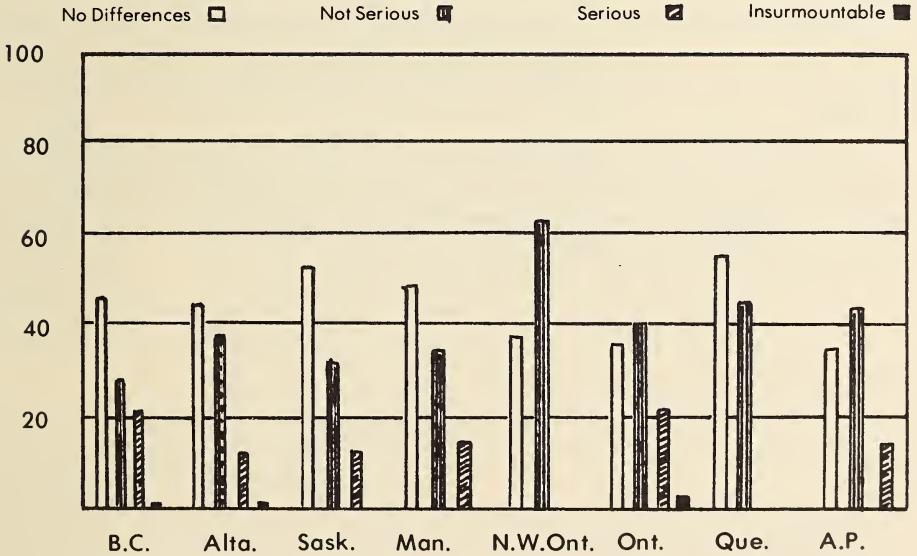


The graphs above show that all of the respondents under 21 felt either that there were no differences in doctrine or that the differences were not serious. On the graph reflecting lay opinion, the portion of respondents who felt either no differences or no significant differences in teaching registers 85% in the 21-35 and 36-50 age categories and declines slightly to 78% and 74% in the 51-65 and over 65 age categories respectively. Aside from the 21-35 age category, the graph on lay responses shows that most of the laity felt there were no differences in teaching between the Lutheran bodies in Canada.

This is not the case on the graph showing clergy response. The clergy categories registered between 31% and 43% who felt that there were no differences in doctrine between the Lutheran bodies. However many clergy felt that the differences were not serious (between 35% and 44% in the various age categories).

Among lay people (aside from the under 21 age group), those who felt that the differences were serious ranged between 10% and 16%. Among clergy it was between 18% and 31%. 1% or 2% of the laity felt the differences to be insurmountable. On the clergy graph only two categories registered respondents who felt this way.

PROFILE BY GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION



When the respondents from a particular province or region are taken as a group there is fluctuation but no really significant difference in the various categories. Those who felt that there are either no differences or no significant differences range from 73% and 74% in B.C. and Ontario respectively to 100% in Quebec and North Western Ontario (the latter contain no LC-C respondents). The Atlantic

Provinces saw 78%, Alberta and Manitoba 83% and Saskatchewan 84% in these categories.

The ELCC consistently had more than half of its respondents in the various areas indicating that they experienced no doctrinal differences between the churches. The LCA-CS respondents registered between 27% to 62% in this category. LC-C register between 26% to 39%.

Among those who felt that the differences were serious the ELCC responses registered 10% or lower. LCA-CS responses in this category range from 2% in Saskatchewan to 16% and 27% in Ontario and B.C. respectively. LC-C responses range between 21% in Alberta to 39% in Manitoba. Recognition of serious differences among LC-C respondents registered at 35% in B.C.; 32% in Saskatchewan and 29% in Ontario. Those who felt that the differences would preclude union of the churches were all from LC-C in B.C. and Alberta (3%) and virtually all from LCA-CS in Ontario (3%). 1% of LC-C respondents from Ontario also felt that insurmountable differences in doctrine existed.

Brief Analysis

The survey shows that many Lutherans in Canada, particularly in the LCA-CS and LC-C, are aware of differences in teaching between the Lutheran bodies in this country. Many seem convinced, however, that these differences can either be reconciled or that they can be allowed to exist in a united church. This is true in each of the three Lutheran bodies, in every age category and in every area of the country.

There are some who are less optimistic that the problem areas can be solved. However on the whole the desire for Lutheran union in Canada is also seen in an apparent willingness to tackle whatever differences might still threaten to keep the Lutheran bodies from uniting with each other.

NJT