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SAMUEL SIMON SCHMUCKER'S FRATERNAL APPEAL  
AND THE REACTION BY THE  
GENERAL SYNOD TO 1850

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Historical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Sacred Theology

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by  
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May 1983

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1838 an article appeared in the American Biblical Repository entitled "The Fraternal Appeal to the American Churches with a Plan for Catholic Union on Apostolic Principles." The "Fraternal Appeal" (as it is commonly called) was an ecumencial document. Its purpose was to impress upon American churchmen that visible ecclesiastical unity was most desirable and it presumed that denominationalism mitigated against the "una sancta ecclesia" concept. The "Fraternal Appeal's" rationale for unity is most intriguing. In the author's opinion Christ has mandated that the Church be visibly joined according to the principle of fraternity. In his opinion the early Church realized this, thus through political and theological accomodation and toleration primitive Christians were able to live in peace and concord. However, the Church had radically departed from the ecumenical spirit and thrust of the primitive church. This was because over the centuries human fallibility and greed had replaced the Church's desire to obey the will of God. In the judgment of the "Fraternal Appeal" a divided Church is a Church in error. Therefore, the aim of the "Fraternal Appeal" is to reconcile the schisms. It assumes that even a diversified

Christendom can achieve political and doctrinal compromise; that is to say, the Church can be universally administered by a central confederated council and can express doctrinal agreement by requiring commitment only to the fundamental articles of faith.

Samuel Simon Schmucker (1799-1873) was the author of the "Fraternal Appeal." Schmucker was a prominent theologian and church leader in the Lutheran General Synod. In 1839, the General Synod deliberated over this ecumenical treatise. Naturally, it would be anticipated that a document of this nature, written and recommended by a theologian of Schmucker's stature, would almost automatically be hailed and ratified by the author's own church body. This did not happen in the case of Schmucker's "Fraternal Appeal."

The purpose of this study is to investigate the General Synod's reaction to the "Fraternal Appeal." The General Synod itself was a structurally complex and a highly intergrated church body. Because it is in constant flux it is difficult, if not impossible, to analyze the General Synod's theological position with precise accuracy. At best it can be assumed that from 1820 to 1850 the General Synod was committing itself anew to the Lutheran Confessions and reevaluating its ecumenical position. In terms of the General Synod's theological stance, one can theorize that the "Fraternal Appeal" appeared a decade too late. This is to say that the concepts and ideals of the

"Fraternal Appeal" were more consonate with the theology of the General Synod in the 1820s than in the late 1830s and 1840s. Therefore, the aim of the "Fraternal Appeal" to unite all denominations failed in the General Synod. In fact, the treatise received so little attention that it was never officially recognized by that Church body.

This study intends to be an investigation of the General Synod's reaction to the "Fraternal Appeal." Three sources will be investigated. The first source is the minutes of General Synod conventions. This study assumes that the minutes of the proceedings of the General Synod reveal the Synod's official corporate action and position. The investigation will begin with the proceedings of the General Synod in 1839 and conclude at 1850. The year 1850 has been selected as the "terminus ad quem" because it was the last year the Committee for Church Union reported to the General Synod. (This Committee has used a "condensed" version of the "Fraternal Appeal" as a basis of union negotiations with the Presbyterian Church.)

Whereas the General Synod technically was an advisory body, every convention resolution was to be confirmed by the constituent district synods. This study will also investigate the available district synod minutes - the second source of information - and report on how the districts handled Schmucker's treatise.

The Lutheran periodical, the Lutheran Observer, will serve as a third source of information. This weekly publication has been selected for several reasons. First, the Lutheran Observer frequently commented on a wide range of issues which concerned the Lutheran Church. Presumably, this periodical provided a theological forum in which churchmen could air their views on various topics. The Lutheran Observer has been selected, secondly, because it was officially recommended by the General Synod and its constituent synods. In summary, the Lutheran Observer was the voice of the Lutheran Church. From these three sources then, the minutes of the General Synod, the minutes of the General Synod's constituent synods, and the Lutheran Observer, one is able to appraise the General Synod's attitude toward any issue.

This study is divided into four chapters. Chapter I proposes to describe the life of Schmucker and to briefly define his understanding of the Lutheran Confessions as they apply to the Lutheran Church. Schmucker elected to rephrase the Augsburg Confession to comply with the theological formulations of the various Protestant bodies. Chapter II will summarize the history of the General Synod from 1820 to 1850. This chapter will comment on the Synod's growth, on its relatively waning ecumenical interest, and on its rediscovery of the Lutheran Confessions. Chapter III will be a document study of the three

editions of the Fraternal Appeal. Chapter IV will summarize the General Synod's reaction to the Fraternal Appeal.

## CHAPTER I

### SAMUEL SIMON SCHMUCKER: THE MAN

#### Introduction

Every era in the history of Christianity presents certain epoch-making individuals. The reasons scholars grant them such esteem vary. Generally, their fame hinges on their unique interpretation and application of Christianity's peculiar contribution to mankind. They contributed to the development of Western culture and thought. Consequently, an appreciation of a particular era might be gained in examining that era's principal individual(s).

The history of American Lutheranism is not exempt from this principle; rather, it too shares this distinction, and presents key churchmen for due consideration. Samuel Simon Schmucker is one such individual. The contributions which earned him such esteem, were in two areas. First, he did much to organize and consolidate the Lutheran church in the East during the first half of the nineteenth century. Second, he promoted fraternal relations among various Christian denominations. Schmucker

was a principal arbitrator, a "Pioneer" as Abdel Ross Wentz proposes,<sup>1</sup> for Christian unity. Beyond some of his profitable contributions to the General Synod, his irenic spirit played part in a number of significant resolutions by the Synod for merger with Christians of other traditions and confessions.

Schmucker was a Lutheran, and in his literary works one detects the author's familiarity with and commitment to the Confessions of the Lutheran Church. It would seem he realized the functional value doctrinal definitions have in the dynamics of Christian communication. However, Schmucker would subscribe only to the Augsburg Confession, considering it the fundamental expression of Lutheran theology, and even then he made that subscription with certain reservations. Sydney E. Ahlstrom notes that Schmucker was hard pressed to deny some of Augustana's precise theological language and to overlook its sometimes harsh polemical tone. Having recalled his effort to restore the confessions to a didactic role, Ahlstrom comments:

Even in these early measures, however, and throughout the four decades of his career as a theologian and

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<sup>1</sup>Abdel Ross Wentz, Pioneer in Christian Unity Samuel Simon Schmucker (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967). This biography on the life and contribution of Schmucker proposes that he displayed an irenic spirit throughout his career, and was indeed a Lutheran "pioneer" for church union.

church leader, Schmucker was torn between a desire to hurl traditional Lutheran symbols against infidelity, and an equally strong or somewhat stronger desire to avoid doctrinal commitments which ran counter to his own pietistic background, the Reformed substratum of American Protestantism which he had studied at Princeton Seminary, or the interdenominational voluntary movements for evangelism and reform in which he vigorously participated.<sup>2</sup>

Ahlstrom suggests that Schmucker's commitment to the Augustana was indefinite and even questionable. Historians, such as Wentz, Peter Anstadt, and James Harney point out at least two factors which determined his confessional attitude. The first encompasses all possible formative influences upon his character. It is theorized that by the age of twenty, Schmucker's theological mind was the resultant mixture of Lutheranism, Pietism, and Puritanism. Together, these influences worked in him the premise that genuine Christians can be found in all denominations. His dream was to unite the church. Perhaps from his vantage point denominational confessions stood in the way of his vision. As far as he was concerned, confessional statements often commented on unnecessary doctrines. Essentially, Schmucker was convinced that confessions permitted partisanship which affirmed discord within the church. This provoked him to review his own Confessional conviction; were the Lutheran Confessions correct? Were they

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<sup>2</sup>Sydney A. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 520.

sufficient? Did they repel or foster church unity? He concluded that for the sake of the church symbols ought to express things held in common and emphasize those items which make one denomination as Christian as the next. Consequently, an expedient task of a Lutheran theologian, like himself, is to reframe and rephrase the Augustana to be more inclusive of and less polemical toward other Christians.

Schmucker's ecumenical design was a second factor influential in his qualified subscription to the Augsburg Confession. He was an ecumenist and it seems that he, at all costs, would do everything in his power to implement church fellowship. His biography includes countless instances of his participation in interdenominational agencies (for example, the American Tract Society) and numerous attempts to actually merge various religious traditions (for example, the Evangelical Alliance). Blaming the Augsburg Confession as the wedge driving Lutherans and Protestants apart, he worked to remove or at least to reduce what he considered the "sectarian" elements in the Augustana. Schmucker did not believe that the entire Augustana was a correct exposition of Scripture. At one point he submitted that the Augustana contained a number of "romish errors." For the sake of unity, Schmucker proposed that any confessional language which might offend another Protestant denomination ought to be removed.

The objective of this chapter is to highlight Schmucker's conception of the normative role of Confessions in the Lutheran Church and its viability in ecumenical deliberations. Schmucker's biography reveals that his theological attitude was, by and large, shaped by key individuals, necessitated by intra-Lutheran organizational needs, and predicated by an ecumenical drive.

### Samuel Simon Schmucker: A Biography

#### Formative Influences (1799-1820)

Many scholars have agreed in identifying the impulses which dominated Schmucker's career.<sup>3</sup> James Harney perhaps best represents the agreement when he states:

A study of Samuel Simon Schmucker's religious heritage and education reveals that he was heir to a particular theological tradition within Lutheranism as he himself insisted. This tradition can be clearly distinguished from either Lutheran Orthodoxy or confessionalism. Though he received part of his education in non-Lutheran institutions, that instruction introduced little which was irreconcilable with the Lutheran heritage he had received through his father. The education he received at York Academy, the University of Pennsylvania, and at Princeton Seminary did

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<sup>3</sup>See A. R. Wentz, Pioneer, pp. 1-45; Idem., "Philosophical Roots of Samuel Simon Schmucker," Lutheran Quarterly 18 (August 1966): 245-59. Peter Anstadt, Life and Times of Rev. S. S. Schmucker, D.D. (York, PA: P. Anstadt and Sons, 1896) pp. 9-79; especially James Lawton Harney, "The Religious Heritage and Education of Samuel Simon Schmucker: A Study in the Rise of 'American Lutheranism'" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1968). This third work includes thematic survey of the influences upon Schmucker and covers his career up to 1820.

prepare him, however, to articulate more forcibly what he later designated as 'American Lutheranism'. The origin and peculiar character of this tradition are apparent in the explication of Schmucker's religious heritage and education.<sup>4</sup>

Harney addressed two key factors in Schmucker's early life which merit our attention. The first is the heritage inculcated by his father, John George Schmucker; the second, less influential, is his academic training.

His Father: John George Schmucker

Schmucker was born on February 28, 1799<sup>5</sup> to Dr. John George Schmucker by his first marriage, that to Elizabeth Gross of Hagerstown, Maryland. Schmucker's paternal family came from the grand duchy of Hesse-Darmstadt, the town of Michaelstadt in the territory of Erbach. Abdel Ross Wentz details the spirit of this region when he writes "the Lutheran congregations in this part of Germany had been greatly influenced by the Pietism of Spener and Francke during the preceeding century."<sup>6</sup> Having emigrated to America in 1785, John George studied

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<sup>4</sup>Harney, "Religious Heritage," p. 26.

<sup>5</sup>An apparent mixup in the dating of Schmucker's birth - Janurary 28 or February 28, 1799 - is discussed in A. R. Wentz, Pioneer, p. 1 note 1. Wentz concludes that since all subsequent information read February 28 that date is to be preferred.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

for two years at Philadelphia under Jacob Goering.<sup>7</sup> In 1794, he was licensed to preach by the Pennsylvania Ministerium and assumed a pastorate in Hagerstown, Maryland. After six years he accepted a call to York, Pennsylvania. Schmucker was born the following year.

John George continued in the Pietist tradition of his native land. Pietism is a descriptive term referring to a movement, arising during the 17th century, which reacted against Lutheran orthodoxy. Pietists emphasized a heart-felt religion over and against what they perceived to be a cold ritualism and the meaningless rote associated with the mechanics of the churchly tradition. They characteristically sought for those things which made them "feel" and "experience" the love of God, and diligently cultivated in their lives a sense of worthy repentance. When he emigrated to America, John George thought it important enough to include John Arndt's True Christianity,<sup>8</sup> a classic in Pietistic literature, among his provisions. Moreover, Wentz notes that he displayed a strong missionary impulse in America. John George frequently went on

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<sup>7</sup>For information concerning Jacob Goering's connection with Pietism see A. R. Wentz, Pioneer, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup>John Arndt, True Christianity, with an Introduction by Peter Erb, trans. P. Erb (New York, Ramsey, Toronto: Paulist Press, 1979); this work is discussed in Harney, "Religious Heritage," p. 46.

long preaching tours which in effect "lifted his outlook beyond his own parish."

John George was a respected leader in the Pennsylvania Ministerium noted especially for his interest in education. In a letter dated December 24, 1857, Schmucker characterizes his father's religious loyalties. This letter is significant in that it suggests that certain aspects of his father's behavior did not pass Schmucker unnoticed. Perhaps the author was hinting at the roots of his own habits. Schmucker notes his father's favor for the various interdenominational societies of the day:

. . . of this his noble defence of the Temperance cause in its infancy, when not only the populace generally, but the majority of professing Christians, and even some of the neighboring ministers of the Gospel, were yet opposed to it, affords a striking example.<sup>9</sup>

And again,

He was warmly attached to the great National Societies of our land, in which different Christian denominations cooperate, such as the American Bible and Tract Societies. He was especially interested in the operations of the American Tract Society, and regarded that mass of truth taught in its publications, and held by the Evangelical denominations in common, as the grand instrumentality for the conversion of the world.<sup>10</sup>

Later he points out his father's esteem for the Sacred Scriptures as a clear testimony of God's will.

He enriched his discourses with copious citations of Scripture proof and illustration, not unfrequently

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<sup>9</sup>This letter is quoted in Anstadt, Life and Times, pp. 19-21.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-20.

naming the chapter and verse. Few men employed the power of the pulpit more faithfully in reproving current vices.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, his father's devotion to the General Synod also struck Schmucker as a worthy example, and he viewed his father's participation in the religious revivals as somewhat a precedent for his own life.

As a Pastor, he was most laborious and faithful. Such was his punctuality in attending the Judicatories of the church that his presence was calculated on by all as a matter of course; and such were his administrative talents that he was repeatedly elected to the highest offices of the Church. He was an ardent friend of the General Synod, was one of its original founders, and ever after among its ablest defenders. For about thirty years he was one of the leading minds in our American Lutheran Church, was actively engaged in all her important measures, and was ever known as the firm champion of piety and revivals of religion, as well as of all such enterprises as tend to advance the spiritual triumphs of the Redeemer's church universal. His own ministry was blessed not only by numerous conversions occurring every year, but by five or six special outpourings of the Holy Spirit, each resulting in the conversion of multitudes of souls.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, spiritual communion with God was an expressed goal of John George's life. John George's objectives of his own spiritual life echo Arndt's concept of spiritual graduations of the Christian's life. Presumably, as one becomes more devoted to "higher" matters and less burdened with the cares of this world, he is drawn closer to the Divine Essence.

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

A striking trait of my father's character was the depth of his religious experience, and his unusually advanced progress in the divine life. The following remarks, which I find written by his own hand in his pocket Greek Testament, will throw some light on his internal religious history:

"1. From the time of my conversion, in my eighteenth year, my life was though in different degrees, a continued prayer, a longing and sighing after God.

"2. It was a continual repentance, on account of my sins and the depravity of my heart.

"3. It was a continual longing after the holiness and grace to live according to the will of God.

"4. A continual longing for union and communion with God.

"5. Through life I had a continual desire for the conversion of souls, which influenced every sermon I preached, though it was often defiled by the intermixture of selfish aims.

"6. I had constant desire for the society of the pious.

"7. At the same time I had many infirmities and sins, and all my virtues were defective."

. . . For several months before his death he was much abstracted from the world, and engaged in almost constant communion with God. During this time, on one occasion, was lying in his bed in the night watches, and called to my mother, who was at his side: 'Oh, if you could see what I have seen beyond the Jordan of death, how happy you would be!' Such was the holy frame of mind in which he awaited the call of the Redeemer, and such the fortaste vouchsafed to him of his future inheritance, until he calmly yielded his life into the Redeemer's hands.<sup>13</sup>

Through his father, Schmucker became acquainted with a Christian life best described as Pietistic in devotion, Lutheran in commitment, cooperative in spirit, and, as far as identifying Christians is concerned, broadly inclusive in definition. Admittedly, it is difficult to

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 20-21.

prove with absolute certainty which of his father's characteristics were actually carried over into his own life. While the purpose is not to develop a psychological profile of Schmucker, his career and his literary works reveal a striking similarity of impulse, attitude, and theme between Schmucker and his father.

#### Schmucker's Education

Education is acclaimed the foremost influence, outside of the family, upon any personality. This is true also in the case of Schmucker who was fortunate enough to receive an education which surpassed that of the average Lutheran clergyman of his day.<sup>14</sup> In piecing together his theological profile, one must not overlook the education which shaped his thought. Clearly, the issue here concerns not so much the extent and level of his learning as those who were his instructors and what were their theological viewpoints.

In 1812, at the age of 13, Schmucker began his formal education at the Academy in York, Pennsylvania. There, under the guidance of a Mr. Beatie, Schmucker had a curriculum quite typical of the time, that is, concentration in the classics and discipline in modern and ancient languages, including Latin, Greek, and French. "Among the

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<sup>14</sup>Clifford E. Nelson, ed., The Lutherans in North America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p. 121.

other branches in the curriculum," Wentz presumes, "young Schmucker must have been influenced by the courses in divinity, in moral philosophy, and in rhetoric."<sup>15</sup>

Having studied at the academy for two years, he matriculated in the University of Pennsylvania at Philadelphia. There he gained a close acquaintance with Dr. Justus Helmuth,<sup>16</sup> who served the University as a Professor of language and literature. Dr. Helmuth knew the Schmucker family well for he had worked with John George Schmucker as co-editor of the Evangelisches Magazin, a periodical for the German community to inform its readership of the providential awakening of the land. Helmuth knew the Schmuckers so well that he wrote to Schmucker, at York Academy, encouraging him to enroll at the University. Whether he did this as a kind gesture to the Schmucker family, or as a sign of his favor of Schmucker's scholarship, is debatable.

Helmuth's theological methodology is described by Wentz:

In the tradition of Halle he laid more emphasis on qualities of the heart than on theological acumen as

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<sup>15</sup>A. R. Wentz, Pioneer, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup>Justus Christian Henry Helmuth (born 1745 in Helmstadt, and died in Philadelphia in 1825) was pastor at Lancaster, Pa. (1769-79), and Philadelphia (1779-1822), and professor in the University of Pennsylvania to 1825. He has been described as an eloquent preacher, graceful poet, and faithful pastor. Furthermore, he was of the pietist tradition and a friend of the Moravians.

requirements of prospective ministers. He subscribed to the unaltered Augsburg Confession and the rest of the Lutheran symbolical books, but was averse to sharp theological distinctions. He thought of the church primarily as an association of believers for the purpose of propagating the Christian faith.<sup>17</sup>

Helmuth influenced Schmucker. For example, under Helmuth, Schmucker was imbued with an inclination toward sharp theological definitions.<sup>18</sup> In many of his writings Schmucker betrayed this particular aspect of Helmuth's influence. His literary works, lectures, sermons, and addresses were systematically precise and tediously outlined to succor his audience. Schmucker also gained an "acquaintance with the Lutheran Confessions,"<sup>19</sup> under Helmuth's tutorage. Being a Lutheran, especially a Lutheran clergyman, assumes some knowledge of the Lutheran Confessions. Schmucker's familiarity with the symbolical writings proved itself as they were variously quoted and referred to in many of his literary works.

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<sup>17</sup>A. R. Wentz, Pioneer, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup>This assessment of Helmuth's influence upon Schmucker is from Abdel Ross Wentz, History of the Gettysburg Theological Seminary of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States and of the Lutheran Church in America (1826-1928) (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publishing House, 1926), p. 133.

<sup>19</sup>Vergilius Ferm, Crisis in American Lutheran Theology: A Study of the Issue between American Lutheranism and Old Lutheranism (New York: Century Co., 1927), p. 71. This work provides an exhaustive study of the confessional character of Schmucker, and includes a number of quotations from his works.

Schmucker was an eager and talented educator. Upon graduating from the University of Pennsylvania he returned to the York Academy, his alma mater, to assume the teacher's seat. His stay at York was brief. By August of 1818, he resolved to pursue a theological education at Princeton Seminary.<sup>20</sup> His reason for selecting this institution is open to debate. Presumably, the proximity of the seminary played a role in deciding against Andover and the newly formed Hartwick Seminary in Otsego County, New York.

Princeton offered a modest curriculum and staff. When Schmucker arrived, the facility of the Presbyterian church employed two professors: Archibald Alexander and Samuel Miller. Of the two, Alexander exerted the greater influence upon the theological novice.<sup>21</sup> Alexander was no mean scholar. His delight was to keep abreast of religious news and other worthy items which might theologically

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<sup>20</sup>For a brief summary of the history of Princeton Seminary up to the time of Schmucker's student days, see A. R. Wentz, Pioneer, pp. 14-16.

<sup>21</sup>One can gather the essential content of Alexander's course in polemical theology as it is epitomized in his 1825 publication Brief Outline of the Evidences of the Christian Religion (Princeton: D. A. Borrenstein, 1825). Alexander emphatically states that a Christian should be equipped to defend his faith against all non-Christian antagonists, i.e. Socinians, deists, Arians, universalists, Pelagians, and papists, all of whom are regarded as 'fundamental' errorists. His course in didactic theology is equally forceful. There we find expressed an expedient task for orthodox Christians to combat heresies and aberrations among Christians which parade around as children of light.

test and intellectually provoke his students. Alexander's special hobby or interest was in European ecclesiastical affairs. He desired to know what was being written and said in Europe. In his lectures he often made reference to Alfonse Turretin of Geneva<sup>22</sup>, and specifically to his Latin compendium of Calvin's Institutes. Alexander's use of this work is in keeping with the aim of the school. Princeton was a seminary conducted under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church. It was quite proper, then, that the institution equip students to be Presbyterian clergymen. Is it any wonder that the academic discipline along with the student-body fellowship of the Princeton Seminary community caused Schmucker to review critically and accept only in part the doctrinal formulations of the Lutheran camp? The extent to which Princeton influenced Schmucker has been open to debate.<sup>23</sup> Some historians maintain

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<sup>22</sup>For information on Alfonse Turretin, see A. R. Wentz, Pioneer, pp. 55-56.

<sup>23</sup>What is the nature of Princeton's influence on Schmucker? Scholars have differed on this point. Ahlstrom has given Schmucker's Princeton Seminary experience minimal consideration as a formative influence. Similarly, Wentz defends Schmucker in regarding his theological conviction as one of lifelong consistency; Princeton somewhat effected this. Bente, somewhat on the offensive, maintains, a dye was cast in his Presbyterian (Calvinist-Arminian) education. Harney leans in Bente's direction. In light of his background, one may suggest that his Princeton experience more or less confirmed his irenic predisposition. We must keep in mind that although he was aware of his religious heritage, Lutheranism then was not

that Princeton affected his theological stance only minimally. Wentz, for example, wants to see very little of a Calvinistic influence upon Schmucker. Wentz writes:

While he learned to think of Calvin as a 'truly great and illustrious divine.' The Lutheran tradition in theology which he had learned from his father and Dr. Helmuth were too deeply ingrained in his personality to permit a Calvinistic superstructure. Theologically he went his own way at Princeton.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, some historians suggest that Schmucker's seminary career at least confirmed his theological character. John G. Morris, a Lutheran biographer of Schmucker writes:

His father, Dr. J. G. Schmucker, was a Pietistic Lutheran of the Spenerian School, and hence sent him to study theology at a Puritanical Seminary.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>John G. Morris, Fifty Years in the Lutheran Ministry, p. 136.<sup>25</sup>

Schmucker adapted the habits of a hard-working, studious individual. By the age of twenty he had learned

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like Lutheranism after the confessional revival. Schmucker regarded himself in the spirit of the Reformation. Considering the majority of his contemporaries, an historian is hard pressed to concur that Schmucker was, relatively speaking, a son of the Lutheran Reformation. But, the confessional revival which rolled through the American Lutheran Church in the mid-nineteenth century, gave an entirely new point of reference to Schmucker's life and work. Authors, such as Bente, who were of the confessional tradition, naturally frowned upon and even defaced Schmucker's career and aimed to delineate his theology from traditional Lutheran orthodoxy's.

<sup>24</sup>A. R. Wentz, Pioneer, p. 27. See his assessment of this issue entitled "Princeton's Influence," pp. 26-33.

<sup>25</sup>Quoted by Ferm, Crisis, p. 71.

to discipline himself to avoid pleasures unbefitting the moral standards of the Savior's call. A contemporary of Schmucker, J. C. Morris, recollects:

Some people would have called his bearing dignified; but young as I was, I set it down as ascetic, unsocial and recluse. He was a laborious student, and had no intimate companions. He did not frequent the society of young ladies, nor indeed of any other class of people; and hence was not a popular young man . . . Dr Schmucker was the severest moralist I ever knew, and carried his principles, I think, to an extreme length. He objected to some amusements which a wiser age now sanctions, and opposed some recreations which the church now approves. He did not know one card from another. I do not suppose he ever had a dice-box in his hand, even for amusement. He knew nothing of checkers, or back-gammon or chess. He never was in the theatre or circus, never heard an opera. He even doubted the propriety of Christians going to hear famous vocalists in a concert hall, especially if they had appeared on the operatic stage. He never used tobacco in any form. He never drank a drop of strong liquor. He never conformed to any modern fashion in dress for fashion's sake, however neat and appropriate it might be.<sup>26</sup>

By way if summary it may be concluded that Schmucker's theological perspective, at the threshold of his ministerial career, was tempered by: Pietism and Puritanism of his father, Lutheranism of his father and Helmuth, and Calvinism of Alexander. Schmucker certainly was capable of using discretion in theological judgments; his personality was probably more than what his father and teachers had taught. Nevertheless, the viewpoints inculcated through his home environment and academic training are

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<sup>26</sup>This letter of Morris is quoted from Anstadt, Life and Times, pp. 41-43.

significant. What sort of an individual was Schmucker? Essentially, he was committed to the religion of his father, he was prepared to enjoy a profession in the church, he was motivated to consolidate the Lutheran church, and he was determined to convince his colleagues that Lutheran doctrine varied only slightly from other Protestant creeds. Monumental aspirations for one only twenty years of age.

Ministry in the Virginia-Maryland Synod  
(1820-1826)

After graduating from Princeton, Schmucker returned to his parents' home at York. For a brief time he assisted his father in his parish. His ambition, however, was to have a Lutheran parish of his own. To gain the official sanction of the Lutheran Church in Pennsylvania, he needed the credentials of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, one of three Lutheran "Synods" in America. His father was a reputable member of the Pennsylvania Ministerium. This, along with Schmucker's training, made the endorsement procedures seem merely a formality. Schmucker attended the meeting of the Pennsylvania Ministerium which was held on May 28, 1820. At the meeting he applied to be licensed to serve four congregations in Shenandoah County, Virginia. As required by the Ministerium for all candidates, he was examined by a theological interview committee. The review committee, consisting of Dr. George Lochman of Harrisburg

and Dr. Christian Endress of Lancaster, found Schmucker fit for service and recommended his name for licensure to the Ministerium. On May 31st Schmucker was officially accepted into the Pennsylvania Ministerium.<sup>27</sup> A license permitted him, though technically still a candidate, to preach, catechize, and administer the sacraments for one year and only in one place or locale.

Several months following the meeting of the Pennsylvania Ministerium Schmucker was called to be the minister of the parishes in which he had been laboring, being at New Market, Solomon, and Armentrout. Evidently the Lutherans of this area of the Shenandoah Valley were in conflict over issues of doctrine and polity. A conservative movement, headed by the Henkels,<sup>28</sup> disassociated itself from the main branch of Lutherans and sought to organize on a more confessional basis. The controversy affected

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<sup>27</sup>The official resolution is found in Documentary History of the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Other States. Proceedings of the Annual Conventions from 1748 to 1821 (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, 1898), p. 567.

<sup>28</sup>The Henkels are considered the more confessional brand of Lutheranism. Their influence was especially present in the Tennessee and Virginia area of the country. Their views against "crypto-Lutherans" were often commented upon by the officers and leaders of the General Synod. Moreover, their insistence upon the pertinence of the Lutheran Confessions of faith precipitated a number of schisms within the Lutheran Synods, see below pp. 68-70.

Schmucker's parish. By the time of his ordination, he had lost one congregation, Armemtrout, to the conservative faction.

As pastor in the newly formed Maryland-Virginia Synod, Schmucker soon put his talents and interests to work. First, he offered his services by opening a theological house of study. This gesture was most welcomed because at this time students interested in obtaining a theological education had difficulty finding an institution to meet their needs. Since no Lutheran Seminary existed outside of Hartwig Seminary in New York, many students had no option but to receive a formal education at a Seminary outside of the Lutheran Church. But another avenue was available. If a Lutheran clergyman was interested and willing, a student might receive a Lutheran education in the pastor's study. This arrangement was the only one available for Lutherans until the founding of Hartwig Seminary in 1815. Schmucker sponsored such a program. The Maryland-Virginia Synod, realizing his interests and the quality of education he could offer, confirmed his efforts. At the synod's convention at Frederick, Maryland (September 2-5, 1821), Schmucker was deputized to train candidates within the region of the Synod.

At this same convention the Maryland-Virginia Synod took further measures to consolidate. The Synod thought it would be beneficial if congregations could agree on

certain issues, such as conduct during worship services. To increase uniformity, it was decided that a consensus be established and put on record, a document which would define the life and discipline expected among the congregations of the Maryland-Virginia Synod. Schmucker was appointed to a committee "to compose a discipline to be introduced into the congregations connected with this Synod."<sup>29</sup> The final product, authored by Schmucker, was known as the Formula for Government and Discipline.<sup>30</sup> The Formula was much like a "Kirchenordnung." It was a statement addressing such issues as the objects of the church, revivals, purpose for church organizations, form of church government, and discipline procedures. This work is important because it formed the basis of the constitution recommended by the General Synod to its constituent synods.

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<sup>29</sup>Proceedings of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Maryland, Virginia, etc., at Winchester, Va., for the Year 1820 (Baltimore: Frederick G. Schaeffer, n.d.), p. 5.

<sup>30</sup>Formula for the Government and Discipline of the Evangelic Lutheran Church, in Maryland and Virginia (Hagerstown: William D. Bell, 1823). The 1828 Formula for the Government and Discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (General Synod), is an adaptation of this. A reprint of this second document is available in Schmucker's Elements of Popular Theology, with Special Reference to the Doctrines of the Reformation, as Avowed before the Diet of Augsburg, in MCXXX (Andover: Gould and Newman, 1834). For a list of Schmucker's works see Robert Wiederanders, A Bibliography of the Published Writings of Samuel Simon Schmucker (Kankakee, IL: N.p. 1960).

Professor at Gettysburg Seminary  
(1826-1864)

The formation of the Gettysburg Seminary in 1826 is a hallmark event in the saga of American Lutheranism. Although Lutherans had been on the North American continent for nearly two centuries, no institution for the formal education of future Lutheran clergy had been established. This is not to say, however, that the notion never occurred to American Lutheran churchmen, nor does it suggest that attempts in this direction were never made. Wentz insists<sup>31</sup> that the idea of a seminary on American soil went back to H. M. Muhlenberg. Muhlenberg's son-in-law, J. C. Kunze, established the rudiments of a seminary in his New York study, but its prospects as a formal institution were cut short in 1773 during the Revolutionary War. The first concerted effort to build a seminary was made by the New York Ministerium. The Ministerium was bequeathed a large amount of money through the estate of J. C. Hartwig. The New York Ministerium purchased a large tract of land in Otsego County, New York. Named after its foremost donor, the Hartwig Seminary, the first Lutheran Seminary in America, opened its doors in 1815.

The Hartwig Seminary was not as successful as its planners had hoped. One reason for this is that it was quite a distance from major traveling routes. Moreover,

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<sup>31</sup>A. R. Wentz, Seminary History, p. 120.

the Pennsylvania Ministerium, a major source of prospective students, had already taken measures to join with the Reformed Church in Pennsylvania in establishing a single educational facility. And, as far as many Pennsylvania Lutherans were concerned, withdrawal from this joint effort would be in poor faith and might jeopardize possible ecclesiastical merger with the Reformed in the future.

At the very beginning of its establishment in 1820, the General Synod expressed the need for a conveniently located, well-funded, and scholastically oriented institution for instruction of clergy in the Synod. At its first regular session, the General Synod appointed a committee<sup>32</sup> to "form a plan for a seminary." However unrest within the infant Synod necessitated a deferment of the topic. But at a time when many of the Synod's leaders were dividing over polity issues, for example, what is the role of the General Synod in relation to the constituent synods?, Schmucker also worked to keep the dream of a seminary alive. His sermon before the Maryland-Virginia Synod convention entitled "The Intellectual and Moral

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<sup>32</sup>See Proceedings of the Convention for the Formation of the General Synod October, 1920 (Lancaster, PA: J. Schnee, 1820), p. 4 for this overture, and for the followup report see Minutes of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (Lancaster: J. Schnee, 1821), pp. 7-9.

Glories of the Christian Temple"<sup>33</sup> was delivered to arouse the interests of his colleagues to consider what an opportune time it was to establish a seminary. Well-trained clergy were an absolute must if the future of Lutheranism was to have any ray of hope.

Schmucker's persistence was not in vain. An official resolution to establish a seminary came from the 1825 Maryland-Virginia Convention, a sure indication that his words took root. In its 1825 Hagerstown convention, a committee of three, including Schmucker, was appointed to draw up a plan for adopting a Seminary; in the end, the Maryland-Virginia Synod would present this as an overture to the General Synod. Schmucker authored a plan which was quite in keeping with the Princeton Seminary Constitution,<sup>34</sup> the same which the General Synod adopted at its 1825 convention. Immediately, necessary preparations for a seminary were made; a revenue plan was drawn up and a Board of Directors appointed,<sup>35</sup> J. G. Schmucker serving as Board chairman. Schmucker, the individual most responsible for the institution's birth, was elected the seminary's first professor.

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<sup>33</sup>S. S. Schmucker, The Intellectual and Moral Glories of the Christian Temple, Illustrated from the History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Baltimore: William Wooddy, 1824).

<sup>34</sup>A. R. Wentz, Seminary History, pp. 130-31.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 456, for a list of the first Board of Directors of Gettysburg Seminary.

Schmucker served a 37 year tenure as professor at Gettysburg Seminary,<sup>36</sup> a career marked by a number of significant accomplishments. As one could imagine, the work load in a new and growing institution was tremendous. For example, since there was a lack of sound theological material in the English language, a considerable amount of time was spent translating German textbooks and publishing his own for use in the classroom. As the administrator he initiated a program to raise educational funds to assist needy students. Also, simply financing a seminary, paying bills, and keeping all things in balance, kept Schmucker quite busy. As the Seminary "Public Relations Coordinator," he was to see that the infant seminary gain a strong academic reputation. So, in addition to maintaining a seminary and developing a thoroughly sound curriculum he had to prove its worth by producing qualified graduates and promoting scholarship among the professor(s).

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<sup>36</sup>At its March 1826 meeting, the Seminary Board of Directors selected Gettysburg, Pennsylvania for the location of the seminary. The seminary had a rather modest beginning on September 5, 1826, with one professor of theology and fifteen students. Shortly thereafter, a preparatory school was opened in June of 1827. It was a classical school by nature and was called Gettysburg Gymnasium. In April 1837, the Gymnasium was renamed "Pennsylvania College."

In 1834, the General Synod expanded the Gettysburg Seminary a step further by adding Charles Philip Krauth to its staff. He was given the title of president. Being relieved of administrative responsibilities gave Schmucker additional time to concentrate on his role as professor.

When Gettysburg Seminary opened its doors in 1826, Schmucker, its only professor, had the confidence of many. He was an aspiring young man of 27. He was a capable leader, an eloquent speaker, an efficient administrator, and above all, he was well-educated. Moreover, he had convinced many of his dedication to the General Synod. He began a number of programs specifically designed to strengthen it and foster its growth. Thirty-seven years later, at his retirement, the feeling was not the same. During the interim Schmucker became entangled in a theological controversy which tarnished his name and career. Essentially, the controversy concerned the authority of the Augsburg Confession.

By 1850, Lutherans were reexamining the value and worth of the Confessions in terms of the American environment. This resulted in two distinct appraisals. The "repristination" party underscored the timeless pertinency of the Augsburg Confession by proposing, since ("quia") the Augsburg Confession is a correct exposition of the Sacred text, its doctrinal content remains immovable. The other faction, including Schmucker, is called the "American Lutheranism" movement. This movement called into question the Augustana's pertinency, dependability, and validity. If the Augustana can be visualized as a religious platform, the American Lutheranism movement removed

some of the planks from that platform. Schmucker's Definite Synodical Platform (1855) is a foremost representative of American Lutheranism thought. This work by Schmucker rejected several doctrines in the Augsburg Confession as distinctly "romish errors," and contrary to the Scriptures.<sup>37</sup>

The question "what motivated American Lutheranism" has spawned a number of theories, not the least of which is a drive among Lutheran leaders to promote an extensive and radical ecumenical spirit.<sup>38</sup> Many Lutherans wanted to participate in programs which would inculcate cordial relations among the various denominations. Schmucker went even further. He was convinced that Protestants share a common belief system. This gave him abundant reason to propose a single, central organization to embrace all denominations.<sup>39</sup> This warrants two questions: what were

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<sup>37</sup>Schmucker cited five "romish errors" as: baptismal regeneration, the real presence in the Lord's Supper, approval of the ceremony of the mass, approval of private confession and absolution, and denial of the divine obligation of the sabbath. For further information on Schmucker's Definite Synodical Platform and the "American Lutheranism" movement see Nelson, Lutherans, pp. 217-27.

<sup>38</sup>Discussion concerning the ecumenical spirit among American Protestants and its effects upon the General Synod is noted below p. 43 note 1.

<sup>39</sup>Schmucker gives precise details for a centrally organized interdenominational government and offers a specific confession common to all Protestants in his Fraternal Appeal. For a discussion on this topic see below pp. 95-114.

Schmucker's ecumenical characteristics, and, what specifically was his attitude toward the Lutheran Confessions?

Dynamic Features of Samuel Simon Schmucker

Ecumenist

Schmucker's career was so involved in mending the visible unity of the protestant churches that his biographer, A. R. Wentz, considers him as a pioneer who is assigned "a unique place in the beginning of the modern ecumenical movement."<sup>40</sup> Who or what was responsible for Schmucker's irenic spirit has been a topic of debate. Some scholars have turned to Schmucker's Princeton Seminary days as the source of his catholic spirit. For example, Vergilius Ferm writes, it "brought to his ministry that catholic outlook and tolerance which came through personal contact with men of other religious persuasions."<sup>41</sup> Abdel Wentz agrees with Ferm when he observes:

. . . his training measurably influenced his theological views, and his associates there, while they stimulated his zeal for his own church, nevertheless produced a broad-mindedness and tolerance toward non-Lutherans that clashed with the spirit of denominational exclusiveness prevailing about the middle of the century.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>A. R. Wentz, Pioneer, p. 269.

<sup>41</sup>Ferm, Crisis, p. 71.

<sup>42</sup>A. R. Wentz, Seminary History, p. 133.

Beyond his responsibilities to the Gettysburg Seminary, Schmucker sensed the importance which various interdenominational societies of his day played in the promotion and extension of the Kingdom of God. Four societies received his personal participation; namely, the American Bible Society (organized in 1816), the American Education Society (1813), the American Sunday School Union (1824), and the American Tract Society (1825). His devotion in these areas saw him serve as Vice-President of the American Tract Society. In addition, he spoke before their conventions,<sup>43</sup> contributed to their cause,<sup>44</sup> and brought their adjunct societies within the scope of the General Synod and its component synods.<sup>45</sup> In all, Schmucker recognized the need for and benefits of denominational cooperation.

In this context the 1838 "Fraternal Appeal" was prepared for the distinct intention of uniting American Protestants. Related to this work was the formation of

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<sup>43</sup>For example, S. S. Schmucker's "The Happy Adaptation of the Sabbath-School System to the Peculiar Wants of Our Age and Country" (Philadelphia: The American Sunday School Union, 1839).

<sup>44</sup>For example, S. S. Schmucker's Appeal in Behalf of the Christian Sabbath; as Divinely Appointed, and Adapted to Man's Physical, Intellectual, and Moral Being (New York: American Tract Society, 1845), Tract number 502.20.

<sup>45</sup>For example, in 1835 the General Synod, under the request of Schmucker, adopted the cause of the Missionary Society by organizing the Central Missionary Society.

the Society for the Promotion of Christian Unity in 1839, the appointment by the General Synod of a special committee for church unity in 1845, and the convening of the World Evangelical Alliance in 1846. Schmucker played a vital role in each of these organized ecumenical endeavors.

#### Confessional Commitment

The context in which Schmucker began his work leaves little room for one to assess his confessional character. Prior to the confessional movement of the 1840s and 1850s, the Augsburg Confession had little priority as a confessional standard of faith and as a rallying point for Lutherans. The Lutheran General Synod did not even include a confessional statement in its original constitution. But this situation changed over a period of three decades. By 1850, many Lutherans in the General Synod were influenced by the confessional revival. This contributed to a diminution of esteem for Schmucker, who was more interested in excising "true articles of faith" from the Augustana. The General Synod, it would seem, reappraised the benefits of being considered a "confessional church." Beginning from the posture of nonconfessional church body, the Synod became confessional, all within the time span of Schmucker's life. This complicates any attempt to assess Schmucker's confessional attitude in terms of the General

Synod.<sup>46</sup>

Early in his career, Schmucker indicated the need for the General Synod to evaluate the status of the Confessions in the life of the church. He believed the church would benefit from commonly confessing the doctrines of the Christian Church. In a letter to Pastor F. C. Schaeffer of New York, dated February 20, 1820, Schmucker voiced the necessity for the Lutheran church to grant this matter priority. He specifically cited the traditional Confessions of the Lutheran Church as a remedy for the church's confessional waywardness. Bente summarizes Schmucker's letter to Schaeffer:

. . . they had promised to each other to labor with all earnestness that the Augsburg Confession should be raised again from the dust, and that everyone subscribe to its 21 articles, and decree before God, by his subscription, that they agree with the Bible not 'quatenus' but 'quia'.<sup>47</sup>

It was rare that a Lutheran churchman should at this time speak of a "quia" subscription to the Augsburg Confession, a phrase which Bente actually carries over from the original letter. A "quia" subscription gave a

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<sup>46</sup>Nelson, Lutherans, p. 217, comments that the relationship between Schmucker and the General Synod was so intimate that "it is often difficult to distinguish them apart." Perhaps this is an overstatement because the confessional change which took place within the General Synod, see below pp. 74-77, was quite contrary to Schmucker's wishes.

<sup>47</sup>F. Bente, American Lutheranism 2 vols (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919), 2:33.

high status to the Confessions by denoting that they are in complete agreement with the Word of God. Schmucker expressed this same attitude at the opening ceremonies of the Gettysburg Seminary on September 5, 1826. In his charge to Schmucker, D. F. Schaeffer, speaking in terms of the Confessions' normative character, called the professor "to exert yourself in convincing our students that the Augsburg Confession is a safe directory to determine upon matters of faith declared in the Lamb's blood."<sup>48</sup>

Schmucker's inaugural oath has a similar ring:

I solemnly declare in the presence of God and the Directors of this Seminary, that I do 'ex animo,' believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the inspired Word of God, and the only perfect rule of faith and practice. I believe the Augsburg Confession and the Catechism of Luther to be a summary and just exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God. I declare that I approve of the general principles of church government adopted by the Lutheran church in this country, and believe them to be consistent with the Word of God. And I do solemnly promise not to teach any thing, either directly or by insinuation, which shall appear to me to contradict, or to be in any degree more or less remote, inconsistent with the doctrines or principles avowed in this declaration. On the contrary, I promise, by the aid of God, to vindicate and inculcate these doctrines and principles, in opposition to the views of Atheists, Deists, Jews, Socinians, Unitarians, Arians, Universalists, Pelagians, Antinomians, and all other errorists, while I remain a Professor in this Seminary.<sup>49</sup>

This oath, which is a product of Schmucker's own pen, was included in the Constitution of the Gettysburg Seminary as the oath for all future professors.

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<sup>48</sup>Ferm, Crisis, p. 78.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

However, Schmucker's comments pertaining to the Confessions were restrictive in content and intent. First, Schmucker considered the theology of Augsburg Confession to be fundamentally compatible with other Protestant creeds. He proposed that the church at large emphasize only the "fundamental" articles of faith as the platform for unity and cooperation. Speaking of the Formula for Government and Discipline of the church, Schmucker addressed the third session of the General Synod:

The principle which the General Synod conceives to be taught in Scripture, and would recommend to the Church at large, is this: that we should view with charity and treat with forbearance those who have fallen into an aberration of non-fundamental importance either from the faith or the practice of the Bible and the Augsburg Confession; and, on the other hand, that we are bound "not to eat with a fornicator or a covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner" but to "put away from among us such wicked persons," and that "a man that is a heretick, who denies a fundamental doctrine, a doctrine essential to the Christian scheme," we are in like manner bound "after the first and second admonition to reject."<sup>50</sup>

Schmucker held to the belief that certain doctrines were central and crucial to the Christian faith. He maintained that denial of one or more of these articles and the denial of the faith went hand in hand. By the same token he proposed not all articles of faith were essential to the Gospel.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>A. R. Wentz, Seminary History, p. 120.

<sup>51</sup>See above, note 37 for Schmucker's explication of those articles of the Lutheran tradition which he considered were expendable. Schmucker proposed that Christians are to be bound only to fundamental articles. For a definition of fundamental articles see below p. 92.

In addition to binding Lutherans only to the fundamental articles of faith, Schmucker also narrowed his definition of which documents in the Book of Concord actually have any purpose in the Church.<sup>52</sup> Orthodox Lutherans find difficulties with Schmucker's confessional attitude. Traditionally, the Book of Concord is described as those articles which delineate Lutheran doctrine from Roman Catholic and Protestant. Through it the Lutheran confessors gave a clear and concise doctrinal exposition of Scripture. Orthodox Lutherans have always maintained that the entire Book of Concord is to be confessed by all Lutheran pastors and teachers. Schmucker, however, spoke merely of the Augsburg Confession as sharing that distinction, and even then, of only the first twenty-one articles.<sup>53</sup> But who was to be the final judge in determining fundamental articles? Schmucker suggests that Scripture is to be the source of all Christian doctrine but the

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<sup>52</sup>After reviewing many of Schmucker's works, this author has not come across any comment by Schmucker which hints that Lutherans are to consider the Confessional writings beyond the Augsburg Confession with the possible exception of Luther's Small Catechism. In fact, everywhere, Schmucker speaks only of the Augsburg Confession, and even then with certain qualification.

<sup>53</sup>The Augsburg Confession contains 28 articles. The seven disregarded by Schmucker were "Articles About Matters in Dispute, in Which an Account is Given of the Abuses, Which Have Been Corrected." For the articles exempted see The Book of Concord, trans. and ed. by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 48-94.

church's universal concensus arbitrates which doctrine is fundamental.

### Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to examine Schmucker's confessional attitude and to establish his understanding of the role confessions play in the Lutheran Church and in ecumenical discussions. Several points were observed:

- 1) His confessional attitude was in part influenced by Pietism, Puritanism, and Presbyterianism
- 2) He proposed that Scripture alone is the source of doctrine
- 3) The fundamental doctrines of the Augsburg Confession constitute the Confessions of the Lutheran Church
- 4) The Confessions function as teaching tools and as norms of the Christian faith
- 5) The fundamental doctrines of the Lutheran Church (that is, the Augsburg Confession) are in agreement with the fundamental doctrines of Protestantism.

Ahlstrom commented<sup>54</sup> that Schmucker's commitment to the Augustana was "indefinite and even questionable." Schmucker could not have afforded to take the Augsburg Confession in the same vein of seriousness as did his

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<sup>54</sup>See above, pp. 7-8.

Lutheran opponents. If Schmucker believed that the Lutheran Confessions were a correct exposition of Scripture, it is possible that his ecumenical works would have been written differently, if they would have been written at all.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ERA OF THE GENERAL SYNOD: 1820 - 1850

#### Introduction

Samuel Simon Schmucker was a prominent Lutheran cleric of the nineteenth century. Most of his professional life was spent at Gettysburg Seminary where for several years he even labored as the institution's only instructor and administrator. Schmucker was also a formative leader in the General Synod. He headed the movement in the General Synod to establish a Lutheran seminary, and, finally, wrote the Constitution of the Gettysburg Seminary (1826). He recognized the necessity of liturgical and adjudicative uniformity in all congregations in the Maryland-Virginia Synod. This resulted in his Formula for Government and Discipline (1822), a plan quite similar to a German "Kirchenordnung." This same Formula was adopted by the General Synod (1828) and was included in its model constitution for synods composing the General Synod. Schmucker was also influential in a number of synodical resolutions to couple the Lutheran church to

Evangelical Societies (for example, the American Tract Society, Home Missions, Foreign Missions).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Evangelical Societies were a prominent feature of American Christianity in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. These societies were claimed to be nondenominational; that is, they were designed to be administrated independent of and autonomous of any church affiliation. Although they bore the name of no denomination, their membership drew extensively from the Reformed camp (e.g. Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist). It is plain to see that these societies expressed Reformed ideologies. For example, orthopraxy, a formal or informal system which insists on and presses toward correct and proper Christian living, is a motif common to many Evangelical Societies. Orthopraxis, it must be understood, fittingly describes the drive of a sanctified life, thus, the admonition to live a holy life is not incorrect. However, acknowledging the "causa efficiens" of this, the sanctified life, is precisely where Lutheran dogma departs from the Reformed. Lutheran doctrine insists that God is the efficient cause of good works. The attitude and behavior of natural man is ungoly, undeserving of God's grace and mercy. God, however declares man righteous through the merits of Christ, and, by His Spirit, works a new creation in man. The Reformed, on the other hand, suggest that sin has left man only half-dead in spiritual matters. They believe that there remains in man a certain inherent power to accept God and to live according to His standards (opinions regarding the nature and extent of man's power has divided the Reformed Church). The Reformed would insist, then, that man must hear the Gospel proposition in order to respond. In conjunction with this, to make this possible, Bibles must be published and missionaries sent. If God's Word is to be accepted, the heathen must hear God's Word. Moreover, the Reformed presume that the Christian lives in a covenantal relationship with his Maker. Once an individual has accepted Christ's sacrifice, that individual must eradicate any sin which potentially may germinate and frustrate the soul's salvation. But, rather than identify oneself as a source of sin, Reformed bodies often accuse objects external to the self as the perpetrators and instigators of sin. If we are to conform to God's blameless standard, this particular ideology maintains, we must remove anything which may distract our spiritual odyssey. So, whether it be fermented beverages or black slaves, the disuse of the

Schmucker was a member of the General Synod. Why is the General Synod important? Historically the establishment of the General Synod, a confederated body of several Lutheran Synods, marks the beginning of inter-Lutheran synodical cooperation in the United States. Various factors led to its organization. By comparison, Lutherans in America lagged far behind the pace of other denominations. Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Roman Catholics represented a major portion of American society. Unlike Lutherans, these denominations were already served by theological institutions by the turn of the nineteenth century and were governed by a judicative body, characteristics essential both to the stability and growth of any church organization. Lutherans were encouraged,

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Sabbath or the presence of the Roman Catholic Church, these trespasses against the will of the Almighty blemish the American community and jeopardize the salvation of individual souls.

Arguments both in favor and disfavor of Lutheran participation in interdenominational organizations have spoken past one another. One side submits that in cooperating with Christians of another denomination, one, in effect, is in deference to the other's theological system and/or publically states that particular theological items are inconsequential and/or outright condones division and error. On the other hand, some assert that Lutherans must, for the sake of charity, recognize the more expedient task facing Christianity; that is, to quantitatively and qualitatively extend the Kingdom of God. They submit that interdenominational cooperation is the most efficient means available to impliment global evangelization. For the most part, the history of Lutheran participation in interdenominational societies is the dialogue of these two positions.

albeit in a passive way, in the success of other denominations and were impressed by the means to those accomplishments. But, quite aside from comparing themselves to other denominations, "family related" issues compelled Lutherans to establish the General Synod. First, Lutheran congregations needed a way to identify genuine Lutheran clergy. It was not uncommon for a vagabond preacher to take on a Lutheran congregation, and, finally, to disassociate it from the Lutheran communion. Second, an ecclesiastical "court of appeals" recognized by Lutherans throughout the land was wanting. Third, the Lutheran synods needed a common understanding of the ministry and a mutual recognition for one another's ministerial acts.

This is not to suggest that before the General Synod, Lutherans in America were sadly disorganized and without any display of unity. The fact of the matter is, prior to the General Synod, American Lutherans were governed for nearly a century by "ministeria," a regular convocation of clergy to see to the affairs of the church. Nevertheless, the power and scope of the ministeria were restricted essentially to within the parameter of their member congregations. The Pennsylvania Ministerium, for example, had little business in South Carolina. Also, the ministeria were often out of touch with and sometimes at odds with one another. Consequently, the ministerium system proved inefficient and ineffective.

The General Synod was designed to represent all Lutherans in America. It welcomed and honored each one's personal theological expression. This permissiveness resulted in a tremendous diversity of culture, ideology, conviction, and Confessional opinion within the ranks of the General Synod. These characteristics must be kept in mind when considering any issue which faced the General Synod.

#### Lutheranism Before the Formation of the General Synod

By 1820, Lutheranism already had been a component of America religion for nearly two centuries. Essentially, Lutherans were found in two geographic locations: along the Delaware and Hudson River Valleys. A number of Lutheran churchmen had served in North America since Reorus Torkillus, such as John Campagis, Kocherthal, and Berkenmeyer. But if one person were singled out as the foremost Lutheran leader prior to the formation of the General Synod, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg would easily be the choice. Muhlenberg helped establish a number of congregations along the Delaware Valley and in eastern Pennsylvania from the time of his arrival in 1742 until the Revolutionary War. He is especially noteworthy in that he organized the Pennsylvania Ministerium in 1748. The Pennsylvania Ministerium preceded the establishment of the New York Ministerium by 36 years.

The Pennsylvania Ministerium was the first lasting ministerial organization. Its purpose was to draw Lutherans closer together. Under Muhlenberg's direction the Ministerium of Pennsylvania was in doctrinal agreement. Although there was no Constitution until 1781, Richard Wolf comments that the essentials of doctrinal agreement were spelled out in the ordination vow of John Nicholas Kurtz which read:

. . . to teach in my congregation nothing, whether publicly or privately, but what harmonizes with the Word of God and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.<sup>2</sup>

The Constitution of 1781 affirmed the doctrinal agreement of the Pennsylvania Ministerium. This document directs that complaints brought against ministers were to be considered in light of the "plain teachings of the Holy Scriptures and our Symbolical Books."<sup>3</sup>

Following Muhlenberg's death in 1787 a new era for American Lutheranism began. The characteristics of this new era are best described by Vergilius Ferm<sup>4</sup> as Confessional laxity, independent thinking, and open fraternity.

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<sup>2</sup>Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 21-22.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 28. The 1781 Constitution was entitled "Constitution of the Ministerium of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, in Force in 1781."

<sup>4</sup>Vergilius Ferm, Crisis in American Lutheran Theology: A Study of the Issues Between American Lutheranism and Old Lutheranism (New York: Century Co., 1927), p. 19.

The 1792 Constitution of the Pennsylvania Ministerium is often cited as evidence of the Confessional laxity of the Lutherans during the interim between Muhlenberg's death and the formation of the General Synod in 1820. Clifford Nelson<sup>5</sup> underscores several changes made by the constitutional revision. Evidently, Lutherans were attempting to keep abreast of the changing condition of the American environment. In their assessment concerning the implication of this constitutional revision Nelson and Wolf<sup>6</sup> do not consider the absence of a distinct Confessional clause as worthy of comment. Abdel Wentz,<sup>7</sup> although acknowledging this deletion, nevertheless assures the reader that congregations maintained the tradition of Confessional subscription. Nelson, Wolf, and Wentz imply that the Confessions still functioned by giving a congregation a standard of the faith. However, by and large, Lutherans did not take the Confessions as seriously as Muhlenberg. Perhaps Muhlenberg's successors were embarrassed in believing that the Confessions exclude and criticize other denominations.

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<sup>5</sup>Clifford E. Nelson, The Lutherans in North America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), pp. 85-86.

<sup>6</sup>Wolf, Documents, pp. 50-51.

<sup>7</sup>Abdel Ross Wentz, Pioneer in Christian Unity: Samuel Simon Schmucker (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 175.

Fraternity is the second characteristic of the interim. On a ministerial level, Lutherans actually exchanged delegates with other church bodies. For example, Lutherans in North Carolina joined together with the Reformed and established the "Unio Ecclesiastica" in 1787. This organization permitted pulpit exchange and provided a system of clergy substitution. Presumably, Lutherans in the southern portion of the country included a small group of Saltzburgers who emigrated to America during the 1730s, in addition to a number of German migrants from Pennsylvania. By 1791 the Lutheran representation was sufficient enough to organize the Lutheran Ministerium of North Carolina. The Lutherans continued to exchange delegates with other denominations and they allowed nonLutherans to join the Ministerium. The Moravian Gottlieb Schober, for example, joined the Ministerium of North Carolina in 1810.

If a lack of numerical strength precipitated fraternal relations between Lutherans and the Reformed in North Carolina, limited resources and inadequate facilities brought Lutherans and the Reformed together in Pennsylvania. As Germans spread throughout Pennsylvania, it occasionally happened that there were not enough Lutherans or Reformed in a given area to support a church. Under these circumstances, "simultania" frequently were found. A "simultanium" was a joint house of worship made possible

as Lutherans and Reformed combined their resources. When many simultania were first constructed, the two denominations remained as separate congregations sharing a common building. Very often, however, the two congregations merged.

Creating an institution to supply clergy was a pressing item among all American Christian denominations after the Revolutionary War, with the possible exception of the Roman Catholics. Since American churches could no longer rely on European sources for ministers, it became necessary to establish theological institutions in America. But, Lutherans and the Reformed could ill-afford separate educational facilities. To solve the dilemma the two denominations combined their resources and sponsored a program at Franklin College in 1787.

Briefly, it can be said that Lutherans and the Reformed of Pennsylvania were well acquainted with one another. In many cases they shared the same worship building and for many years they supported the same theological institution. As a natural development in 1818, the Ministerium of Pennsylvania appointed a committee to consider union with the Reformed.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>See Proceedings of the Pennsylvania Ministerium of 1818, 1819, and 1821 in Documentary History of the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Other States. Proceedings of the Annual Conventions from 1748 to 1821 (Philadelphia: Board of Publication of the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America, 1898), pp. 516-17, 521, 537, and 580.

Rationalism was a third feature of the Lutheranism during the interim between Muhlenberg's death the formation of the General Synod. Quitmann's Catechism of 1814 is often cited for its flagrant display of Rationalistic principles applied to matters of faith. Spaude comments that this catechism "was filled with doctrines bristling with Rationalism and latitudinarianism."<sup>9</sup> Another catechism similar in spirit to Quitmann's was widely circulated in the south, it was called the Velthusen Catechism<sup>10</sup> commonly known as the "North Carolina Catechism."

#### The General Synod

##### Formation

By 1817, most of the Lutherans in America were organized into three ministeria; namely, New York, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. Each ministerium had qualities all its own. There was Quitmannism, Anglicanism, and Rationalism in New York, Germanism and Unionism in Pennsylvania, and Moravianism and Velthusenism in North Carolina.

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<sup>9</sup>Paul W. Spaude, The Lutheran Church Under American Influence (Burlington, IA: Lutheran Unity board, 1943).

<sup>10</sup>This catechism was circulated under the title Helmstaedtischer Katechismus oder Christlicher Religionsunterricht nach Anleitung der Heiligen Schrift, though it became known by its shorter title the North Carolina Catechism. The work is discussed in Arthur Christian Repp, Luther's Catechism Comes to America (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1982), p. 79.

No single organization tied the three together. But in 1818, the Pennsylvania Ministerium invited the other ministeria to consider whether cooperation might be possible.<sup>11</sup> The meeting of the Pennsylvania Ministerium at Baltimore in 1819 took up the memorial of 1818. During the year's interim, New York, North Carolina, and newly formed Ohio ministeria had been contacted concerning Pennsylvania's resolution. Unable to send delegates to the Baltimore meeting as requested, letters approving the idea of a central organization were issued from New York and North Carolina. Gottlieb Schober, secretary of the North Carolina group attend the Baltimore meeting. He is important because he had in his possession a "Proposed Plan"<sup>12</sup> (called the Plan Entwurf) for the formation of an organization designed to mediate in certain inter-synodical affairs. This convention, then, took Schober's work as a constitutional rough draft. John Tietjen's

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<sup>11</sup>The resolution of the Pennsylvania Ministerium reads: "Finally, that the Synod thinks it were desirable if the various Evangelical Lutheran Synods in the United States were to stand in some way or another in closer connection with each other, and that the venerable Ministeria be charged to consider this matter, to prepare a plan for a closer union if the venerable Ministeria deem it advisable, and to see to it that this union, if it be desirable, be brought about, if possible." In Documentary History Ministerium of Pennsylvania, p. 517.

<sup>12</sup>For a copy of the Plan Entwurf see Wolf, Documents, pp. 54-58.

critique of the "Proposed Plan" lends insight into the document's specifications.

The main body of the proposed plan shows that the purpose of the general organization was to unite the Lutherans of America in doing the practical work of the church. The general organization was to provide literature for the synods, make liturgical changes, fix grades in the ministry, and function as a court of appeals in cases of dispute.<sup>13</sup>

The "Proposed Plan" was to provide an agreeable context for Lutheran ministry and a workable model of inter-synodical government. The "Plan" was to serve as a basis for discussing the feasibility of a central governing body, also, as the framework for a constitution, until official action could be taken. However it created more division than unification. By 1820 the "Plan" was ratified by the Maryland-Virginia and North Carolina synods, adopted (though with some disappointment) by Ohio, flatly rejected by New York, and essentially ignored by Pennsylvania. The 1820 Constitutional Convention of the General Synod, at Hagerstown Maryland, came under two criticisms. Those who rejected the "Plan" thought the governing body was either too centralized and powerful or they felt a national organization might stifle potential merger with resident denominations. A comparison between the "Proposed Plan" and the 1820 Constitution reveals that these

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<sup>13</sup>John Tietjen, Which Way to Lutheran Unity? (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 16.

criticisms were taken into consideration.<sup>14</sup> For example, with regard to introducing new books and examining those already in use, the "Proposed Plan" gave the General Synod broad control. The "Plan" specifically states,

The General Synod has the exclusive right with the concurrence of a majority of the particular Synods to introduce new books for general use in the public church service as well as to make improvements in the Liturgy.<sup>15</sup>

Its successor reduced the authority of the General Synod. The 1820 Constitution permitted the General synod only to advise in matters of publications. The 1820 Constitution reads,

The General Synod shall examine all books and writings . . . and give their well considered advice, counsel or opinion concerning the same.<sup>16</sup>

Evidently, the alterations were insufficient to satisfy those representatives who demanded greater autonomy for the member synods. Dissatisfied with the power reserved to the new Lutheran body New York and Ohio withdrew from the General Synod in 1820, as did the Ministerium of Pennsylvania in 1823.<sup>17</sup> At its 1825 Convention,

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 16-17.

<sup>15</sup>Wolf, Documents, p. 56.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>17</sup>F. Bente, American Lutheranism 2 vol. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919), 2:17 points out that the removal of the Pennsylvania Ministerium from the General Synod depleted the representation of Luther-ans by one half.

the General Synod was composed of only three "district synods" (that is, Maryland-Virginia, North Carolina, and West Pennsylvania). Four Synods were not members. The Pennsylvania Ministerium was among the four. Its absence left a substantial number of Lutherans (Pennsylvania Ministerium consisting of half of the Lutherans in North America) outside of the General Synod. For all intents and purposes the General Synod failed in its objective to provide a theological and ecclesiastical forum for all Lutheran synods.

#### Transformation

The General Synod of 1850 was not like the General Synod of 1820. Over thirty years, this Lutheran Church organization changed with regard to synodical affiliation, attitude to the Confessions, and to other church bodies.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>The following overview concerning the General Synod's synodical, Confessional, and ecumenical transformation is crucial in assessing the General Synod's attitude toward Schmucker's "Fraternal Appeal." The General Synod was less receptive of this unionistic handbook in 1850 than when it was first introduced in 1838. Perhaps this is because the Synod itself had a different character. For a discussion concerning the General Synod's response to this unionistic document see below, pp. 143-63.

Numerical/Synodical Accretion

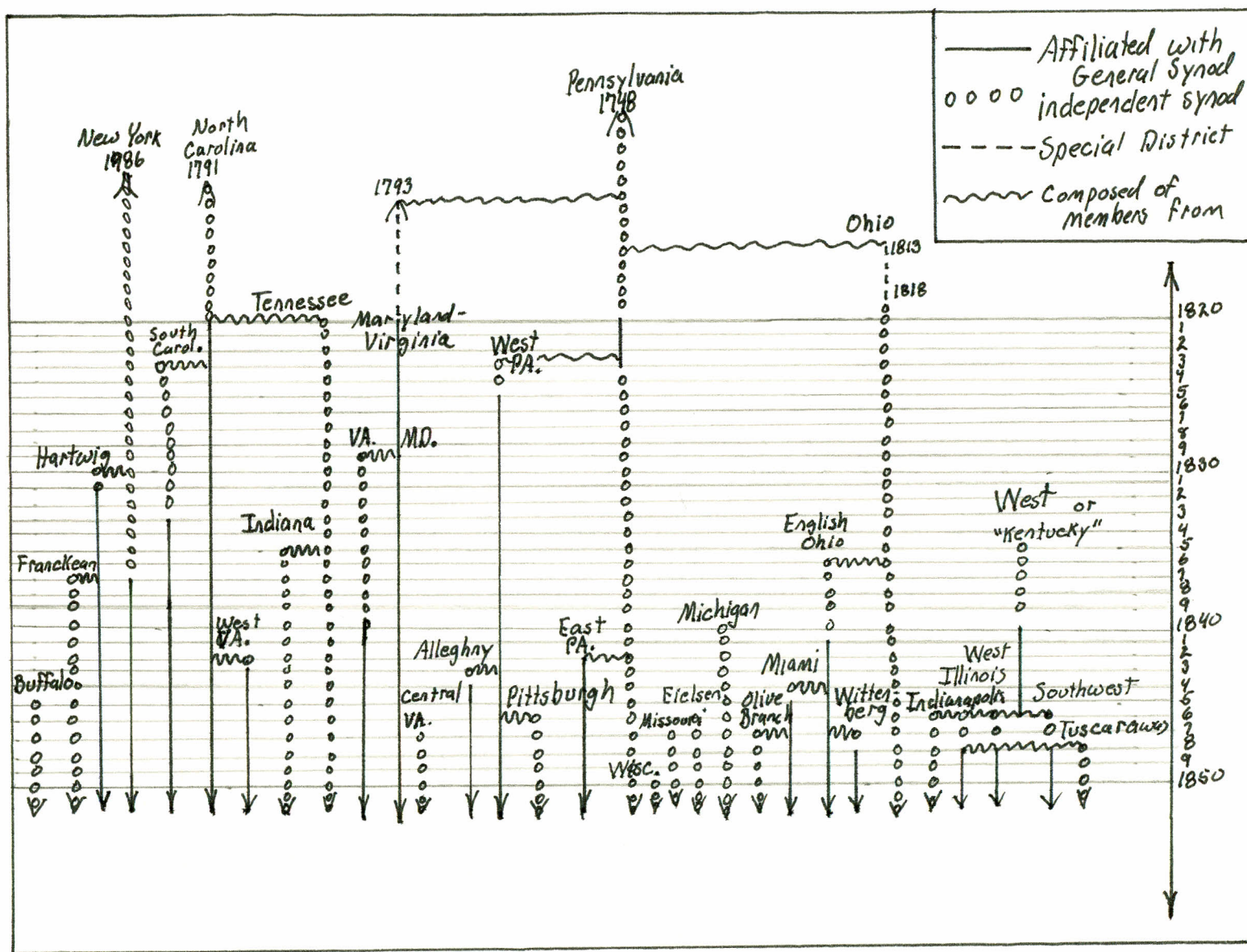
At its 1820 Constitutional Convention, the General Synod was composed of three district synods, namely, North Carolina, Maryland-Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Prior to the convention, New York and Ohio had withdrawn their names from the roster. In 1823, dissatisfaction over particular items of polity led to Pennsylvania's secession. The issue of governance caused considerable strife during the infancy years of the General Synod. But by 1825 everyone who wished to leave the General Synod on account of its centralized government had done so.

In 1850 the General Synod consisted of seventeen district synods. Fifteen synods were not represented (see chart on page 57). The following discussion concerns the proliferation of synods committed to the General Synod. The presentation divides the country into three regions. Region I covers New York and Pennsylvania; Region II covers Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas; and Region III covers Ohio and the west.

#### Region I

New York and Pennsylvania were two ministeria which withdrew from the General Synod during its infancy. Among these ministeria a pro-General Synod movement established

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IN AMERICA FROM 1820 TO 1850



four additional synods. The Hartwig Synod,<sup>19</sup> formed in 1830, was composed of clergy essentially from the Western District of the New York Ministerium. Hartwig was sympathetic toward the General Synod and one year after its formation it affiliated with that ecclesiastical body. Hartwig had distinct characteristics: it sought for a deep spiritual life, it saw the benefits of revivals,<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>The basic points on the history of the following synods may be drawn from general histories of American Lutheranism; therefore, this author will not mention the works unless specific information must to be acknowledged. For a history of the Hartwig, New York, and Franckean Synods see Harry J. Kreider, History of the United Lutheran Synod of New York and New England, 1786-1860 (Philadelphia: Mulenberg Press, 1954).

<sup>20</sup>Revivals were a common feature of American Christianity during the period from 1820 to 1850. Revivalism and camp meetings were a part of of the Second Great Awakening. If one can say that an objective of the Second Great Awakening was to reconvert the church, to instill it with new life, and to invigorate it with enthusiasm, than revivalism was a technique to bring this about. Revivals occurred throughout the country. Basically, a revival was a religious gathering of citizens of a given region. They came together to hear preachers, to sing, to pray, and to join in the festivities which accompanied the revival. Revivals were especially common in New York thanks to Charles Finney. For a discussion of the early leaders of the Second Great Awakening see Sydney A. Ahlstrom, "The Second Great Awakening in New England: Revival, Evangelism, and Reform," in Religious History of the American People (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), pp. 415-28. For an in depth review of revivalism and its impact in a specific area see Whitney Cross, The Burned-Over District (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1950).

it participated in various evangelical societies,<sup>21</sup> it had an aggressive home missions policy, and it regarded the Augustana as a "substantially correct" Confession of faith. The New York Ministerium (1786) joined the General Synod in 1837. Because New York was still jealous of its autonomy, it agreed to join the General Synod after the polity issue was clarified. The clarification was documented as "New York Ministerium's entrance, 1836."<sup>22</sup> Essentially, the document emphasized that the General Synod "be regarded as an advisory body only," and that

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<sup>21</sup>See above, p. 43 note 1. As were revivals, interdenominational societies were a common feature of American Christianity during the first half of the nineteenth century. Ahlstrom, Religious History, pp. 422-28 comments that evangelical societies were of three types. The first type is reformatory. A number of societies (e.g. the American Temperance Union) were designed to instill proper moral conduct in society. The second type was missionary. This second category covers a majority of the societies and includes interests such as, missionary work, publications, and education. The third type of evangelical society was humanitarian. These societies sympathized with the poor, the imprisoned, the handicapped, and the slaves. We might add a fourth type of evangelical society: ecumenical. Perhaps this fourth type epitomized the intention of the entire evangelical movement. The American Society for the Promotion of Christian Union (1839) is an example of an ecumenical society. Although this society terminated within two years, its objective was adopted by the World Evangelical Alliance, formed in 1846. Schmucker's, "Introduction," The True Unity of Christ's Church (New York: Anson Randolph and Co., 1870), pp. 13-49, offers the most information on the SPCU this author has seen, as well as a very fine overview of the objectives of the E.A.

<sup>22</sup>See Wolf, "New York's Entrance, 1836," Documents, p. 90 for a copy of the provisions which led to New York's entrance.

every decision by the General body be subject to district approval. New York's entrance is important in that it demonstrates a deliberate compromise on the part of the General Synod. This means that the church body was willing to give up some of its power and jurisdiction to appease its members and to attract new prospects. In the case of New York, this policy was interpreted to mean that the ministerium was not required to forfeit its liturgy and hymn book.

The Pennsylvania Ministerium did not rejoin the General Synod until 1853. Pennsylvania's withdrawal in 1823 reduced the General Synod to two district synods and thus created a dilemma in synodical protocol. Article VII of the Constitution stipulated that decisions of the General Synod were to be made by a two-thirds majority. But how might a majority be determined among two synods? The situation was resolved when, through Schmucker's efforts,<sup>23</sup> a small faction broke from the Pennsylvania Ministerium. This group established the West Pennsylvania Synod. Its entrance into the General Synod (1825), converging with the Maryland-Virginia and North Carolina synods, fulfilled the necessary requirement for a quorum.

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<sup>23</sup>This event was recollected by Schmucker before his students at Gettysburg. A portion of this lecture may be found in Peter Anstadt, Life and Times of Rev. S. S. Schmucker (York, PA: P. Anstadt and Sons, 1896), pp. 133-35.

The synod consisted of churches west of the Susquehanna. In 1842 a group split from the West Pennsylvania Synod and formed the Allegheny Synod. Among the reasons for the split the resolution cited dissatisfaction over the size of the West Pennsylvania synod and a desire for closer and more convenient organization.<sup>24</sup>

A second division from the Pennsylvania Ministerium occurred in 1842 involving congregations in the eastern portion of the state. At the Pennsylvania Ministerium convention a memorial requesting a peaceful removal was presented. The memorial cited the size of the ministerium, language difference, view regarding the General Synod, and desire for greater expression and liberty in worship (for example, revivals) as reason to disassociate with the larger body.<sup>25</sup> This group became The Synod of East Pennsylvania and joined the General Synod in the same year of its establishment.

## Region II

The central and southern portion of the General Synod, Maryland south to South Carolina and west to Tennessee and Kentucky, likewise saw considerable activity.

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<sup>24</sup>William Harrison Carney, History of the Allegheny Evangelical Lutheran Synod (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1918).

<sup>25</sup>History of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of East Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1893).

The Maryland-Virginia Synod of 1820,<sup>26</sup> grew out of the "Virginia Special Conference" (1793) of the Pennsylvania Ministerium. Eisenberg notes that the purpose for a "Special Conference" was a) to promote the welfare of the respective congregations, b) to advance the interests of German schools, and c) to transact business on a local level.<sup>27</sup> John George Schmucker was a member of this Conference. On May 30, 1820, this conference was granted permission by the Pennsylvania Ministerium to form an independent synod. The Maryland-Virginia Synod is important because it supplied the General Synod with a significant number of leaders, including John Kurtz, David Schaeffer, Benjamin Kurtz, Charles Philip Krauth, and Schmucker.

Through the 1820's the Virginia population steadily grew. By 1829, the Virginia Lutheran representation was large enough to organize a synod. The Virginia Synod came into existence as a small group peacefully withdrawn from the Maryland-Virginia Synod. This synod likewise withdrew from the General Synod in 1830 over polity issues. By 1839 the differences between Virginia and the General

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<sup>26</sup>William Eisenberg, The Lutheran Church in Virginia (Lynchburg, VA: J. P. Bell, 1967) is an excellent survey of Lutheranism in this area. The work also provides information concerning Lutheranism throughout the south.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

Synod were resolved and Virginia rejoined the General Synod. As in the case of New York, the relationship between Virginia and the General Synod was clarified to read:

. . . in regard to the General Synod, it was resolved that since the modification of its constitution has made it an advisory body, that approval be given the changes and the connection with the General Synod be made through the adoption of its constitution.<sup>28</sup>

Removal of the Shenandoah group in 1829 left only Maryland representatives in the original Maryland-Virginia Synod. Consequently, this group renamed its organization the Maryland Synod. The Maryland synod remained with the General Synod; it was one of two synods (the other North Carolina) which lent continual support to the General Synod since its inception in 1820.

Further south, the North Carolina Synod<sup>29</sup> had existed since 1803. This synod was rooted within the 1787 "Unio Ecclesiastica," a ministerial society of Lutheran and Reformed clergy.<sup>30</sup> Five pastors were charter members of the North Carolina Synod, which in turn became a charter member of the General Synod. The North Carolina

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 164.

<sup>29</sup>Along with the information provided by general Lutheran Church histories, Eisenberg, Lutheran Church in Virginia, is a tremendous help in sketching the development of Lutheranism in North and South Carolina and West Virginia.

<sup>30</sup>See above, p. 49 for a discussion of the "Unio Ecclesiastica."

synod saw two divisions. The first came in 1823 as a southern group withdrew "because fulminatory pamphlets had begun to spread censure, contention, party-spirit, and destruction in congregations."<sup>31</sup> An eruption within the North Carolina synod in 1822, a dispute between George Schober and Philip Henkel,<sup>32</sup> precipitated the formation of the South Carolina Synod. This synod joined the General Synod in 1833 understanding that the General Synod is only an advisory agency. The second division from the North Carolina happened in 1842.<sup>33</sup>

In 1842 six clergy successfully petitioned North Carolina and formed the West Virginia Synod. The West Virginia synod is special because it maintained cordial relations with both the North Carolina synod and the Tennessee synod.<sup>34</sup> Since 1822, North Carolina and Tennessee were bitter enemies. It exacted a theological and

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<sup>31</sup>Nelson, Lutherans, p. 123.

<sup>32</sup>For a discussion of Paul Henkel and the formation of the Tennessee Synod see below, pp. 68-70.

<sup>33</sup>South Carolina joined the General Synod providing: 1) that the General Synod be strictly advisory; 2) that no recommendation of the General Synod be binding; 3) that the South Carolina Synod reserve the right to introduce books and literature; and 4) that the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary be permitted to remain open. These provisions are found in Extracts from the Minutes of the Tenth Annual Session of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of South Carolina (Savannah, SC: Thomas Purse, 1834), p. 12.

<sup>34</sup>Eisenberg, Lutheran Church in Virginia, p. 175.

political flexibility for any organization to mediate between the two. West Virginia associated with North Carolina through the General Synod; likewise with Tennessee through certain "gentlemen's agreements." For example, West Virginia and Tennessee agreed that the James River be a geographical dividing line. Neither synod would proselytize on the other's "territory." The West Virginia synod joined the General Synod in 1843.

### Region III

The Lutherans of Ohio and the west likewise saw a considerable number of Lutheran synods in 1850. In 1831 the Ohio Synod was renamed the Joint Synod of Ohio.<sup>35</sup> This synod, like Maryland-Virginia, evolved out of the Special Conference of a Pennsylvania Ministerium set up in 1813. Because the Pennsylvania Ministerium did not permit this Conference to form into a synod, it seceded from Pennsylvania. Ohio was equally antagonistic toward the

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<sup>35</sup>In this section, the following works provide a wealth of information; Willard Allbeck A Century of Lutheranism in Ohio (Yellow Springs, OH: Antioch Press, 1966); Idem., "John Stough: Founder of Ohio Lutheranism," Lutheran Quarterly 12 (February 1960): 25-43; Clarence Sheatsley History of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Books Concern, 1918); and Arthur Smith A History of the East Ohio Synod of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church 1836-1920 (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Books Concern, 1924).

General Synod and accused the central body of autocracy. Tensions which unsettled the Lutheran synods at this period (for example, language, revivals, new measures,<sup>36</sup> relation with other Christians) especially troubled the Joint Synod of Ohio. Its first schism was over language. In 1831, Ohio divided into Western and Eastern districts. In 1835 an English district was organized within the Eastern district. One year later, the English group withdrew from the synod accusing Joint Ohio as too Confessional and too German.<sup>37</sup> This faction formed the East Ohio Synod. In 1840, the East Synod of Ohio was renamed the English Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Ohio. The English Synod joined the General Synod in 1841.

In 1844, ten clergy in southwest Ohio split from the English Synod and formed the Miami Synod. Members of the Miami Synod sought to mediate between Joint Ohio and English Synod by remaining sympathetic to the new measures

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<sup>36</sup>Charles Finney was widely known for utilizing "new measures" during his revivals. His new measures were: 1) protracted meetings, 2) prayers directed at individuals, 3) permitting women to pray in public, 4) attacking "unconverted" clergy, and 5) use of the "anxious bench." For a discussion of the new measures movement among Lutherans and the controversy which it precipitated see David Bauslin, "The Genesis of the 'New Measures' Movement in the Lutheran Church in this Country," Lutheran Quarterly 40 (July 1910): 360-91; and Frank Seilhamer, "New Measure Movement Among Lutherans," Lutheran Quarterly 12 (May 1960): 121-43, this second work being a condensed version of the author's dissertation.

<sup>37</sup>Sheatsley, History of Joint Ohio, p. 114.

while accepting the Augsburg Confession as a substantially correct exposition of the faith.<sup>38</sup> Miami joined the General Synod in 1845. Miami likewise experienced a division. Three years following its organization, the Olive Branch Synod of Indiana was established. Olive Branch joined the General Synod in 1850.

In 1847, a second group left the English Synod. This group, under the leadership of Ezra Keller and S. Sprechin, organized the Wittenberg Synod. This group left the English Synod because it felt the English was too large and conventions were too far away.<sup>39</sup> The Wittenberg Synod adopted the constitution of the Miami Synod but without the preamble's statement on the Augsburg Confession. In 1848, this synod joined the General Synod.

In 1835, a group of around ten clergy banded themselves and formed the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of the West (sometimes called the "Kentucky Synod"). This group worked closely with the English Synod, especially in educational endeavors. In 1840 the Synod of the West adopted the "Model Constitution for Member Synods" and affiliated with the General Synod. In 1846, this synod had a four-

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<sup>38</sup>For a copy of the Miami Synod's constitution see Proceedings of a Convention and of the First and Second Sessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Miami (Baltimore, MD: Publication Rooms of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1845), pp. 29-39.

<sup>39</sup>Allbeck, Century of Lutheranism, pp. 119-20.

fold geographic division. This resulted in a) the South-west Synod, covering the territory of Kentucky and Tennessee, which joined the General Synod in 1848, b) Illinois, which entered the General Synod in 1848, c) Evangelical Lutheran Synod of the West, including the territory of Indiana, also joining the General Synod in 1848, and d) the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Indianapolis, consisting of the German portion of the original synod. Indianapolis defected from the General Synod on account of the "Overture for Union" of 1845.

#### Independents

There was nearly an equal number of synods not connected with the General Synod. These synods included the Pennsylvania Ministerium (1748), Joint Ohio (1818), Tennessee (1820), Kentucky (1822-1823), Indiana (1835), Franckean (1837), Melancthon in Virginia (1835), Michigan (1840), Pittsburgh (1845), Buffalo (1845), Eielsen (1846), Indianapolis (1848), Central Virginia (1847), Missouri (1847), Tuscarawas (1848), and Wisconsin (1850).

If the Confessional commitment of each synod could be plotted along a spectrum, the Tennessee Synod<sup>40</sup> represented the orthodox and traditional end. This synod was

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<sup>40</sup>For information on the Tennessee Synod see Bente, American Lutheranism, 1:148-237; L.A. Fox, "The Origin of the Tennessee Synod." An address delivered at its Centennial Celebration in Linconton, NC, October 14, 1920 (N.p., n.d.); and Socrates Henkel, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod (New Market, VA:

organized in 1820 by a schism within the North Carolina Synod. Historians have suggested slightly different reasons for the rupture in the North Carolina Synod. Nelson, for example, cites the personality conflict between Schober and David Henkel.<sup>41</sup> Quite apart from personal incompatibility, Fox proposed that the two had theological differences. Fox writes:

The Tennessee Synod came into existence not because Schober and David Henkel were embittered against each other, but because the heterodoxy of the one and the orthodoxy of the other could not remain in the same synod.<sup>42</sup>

Wentz concurs with Fox;

The Tennessee Synod was formed in protest against the "un-Lutheran teaching and practice" of the North Carolina Synod, and which was based doctrinally on "the Holy Bible . . . and the Augsburg Confession of Faith as a pure emanation from the Bible."<sup>43</sup>

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Henkel and Company, 1890); for a discussion concerning the contribution and work of Paul Henkel as church organizer, missionary, and author, see William Finck, "Paul Henkel, the Lutheran Pioneer," Lutheran Quarterly 56 (July 1926): 307-34; and B. J. Pershing, "Paul Henkel Frontier Missionary," Lutheran Church Quarterly 7 (April 1934): 125-51.

<sup>41</sup>Nelson, Lutherans, p. 117, writes:  
 "For several years tension had been mounting in North Carolina Between Secretary of Synod Shober [sic] and David Henkel, the most brilliant and aggressive of Paul Henkel's six sons."

<sup>42</sup>Fox, Tennessee Synod, p. 6.

<sup>43</sup>Abdel Ross Wentz, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Maryland 1820-1920 (Harrisburg, PA: Evangelical Press, 1960), p. 128.

Bente<sup>44</sup> and Ferm<sup>45</sup> likewise regard the separation of the Tennessee synod as due to doctrinal matters.

Tennessee was quite unlike any Lutheran Synod east of the Mississippi River before 1850. The Tennessee Synod declared all symbolical books of the Lutheran Church as a "directory in theology." This motion set the Tennessee synod confessionally apart from its colleagues in the General Synod. In short, the Tennessee synod proposed that Confessions serve as a theological norm for the contemporary church and provide a viable standard for ecclesiastical practice. Tennessee joined in the spirit of Lutheran orthodoxy. It maintained that the Confessions were Scriptural in content and Catholic in spirit. Consequently, Tennessee repudiated the unity efforts spearheaded by Schmucker. Tennessee accused him of unionism and appraised his assumptions as un-Scriptural and un-Lutheran.

If Tennessee represented the orthodox end of the confessional spectrum, the Franckean Synod<sup>46</sup> represented the non-confessional end. This synod was formed as four clergy separated from the Hartwig synod in 1837. The Franckean Synod was influenced by the revivalist Charles Finney. This faction deemed separation from the larger

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<sup>44</sup>Bente, American Lutheranism, 1:148-58.

<sup>45</sup>Ferm, Crisis, p. 64.

<sup>46</sup>Kreider, History of New York, pp. 105-15.

Lutheran community necessary in order to freely pursue a deeper religious commitment. Doctrinally, it pursued a "Bible alone" policy. Kreider characterizes this group of "pseudo-Lutherans" as of the Neo-Pietist, holiness trend which stressed deeds rather than creeds. They advocated a radical conversion for church membership and boasted of a "converted ministry." Moreover, the Franckean Synod zealously supported societies for moral reform (especially anti-slavery efforts) and efforts for church unity. In 1839, the General Synod denied membership to the Franckean Synod and warned members "to beware of the efforts of these men who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the spirit of the Gospel."<sup>47</sup>

#### Ecumenical Diminution

Generally speaking, the ecumenical mood of the General Synod diminished from 1820 to 1850. At first, the synods comprising the General Synod frequently exchanged representatives across denominational lines. This gesture continued the practice of their forefathers.<sup>48</sup> When reading the minutes of these synods, one senses a concerted effort to bridge the traditional denominational gap

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<sup>47</sup>Proceedings of the Tenth Convention of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (Gettysburg: H. C. Neinstedt, 1839), p. 17.

<sup>48</sup>See above, pp. 47-51.

separating Lutherans from other Christians. In 1821, the North Carolina Synod seriously considered a "Plan of Union" with the English Episcopal Church.<sup>49</sup> In 1822, the Maryland-Virginia Synod deliberated over the issue of union with the Reformed. The minutes read:

The subject of union with the German Reformed Church was introduced and is considered as one of great moment by this synod, meriting the attention of the General Synod.<sup>50</sup>

In some instances, synodical representatives were commissioned to attend convocations which were expressly unionistic. In 1835, Henry Pohlman of the New York synod reported on the convention of the New York Congregational Association. The synod secretary writes concerning Pohlman's report:

His attendance there has, also, convinced him that were Christians to cherish more of a friendly intercourse with each other, the separating walls which ignorance and prejudice have raised, and which hitherto prevented a union of action and effort in building up the Redeemer's kingdom, would fall like Dagon before the ark of God.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Minutes of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of North Carolina from 1803-1826, trans. F.W.E. Peschau (Newburry, SC: Aull and Housel, 1894), p. 48.

<sup>50</sup>Proceedings of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Maryland and Virginia (Baltimore: Frederick G. Schaeffer, 1822), p. 10.

<sup>51</sup>Minutes of the 40th Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of the State of New York and Adjacent Parts (New York: H. Ludwig, 1835), p. 11.

In 1846 West Virginia Synod actually proposed for union with the Presbyterian Church.<sup>52</sup> In the same year as West Virginia's proposal, the Virginia Synod issued a statement "On Christian Union" praising Schmucker for his efforts toward the unification of Christendom. The statement also encouraged the objectives of the Evangelical Alliance.<sup>53</sup>

The synods of the General Synod were also active in the life of evangelical societies. Without exception, each synod informed its congregations of the work of these societies, and in some instances, district synods established a society which affiliated with a National Organization. For example, Hartwig joined the Sunday School Union in 1833 and the Temperance and Anti-Slavery societies in 1836. The Maryland Synod joined the Tract Society in 1833 the Home Missions Society and the Education Society in 1835.

Despite all these proposals, however, this most striking fact remains: during this period no merger was effected by any member synod of the General Synod with a

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<sup>52</sup>Minutes of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and Ministerium of Western Virginia and Adjacent Parts (Baltimore: Publication Rooms of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1846), p. 7.

<sup>53</sup>Minutes of the Sixteenth Annual Session of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Virginia (Baltimore: Publication Rooms of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1846), p. 26.

church body outside of the Lutheran tradition. There was a subtle hint in the late 1840s that the General Synod had begun to relinquish its unionistic stance. This can be gleaned from the General Synod's lack of enthusiasm for the Evangelical Alliance.<sup>54</sup> But in a more obvious way, a resolution by the West Pennsylvania Synod in 1848 signifies a changed ecumenical mood. Speaking in reference to the building of joint houses of worship with the Reformed (that is, simultania) it was:

Resolved, That we concur with them [the Reformed] on this recommendation, and would urge upon all our ministerial brethren and laymembers, hereafter not to encourage the building of any new houses of worship on the union principle.<sup>55</sup>

### Confessional Rediscovery

The General Synod included no confessional statement in its 1820 constitution. By 1850, the General Synod had become aware of its Lutheran heritage and had altered its confessional character. As in the case of its ecumenical change, the General Synod's confessional transformation was subtle and indirect. For example, the professors

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<sup>54</sup>The Evangelical Alliance was a confederated body of all Christian denominations. Some have suggested that this ecumenical body was created in response to Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal. For comments on the Evangelical Alliance see below, p. 157.

<sup>55</sup>Minutes of the Twenty-fourth Annual Meeting of the Synod of West Pennsylvania (Gettysburg: H. C. Neinstedt, 1848), p. 19.

of Gettysburg Seminary were committed to teach according to the Augsburg Confession. Part I of the Seminary's Constitution directed the Seminary professors to teach the "fundamental articles of the Sacred Scriptures, as contained in the Augsburg Confession."<sup>56</sup> Therefore, it is likely that the graduates of Gettysburg carried over an appreciation of the Confessions into their ministry. For example, the Hartwig Synod declared that "subscription to the fundamental articles of the Augsburg Confession" is important in the life of the church.<sup>57</sup>

Various synods were interested in publishing the Augsburg Confession for use in its congregations. As early as 1804 the North Carolina Synod recommended that the twenty-one Articles of the Augsburg Confession be published for distribution. From this point, North Carolina has a peculiar history of being more "Confessional" than its colleagues in the General Synod. In 1825, it explicitly recommended that that Luther's Small Catechism be the text for catechetical instruction; a similar resolution was passed by West Virginia in 1843. In 1831 West Pennsylvania recommended to the General Synod that it publish a Lutheran Manual containing the Augsburg Confession.

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<sup>56</sup>Wentz, Maryland History, p. 120.

<sup>57</sup>Extracts from the Minutes of the Second Session of the Hartwig Synod and Ministerium of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the State of New York (Troy, NY: Norman Tuttle, 1832), p. 31.

This resolution was followed by Hartwig (1832). In 1850 West Pennsylvania appointed a committee to consider the feasibility of publishing Luther's Small Catechism, the Augsburg Confession and the Formula of Concord.

A handful of synods even expressed a confessional position in their constitutions. For example, Section II of the Preamble of Miami Synod's Constitution affirmed the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism as documents which set the teachings of the Lutheran Church.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, the Preamble to the Constitution of the English Synod stipulates,

. . . anyone will be rejected who denies that the doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession of faith are not the fundamental doctrines of the Lutheran Church.<sup>59</sup>

Finally, Lutherans could not but appreciate their heritage when synods commemorated distinctly Lutheran events,<sup>60</sup> but especially when the General Synod called for a synodical celebration in honor of the Lutheran Centenary in 1841.

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<sup>58</sup>A copy of Miami's Constitution is found in Proceedings of a Convention and of the First and Second Session of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Miami (Baltimore: Publication Rooms of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1845), pp. 29-39.

<sup>59</sup>Quoted in Sheatsley, History of Joint Ohio, p. 110.

<sup>60</sup>In 1842 the General Synod commemorated the history of Lutheranism in America through a Centenary celebration.

Summary

Schmucker was a leader in the General Synod. The General Synod was a confederated church organization designed to consolidate the Lutherans in America to achieve prescribed goals. Theologically the General Synod was complex. The complexity was due, in part, to a synodical, ecumenical and Confessional transformation of the General Synod from 1820 to 1850. This chapter has pointed out that the General Synod from 1820 to 1850:

1. grew from three district synods to seventeen
2. had a diminution in ecumenical interest
3. rediscovered its Lutheran heritage.

During this same period, the General Synod experienced a number of controversies and often it appeared disjointed. This was due to its confederative design. On account of its political policy, the central body was unable to direct its constituent synods to speak with a unified voice. Consequently, the ecumenical and Confessional changes occurred inconsistently and unevenly. Thus, while some synods called for a confessional revival, others never even mentioned the Lutheran symbols. And again, while some synods spoke freely and praised ecumenical efforts, others seldom mention non-Lutheran denominations.

### CHAPTER III

#### S. S. SCHMUCKER'S 'FRATERNAL APPEAL'<sup>1</sup>

##### Introduction

Samuel Simon Schmucker's career included activities ecumenical in character. His ecumenical efforts were rather extensive and produced a significant impact on American Christianity. Briefly, it may be said that this nineteenth century ecumenist not only desired closer relations among Christians in theory, but that he also sought to express in an organizational way a visible unity in the church. The "Fraternal Appeal" is Schmucker's handbook for church unity. By and large the "Fraternal Appeal" has received little attention by Church historians. It seems

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<sup>1</sup>For the sake of terseness "Fraternal Appeal" will refer to the work by Schmucker which, in full, is entitled, Fraternal Appeal to the American Churches, with a Plan for Catholic Union on Apostolic Principles. The first edition appeared in a periodical and therefore will be referred to by quotation marks. A year later the second edition appeared in book form, and will be cited with an underscore. The third edition appeared under the title True Unity and will be thus cited in the body of this paper. Pagination will refer to the edition under consideration. It is quite beyond the scope of this present work, but it may prove beneficial for one to consider the relationship between Schmucker's confessional innovations, educational thrust, and ecclesiastical polity in the light of his prized ecumenical work, the "Fraternal Appeal" sometime in the future.

that this significant ecumenical contribution is overshadowed by the impact of the "American Lutheranism" controversy of the 1850s. Although many historians have examined Schmucker's role in the "American Lutheranism" movement, little has been done with his "Fraternal Appeal."

This chapter is intended to be a document study of the "Fraternal Appeal." It is designed to address questions which the reader may quite naturally raise - for example, "what was the 'Fraternal Appeal'?"; "what were its contents?"; "who was its audience?"; "what was its aim?"; and "what occasioned the work?"

The "Fraternal Appeal" appeared in three editions. The first edition came in 1838 under the auspices of the American Biblical Repository, "an interdenominational theological journal."<sup>2</sup> This edition was well received by many churchmen. Due to its success, a second, enlarged edition was published the following year. This second edition, appearing in book form, was envisioned someday to rest on the bookshelf of every cleric's study in America as a manual of fellowship.<sup>3</sup> Thirty-one eventful years, both for Schmucker and the advocates of the ecumenical

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<sup>2</sup>This description of the magazine is borrowed from Fraternal Appeal to the American Churches with a Plan for Catholic Union on Apostolic Principles, with an Introduction by Frederick K. Wentz, ed. F. K. Wentz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965; being a reprint of the second edition, 1839), p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 44 "Preface to the first Edition."

movement, expired until a third edition of the "Fraternal Appeal" was requested. This edition, which extends considerably beyond the "terminus ad quem" of this work, came under the title The True Unity of Christ's Church.

The 1838 Edition of the 'Fraternal Appeal',<sup>4</sup>

Occasion

The "Fraternal Appeal" was the author's striking response to his perception of the existing condition of the Christian Church. Schmucker perceived the church to be in a state of disunity, disarray, and confusion. This conclusion is the result of a conscientious study of the subject, which Schmucker claims was

. . . first urged on him by providential circumstances about twenty years ago [as a student at Princeton Seminary], and frequently since pursued by extensive investigations into the organization and experience of the church in the different ages of her history."<sup>5</sup>

In his estimation, the church was flagrantly divided and devoid of the unity expressed in her Savior's wish "that they be one" (John 17:21). In Schmucker's eyes, the fact of the matter is,

. . . the body of Christ [is] rent into different divisions, separately organized, professing different creeds, denouncing each other as in error, and often

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<sup>4</sup>The first edition of Schmucker's "Fraternal Appeal" appeared in two articles in The American Biblical Repository, 11 (January 1838):86-131, and (April 1838):363-415.

<sup>5</sup>Schmucker, Fraternal Appeal, 2nd ed., p. 43.

times, hating and being hated; his [a true member of Christ's body] spirit is grieved within him, and he asks how can these things be among brethren [page 87]?

The "Fraternal Appeal" is addressed "to the American churches of every denomination." It is written in the interest of the "Redeemer's kingdom," that is to say, in the wish for unity and cooperation. Its intended outcome is that Christ's kingdom might be extended both at home and abroad. The preface expresses the hope that the "Fraternal Appeal" will vivify an interest in and a restoration of the principles and theology of the primitive Christian church. Only then might the contemporary church see its gross negligence and error. To this end, the "Fraternal Appeal" is divided into two parts. The first part begins with a summary of the author's investigation into the life and doctrine of the primitive church and develops into a full-blown remedy for the evils presently plaguing the church. The remedy is essentially a recapitulation of the features of the primitive church. The second part of the "Fraternal Appeal" is an eclectically fashioned confession of faith. Presumably every denomination may subscribe to this confession with little or no complaint.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>The idea of fashioning a compromising confession was not novel in the history of the Christian church (e.g., the Heidelberg Confession), yet this particular confession proved more inclusive of the vast theological variety in existence and more successful in the interest of ecumenicity than any of its predecessors.

## The Appeal

The first section of the "Fraternal Appeal," which strictly speaking is the appeal, is designed to answer several questions elicited by the present condition of the church. The questions include: 1) are schisms due to the diversity of opinion permissible?, 2) what are the characteristics of union in the primitive church?, 3) what are the causes of sectarianism in the Protestant church?, and 4) what will remedy the evils of sectarianism?

Before he begins to answer the four questions, the author establishes five premises,<sup>7</sup> namely; a) no one house of worship can contain all the Christians in the world, b) (consequent of the first premise) there must be different houses of worship, c) all the several denominations presently in existence are part of the true visible church, d) each denomination holds dissident views in one degree or another so logically some error is attributed to each sect, and e) all men, ministers and laymen, are fallible.

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<sup>7</sup>These premises are essential to the ensuing exposition. By way of observation, it is clear that the author's premises focus on human limitations (e.g., the human race cannot be at the same place at the same time) and attributes (e.g., every human makes mistakes). Throughout this discussion there is no mention of an invisible spiritual unity which might explain the Redeemer's petition "that they may be one." Moreover, the author speaks of unity as a human exercise; the bond of Christian fellowship is a work of human hands.

Having established his premises, the author continues by examining each of the four questions.

Are schisms due to diversities  
of opinion permissible?

Schmucker answers this question in the negative for three reasons. (a) First, Scriptural injunctions (for example, 1 Corinthians) testify that the church is not to be concerned over non-essential issues which might prove divisive. Schmucker observes,

The simple facts that they were baptized into Christ and into Christ alone, i.e. were members of the church in good standing, and that Christ must not be divided, are the only arguments which he [Paul] deems requisite to prove the impropriety of their [the Corinthian's] divisions and of their assumption of different names [page 91].

But there were some exceptions. Heretics, for example, were a common feature of the primitive church. These deserved to be cast out of the church altogether because they denied a fundamental doctrine of the gospel, "that is a doctrine unitedly believed by all the orthodox churches" (page 92). How is a heretic identified? Obedience to doctrines selected by the Church divide a true Christian from a heretic. A heretic is an individual who departed from the church's magisterium. One is not a heretic if, in being cast out from one community, he is received into the communion of another. In these cases, the individual was wrongfully excommunicated, because he

violated articles of faith of a group which were non-essential and non-universal. When rightly understood, heresy is a rare exception in the church. Generally, and more positively speaking, a Christian community ought to learn willingly to permit divergent doctrines. Schmucker comments,

As a rule, we ought not separate from our brethren, for any error which we believe them to entertain, and which does not in our most conscientious judgment deprive them of all claims to the character of Christians [page 93].

Presently, however, the church acts in defiance of this Scriptural injunction. The author observes,

. . . it is evident that the union inculcated by the apostle, is such, as is inconsistent with the divisions which he reprobates, and such divisions substantially are those of the present day, which are all based on some difference of doctrine, forms of government, or mode of worship among acknowledged Christians [page 95].

(b) Secondly, Schisms due to the diversity of opinion were not permissible on account of the example of the apostles and of the apostolic age. It is well known that the apostles were not always in agreement. For example, differences of opinion were expressed between Paul and Peter (Gal. 2:11-14), Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:5), and Jewish and Gentile converts (page 96). In the face of these differences and for the sake of peace, the individuals involved honored a principle, which at best can be described as "mutual forbearance." The lesson to be learned from these examples is that opinions are to be

kept in their proper place. Whether it be over meats offered to idols or circumcision, each person's opinion is to be respected.

How does this apply today? Can the church-at-large live according to the same fraternal spirit? The author wishes that it could, but since the church is torn by issues comparatively more complex than those in the primitive church, organic unity is impossible. But this should not trouble us because even in the primitive church no single body sat in judgment over the affairs of its members. Schmucker writes,

As to a union of all the churches of the land in one compact ecclesiastical system of judicature, such a one did not exist in the apostolic age, is undesirable, and dangerous [page 99].

(c) Thirdly, the baneful effects of sectarian divisions testify that schisms due to diversities of opinion are not permissible in the Christian church. The author would have us see that the baneful effects are legion. For example, if every community would be radically exclusive each congregation would lack theological diversity. If there was a lack of diversity, Christians would be unable to discipline themselves to be patient, kind and understanding. Another example of the baneful effects is that schisms eventually lead to unhealthy competition. For example, at sometime or another schismatics will proselytize in the same field as their fellow Christians,

albeit of another community. This situation creates "contention, rivalry and jealousies among fallible men" (page 101). Furthermore, sectarianism encourages a partial and biased scholarship of the sacred volume. To comprehend what is meant by partial and biased scholarship, one must first understand that two types of doctrine exist. First there are the "undisputed," those held in common by all sects. The second are the "disputed," those which distinguish sects from one another (page 101). The author believes, "The sectarian principle builds a wall of defence around the peculiar opinions of each sect [i.e. the disputed doctrines]." That is to say, in due course, each sect indoctrinates its constituents with the presumed truthfulness of its own interpretations, even to the point of declaring variant opinions anathema.

The sectarian division is a serious matter. It has resulted in a retardation of the church's mission work. By failing to consolidate her resources, the church has failed to convert the world. In fact, church division has had a negative effect in mission work. Presently, ecclesiastical "family feuds" (page 104) portray a contradiction. In the eyes of the unconverted the very proclaimers of reconciliation are unable to enact reconciliation among themselves, and it is concluded that the Christian message is without substance and power.

The author summarizes the discussion of the first question by declaring that the church is guilty of "suicidal error." It is suicidal in that ultimately its present condition will reap self-destruction. The baneful effects of sectarianism frustrate the Spirit, and when the Spirit is frustrated the church's life source fades. It has been said that the church is just one generation from extinction. This means that unless converts are made in each succeeding generation, the church will cease to exist. We are not far from this, Schmucker warns. Moreover, a divine judgment will be pronounced upon the church because of its error. The Lord of history will not bless an organization which violates His express will and command.

What are the characteristics of union  
in the primitive church?

The author's treatment of this section is fundamental for his recommendations to the church of the 19th century. His critique is of the primitive church portrayed in Fuch's Bibliothek der Kirchenversammlungen and Neander's Allgemeine Geschichte der Christlichen Religion und Kirche.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>One work to which Schmucker makes reference is August Neander's Geschichte der Pflanzung und Leitung der christlicher Kirche durch die Apostel, als selbstständiger Nachtrag zu der allgemeinen Geschichte der christlichen Religion und Kirche (Hamburg: F. Perthes, 1847; the first edition was issued in 1832). This author, having investigated into historical bibliographies, the National Union Catalogue, and the British Museum General Catalogue of Printed Books, was unable to gain information concerning

Schmucker mentions negative and positive elements of the primitive church.

Three negative elements

(a) Unity in the primitive church "did not consist in any compact ecclesiastical organization of the entire church in a nation or empire under one supreme judicatory" (page 106). There were, however, occasions, for example, Acts 15, when the church gathered in convention consisting of apostles, elders, and brethren in Jerusalem. In Acts 15 we see that this type of meeting was for a specific purpose. In the case of Acts 15 the church gathered to settle a dispute over the obligation of christian converts to observe "the law of Moses." This assembly is not to be confused with our present idea of a synod. Acts 15 narrates a meeting "pro re nata" (approximately meaning, "for the reason it is born") in nature. This meeting was called, not to handle the ordinary affairs of the church, but to settle a single issue which beset the church.

In addition to the fact that these meetings were convened for a special purpose, it can be observed that conventions of the primitive church met infrequently, as occasion should arise.

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the second work, Fuch's Bibliotek der Kirchenversammlungen, footnoted on page 111 of Schmucker's first edition of the "Fraternal Appeal."

(b) A distrust of the centralization of power is again expressed in the author's second characterization of the primitive church. The unity of the primitive church was not in "the organization of the whole church on earth under one visible head" (page 110). Any church which claims unity by identifying itself with an individual is in error. Predictably, Schmucker speaks out against the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church. According to Roman Catholic doctrine the sacerdotal office in the church receives its authority and power from the Pope, Christ's Vicar on earth. The Pope receives his power by virtue of his apostolic succession, extending back to St. Peter, the one to whom Christ entrusted the keys of the Kingdom (Matthew 16). Schmucker writes,

It is easily perceptible, how this erroneous idea of the necessary visible combination of all the churches under one organization, as the supposed exclusive channel of the divine influence and favor, would naturally tend to facilitate the ultimate adoption of the papal hierarchy; for here, and here alone, in the holy father, is to be found one visible, tangible head, adapted to the one universal visible church. That this opinion however, was not that of the apostles or of the apostolic age, is confirmed by the concurrent testimony of all writers in the earlier centuries [page 112].

Through the first two negative points of church unity, the author would have the reader understand that the church-at-large is not to be governed by a council nor by an individual. The primitive church observed extreme congregational autonomy. The local congregation is the

final authority in the church. This principle ruled out any possibility for a higher judiciary (be it in convention or reserved for an individual) beyond the local congregation. No synods, no meetings imposed their resolutions upon a congregation. Yet the congregation was not self-centered; it did not consider itself above or apart from other congregations. In a way each congregation is intimately and mysteriously related to another by virtue of the faith held in common. For the sake of consensus congregations consulted with brethren in other parts of Christ's body. However, adds the author, the church always had to fight off the "natural tendency of consolidation in church" (page 108). Where human impulse is involved it is the tendency for congregations to establish stronger ties with another. This tendency was checked in the primitive church through a fear that a congregation might forfeit its autonomy.

(c) The third point parallels the anti-council, anti-autocrat principle, and specifically addresses the question of unanimity of doctrine. Did the primitive church have doctrinal consensus? Schmucker responds negatively: "the unity of the primitive church did not consist in absolute unanimity in religious sentiments" (page 113). It has already been pointed out<sup>9</sup> that differences

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<sup>9</sup>See page 84 and the discussion concerning the way the Apostles handled their disagreements.

of opinion did exist in the primitive church. Now the author offers a second argument; namely, there was no doctrinal consensus in the primitive church. Scriptures, he states, "contain no provision to preserve absolute unity of sentiments on all points of religious doctrines and worship" (page 113). Primitive Christians knew, and were able to distinguish, those articles of faith which were important. These were called essential doctrines (also called "fundamental" and "universal"). Essential articles were those which indisputably identify the Christian. However, the doctrinal corpus also included articles which were non-essential. These, Scripture wisely inculcated in "indefinite language" thereby allowing several valid interpretations. Each interpretation was considered on equal footing with the other. If certain passages of Scripture have been interpreted differently, then each interpretation must be honored. Schmucker states that absolute doctrinal agreement is unimportant to the unity of the church:

The diversity of views derived from these records by the several religious denominations of equal piety, of equal talent and equal sincerity, indisputably establishes the fact, that they do not contain provision for absolute unity of sentiment among Christians [page 113].

And again,

Now as they have left many points of doctrine and forms of worship and government undecided, and as they do not express with philosophical precision the doctrines which they do teach, it is a just inference that one reason why these minor differences are not obviated in the church, and all truly pious, able and faithful Christians do not agree on all points is that

the sacred volume has not made provision for such absolute unanimity. Let no one here assert that human language is so deficient and the education and habits of men so diverse, that they will impose different constructions on any composition. The contrary is the case [pages 113-14].

Remaining true to the "toleration principle," primitive Christians often had to contain their eagerness to excommunicate those who rendered differently the interpretation of a specific theological issue. Romans 14:1-13 sets an attitudinal precedent. In this passage Paul encourages his fellow believer to honor and respect the attitude of another. Even if the occasion should arise where a brother falls into fundamental error, hasty excommunication would violate a far greater principle, mutual toleration. Schmucker cites as an example the case in the Corinthian church where certain members denied the resurrection of the body. Schmucker remarks that although the apostle certainly vindicated the truth of the bodily resurrection, the congregation was not instructed to discipline the violator(s).

Schmucker attempts to convince the reader that excommunication is a mark of an easily offended, somewhat paranoid congregation. Whereas the mission of the church is to build the body of Christ and to forgive all unrighteousness, a congregation's foremost duty is to serve, not to sever, to instruct, not to destruct. Schmucker's point is, a congregation should at all costs retain fundamental

errorists as members in good standing. This policy is the most constructive means of correction. How else may a falsity be corrected than to surround it in truth?

#### Six Positive Elements

Schmucker submits six positive elements of primitive church unity in addition to the three negative elements discussed above. The six elements actively serve as "principal external means of manifesting and perpetuating [the] unity of spirit among the primitive christian churches" (page 118).

(a) First, "Entire unity of name" served as a means of uniting the early Christians. Unlike today, scoffs Schmucker, the primitive church was called by one name, namely, "Christian." In stark contrast sectarianism and party spirit presently divide the body of believers into a multiplicity of names. Would that the apostles speak to our hypocrisy! Such a variety of names is detrimental to the church's mission. Partisanship can only breed distrust, envy, hatred, and jealousy. Denominationalism inculcates an attitude which not only weakens a firmly established organization, it also diametrically opposes Christianity's mission of reconciliation. Schmucker suggests, a single categorization, even a common name, will diminish rabid sectarianism and restore the church to a wholesome level of fraternity.

(b) Schmucker quite frequently addresses the issue of those Christians who wander from the universally accepted teaching of the Christian community. At this point the author identifies the dividing line which distinguishes essential from non-essential articles. He does this by defining normative doctrines of faith. Schmucker begins his definition by stating, "unity of opinion on all fundamental doctrines, that is, the profession of a creed of fundamentals" (page 120) is the second positive bond of unity. We can conclude that the early church maintained a normative body of doctrine on two counts. First, Scripture itself alludes to the fact. For example, the apostle's injunction "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints" and again "I have delivered that which I have received" hint that his audience had some understanding of the crucial articles of faith. Important teachings eventually were written down. For example, through the centuries the church found it convenient to have its catechumens (those receiving instruction to enter the church) study and bind themselves to the universally accepted articles of faith. This document came to be known as the "Apostles' Creed." The Apostles' Creed is important for our purposes because it documents what the primitive church universally understood the Scriptures to teach. It also incontestably establishes the fact that

the primitive church "deemed it lawful to require unanimity only in fundamental doctrines" (author's emphasis) (page 120). With regard to the entire corpus of Christian doctrine we must keep a significant point in mind. Only fundamental articles united the primitive Christians. Any disputed teaching was considered non-fundamental and peripheral to the central issues of the Christian faith. Consequently, fundamental articles of faith were "sine qua non" to Christianity.

In his exposition concerning unity in fundamentals, Schmucker seems to say that non-fundamental articles are related to fundamental articles as a quality is to a thing, or to put it into scholastic terms, as an accident is to a substance. For example, what a congregation believes regarding the nature of Christ's presence in the Eucharist is unimportant. Concerning the eucharist some groups teach transubstantiation, some real presence, some a symbolic presence, and still others consubstantiation. In every instance, Schmucker insists, the differences are over semantics and are superficial. The differences concern non-fundamental articles. This is not to say that the eucharist is non-fundamental, because the church universally practices this rite. But the way each denomination expresses the mystery of this sacrament is non-essential, and not binding upon any individual.

(c) The primitive church recognized one another's act of discipline, the third bond of union. If a particular congregation excommunicated a member, that member could not gain admission into any other congregation. In support of this claim, Schmucker quotes Canon 5 of the Council of Nicea, convened in 325 A.D., which reads:

In regard to those persons, whether clergymen or laymen, who have been excommunicated by a bishop, the existing rule is to be retained, namely, that they shall not be restored by any other than by the one who excommunicated them [page 126].

(d) The fourth bond of union among the primitive Christians was "sacramental and ministerial communion" (126). This fourth element speaks of two types of communion,<sup>10</sup> namely, sacramental and ministerial. There was sacramental communion in that members of one congregation were permitted to receive the sacrament in another congregation. This is no small matter. Refusing a valid

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<sup>10</sup>By way of criticism, Schmucker does not investigate the nature of the sacrament except in using it as a visible sign of an intangible reality (unity). Often he is confusing. He speaks of a unity in the primitive church and indicates that sacramental communion was an element of that unity. Did sacramental communion "create" unity or did it "express" unity? Was the unity invisible (e.g., faith in the heart) or was it visible (e.g., doctrinal consensus)? The confusion is compounded when Schmucker takes occasion to apply his notion of primitive sacramental communion to the present. He suggests that the church should have sacramental communion as a sign of its unity. But throughout his discussion he indicates that the church is disunited, is severed into several sects. If the church is disunited why allow a sacred act which presupposes unity?

communicant to one's table would be in violation of the apostle's injunction "For we being many, are one bread and one body for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:17). There also was ministerial communion in that clergy of one congregation were received with equal status in another congregation. For the sake of order, reception into a cooperating congregation required a validated certificate on the part of the minister. This certificate simply indicated that the person in name was a member of another congregation. This practice was regulated at the Council of Nicea. Canon 32 reads:

Let no one receive strange (foreign) bishops or presbyters or deacons without letters of recommendation; and the letters that are brought must be examined. If they prove to be pious preachers (preachers of piety) let them be received: but if they do not; their immediate necessities should be supplied, but, they must not be received into communion. For many instances of fraud have occurred in this matter [page 128].

(e) The fifth means by which unity was "promoted and preserved among the primitive Christians," albeit the weakest, was through "occasional epistolary communication" (page 128). The remains of a substantial number of letters (for example, the New Testament epistles) indicates that churches and individuals maintained a level of communication. This practice, in the opinion of Schmucker, stabilized the church. Sound and efficient communication insured quick and accurate reporting. This gave the church

some continuity in sharpening its teaching and in clarifying its mission. Through epistles and messengers, congregations communicated their experiences with one another.

But communications also had a negative effect. Schmucker notes quite often the church experienced difficulty in containing heresies simply because the proponents dispensed of their thoughts through letters and other forms of literature. Epistolary communication, then, also confirmed heretics in their error.

(f) Finally, "The last bond of primitive union was the occasional consultation of different churches by representatives convened in a council or synod." (page 130) At first, this observation may seem to be a reversal of what has been established earlier.<sup>11</sup> At this point Schmucker is referring to the "pro re nata" type of convocation. The very fact that congregations willingly meet is, to Schmucker, a signal of unity. But, Schmucker was jealous for the autonomy of the congregation. If a congregation should choose to seek counsel from another congregation, either formally in a convention or informally through a letter, the counsel is to be regarded strictly as advisory. Even a decision by a synod or the

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<sup>11</sup>See page 95. Namely, the unity of the primitive church did not consist of a single judicatory body or a sole head (e.g. Pope).

counsel of another congregation is subject to congregational approval.

What are the causes of sectarianism  
in the Protestant church?

Having surveyed practices of the primitive Christian church, the author of the "Fraternal Appeal" refocuses the discussion. Basically, in the next section he attempts to characterize the practices of the Protestant church since the Reformation. The author has, by this point in the discussion, established his argument in favor of the visible, tangible unity of the church as fundamental to its nature. In this section he would have his reader observe the visible disunity of the church. In the end, the reader is to be convinced that the state of the church is "inconsistent with the practice of the apostolic church" (page 364). Presuming that sectarianism has, like a cancer, infected the church, he asks whence did it arise? Schmucker offers several possibilities.

Protestants, already one generation removed from the Reformation controversies, learned a habit of self-interest. Rather than working to reunite the Protestant church (Schmucker assumes that the Protestant leaders originally were of one mind), second generation Protestants thought particularization to be more expedient and beneficial. This attitude came about through persecution.

Fleeing from papal interdict, Protestants retreated to where they might safely live and teach according to the dictates of their conscience. While in isolation, these bands assumed sectarian names. They increasingly saw fit to emphasise their peculiar points of doctrine, and "paying little interest in the church as a whole, [they] calculated to cast into the back ground the fundamental unity which actually [existed] between them" (page 364). They erred. In assuming that controversial matters (for which they were persecuted) were of great import, they defaced a guiding principle of the primitive church. As a result, the Protestant church has forgotten the principle: unity in fundamental articles. The creeds they developed sinfully elevated nonfundamental articles to a status equal to fundamental articles.

In principle, Protestants were free to regather under "mutual toleration," yet this did not happen. Since the sixteenth Century, nonessential issues wedged parties further apart. Denominational literary works and disputations are filled with rabid criticism and unrestrained jealousy of an opponent's views. Under the present system, Schmucker sees little hope for reform. Unless drastic measures are put into effect the church will continue to perpetuate this same sectarian attitude. Training of ecclesiastical leaders, for example, is sectarian in nature. Formal institutions of theological training or the

informal instruction received in a pastor's study presume a course to inculcate the student with a sectarian tradition. Whether Lutheran, Episcopalian, Methodist, or Baptist, each Protestant party indoctrinates its succeeding generation with its theological and ecclesiological presumptions. Furthermore, the training often disallows any possibility for future doctrinal discussions and compromise since a denomination's curriculum often includes a ruthless castigation of the theology of an opponent sect. Consequently, Protestant groups have assumed a smug and arrogant attitude, and each considers itself to be the one and only true church on earth.

Sectarian idolatry or man-worship is another of the sectarian strife. Schmucker claims that Protestant churchmen by and large have a narrow perception, realization, and appreciation of the literary contributions available from the denominational gamut. Why should a Lutheran read Calvin's work?, is an example of what often is on the lips of professors. Generally, each churchman settles for the literature corresponding to his own denomination. Schmucker writes:

Enter the theological schools or the private libraries of ministers, and you will find that generally Lutherans and Calvinists and Episcopalians and Baptists and Methodists, devote most of their time to the study of authors of their own denominations, and this peculiarity may also be distinctly traced in the libraries of many lay Christians [page 372].

As a result of this narrow scholarship, churchmen are intellectually sterile. They do not challenge their minds with alternative and provocative concepts. Consequently, few churchmen truly understand what the other side is saying. This intellectual isolationism has left churchmen to speak only ignorantly at best of the theological position of another denomination. How can one criticize the thought of another unless he fully comprehend the subject at hand? With this, no wonder sectarianism has endured. But, adds Schmucker, will denominations have any reason to remain apart after they have thoroughly examined the teaching of other sects?

Ecclesiastical pride is another cause of sectarian strife. Since the Reformation, and especially in America, denominations have seen fit to ignore their fellow believers. Schmucker writes:

Each sect is naturally disposed to regard its institutions and its ministers as the most learned and able, or its members as most genteel, or its rites most fashionable, its churches most splendid, or its members the most pious, its pales as far the best road to heaven [page 374].

The church, of which Christ has prayed "that they be one," is in fact disjointed. In the end, it must be admitted that this institution is divided because it has fashioned itself on envy, arrogance, pride. The church is guilty of an attitude quite apart from the principles and standards initiated and commanded by its Creator.

Schmucker considers the church's tangible unity and its missionary success to be positively related. The more unity there is, the more efficient will be its mission. "Let us unite for the sake of winning people to Christ," seems to be the thrust of his appeal.

Finally, "conflict over pecuniary interest" is another cause of sectarian strife. Historically monetary considerations have destroyed the most intimate friendships, the greatest of empires, and the most sound institutions. This aspect of human nature, the inclination to measure success and find fulfillment in quantity, is present in the church. Congregations have been known to "steal" members of another congregation to increase enrollment, revenue, and prestige. Since a clergyman's salary and a church's facilities hinge on the size of the parish, to increase this prestige, congregations have feverishly sought to inflate their membership.

The causes of sectarian strife continue to exist in the Protestant churches. Schmucker implies that the American churches, in fact all the churches of the world, have forfeited the simple and wholesome principles established by Christ and the apostles. For the sake of the more immediate calling, for example, to make disciples and to be one, Schmucker would have the church bring an end to all its division and strife.

What will remedy these evils?<sup>12</sup>

This final section actually is the author's original contribution to the ecumenical movement. As the remedy, he submits a unity based on the principle of denominational confederation.<sup>13</sup> Denominational confederation must possess the following attributes:

1. It must require of no one the renunciation of any doctrine or opinion believed by him to be scriptural or true.
2. It must concede to each denomination or branch of the church of Christ, the right to retain its own organization, or to alter or amend it at option, leaving every thing relative to government, discipline, and worship, to be managed by each denomination according to its own views for the time being.
3. It must dissuade no one from discussing fundamentals and non-fundamentals in the spirit of christian

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<sup>12</sup>See pp. 99-114.

<sup>13</sup>Schmucker also evaluates two popular theories for church unity in his day. One called for all denominations to join, in every respect, one denomination. The other theory suggested that the denominations converge and construct an eclectic constitution. Schmucker rejected the first theory on the grounds that it would prevent Christian liberty. According to the first theory individuals would be forced to accept another set of doctrines. Schmucker also felt that the second theory is not feasible. There is no way that all churchmen could agree to a single constitution. Schmucker writes:

"But the writer is unable to perceive how these denominations could all unite on any middle ground of church government. We must either have diocesan bishops or practise ministerial parity; and any plan, constructed on the principle of uniformity, must adopt either the one or the other, and could not enjoin both" [page 381].

Through this discussion Schmucker clearly rejects any possibility for organic unity.

love, and amicably showing why he believes some non-fundamental opinions held by any of his brethren to be incorrect.

4. The plan must be applicable to all the orthodox christian denominations, to all that are regarded as portions of Christ's visible church on earth [pages 379-80].

Schmucker's theory of confederation attempts to permit each denomination to maintain its theological heritage. But while Baptists remain Baptist and Methodists remain Methodist, each denomination will participate in a central government. The author believes that denominational confederation is more in keeping with "apostolic principles, more feasible, and more safe" (page 382) than any plan thus far in history. The plan is embraced in seven features, explicated in seven clauses.

(a) The first feature permits each denomination to retain its traditional organizational and doctrinal formulations. The clause reads:

The several christian denominations shall retain each its own present ecclesiastical organization, government, discipline, and mode of worship [page 382].

The author is comfortable in allowing multiple modes of denominational government to exist along side of a central, representative body. Schmucker believes that it is perfectly within his right to frame a church polity. He maintains that Scripture prescribes church organization for the sake of order but it does not impose a specific polity. Therefore, Christians are at liberty to select a

church government which accommodates their particular situation.

Schmucker does recognize the benefit of a centralized organization. For example, a church government embracing all denominations would facilitate a more efficient missionary program. Schmucker hopes that eventually the church will unite under a single system, but realizes that at present such an organization is out of the question. Without precaution an organically united church runs the risk of becoming a "new hierarchy." It is easy to see that an organically united church might impose such things as a uniform worship. For this reason, a polity honoring local tradition is more logical.

(b) The second feature mandates each congregation to acknowledge the validity of another congregation's doctrine. The clause reads:

Let each of the confederated denominations formally resolve for itself, not to discipline any member or minister, for holding a doctrine believed by any other denomination whose christian character they acknowledge, provided his deportment is unexceptionable, and he conform the the rules of government, discipline and worship adopted by said denomination [page 384].

This second feature assumes that each Christian denomination and each Christian congregation, by definition, profess all which is necessary to bear the title "Christian." Logically no single congregation may excommunicate a member if the doctrine in question is held by another

Christian congregation. For example, a member of a Lutheran congregation may not be excommunicated for being a lodge member providing another congregation will take him in. This argument rests on Schmucker's understanding of fundamental articles.<sup>14</sup>

To establish uniformity each denomination is to draw its doctrine from Sacred Scripture. Schmucker writes:

The judgment of each denomination, as to the most important points of doctrine taught in the Scriptures is confessedly set forth by the creed which it professes. Hence those doctrines which are taught in common by the creeds of all the so-called orthodox Protestant denominations, and as far as they unitedly taught, may be safely regarded as clearly revealed in the book of God [page 388].

The church strives for divine truth. But, how is the Church to understand divine truth. The author is imbalanced on this point. He states that Scripture is the repository of divine truth, when he writes,

Every disciple of Christ ought to be willing to see the peculiarities of his own denomination cast into the crucible of God's word, and exposed to the unrestrained action of Bible truth and Bible principles, in order that the truth of God might thus be gradually developed in its full purity over the whole church,

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<sup>14</sup>Schmucker proposes that fundamental doctrines are the "sine qua non" of Christianity. They are statements pinpointing those teachings which are the core of our religion. Fundamental articles are to be extracted from Sacred Scripture, the repository of Divine truth. Concerning Scripture Schmucker states:

". . .all those doctrines which the great body of all Christians whom God has owned by his grace and Spirit, and who have free access to the Scriptures, agree in finding in them, are certainly taught there, and all those points on which they differ are less certain, are doubtful" [page 387].

the breaches in Zion's walls be healed, and use peculiar people zealous of good works, be raised up to God [page 382].

If Scripture is the final authority, the Church ought to heed the word. But Schmucker suggests that God has clouded His revelation by having certain points of doctrine expressed in Scripture in such a way that multiple interpretations are valid. Consequently, by common consent, the church is to determine "fundamental articles," the church is to decide which doctrine is essential to the faith and which is not. Schmucker points out,

This rule is based on the dictates of common sense, that if the Scriptures are a revelation from God to man, they must on all points necessary to salvation, be intelligible to all impartial and competent inquirers [page 387].

Consequently, Schmucker elevates the church to magisterial position over that which gave her life, namely the Word. In the final analysis, Scripture is not the final authority of divine truth, nor is doctrine for that matter. If the individual desires divine truth, he must inquire of the Church universal.

(c) The third feature of the plan for confederated church union underscores the necessity to explicate the faith held in common. The clause reads:

Let a creed be adopted including only the doctrines held in common by all the orthodox christian denominations, to be termed the Apostolic, Protestant Confession, and let this same creed be used by all denominations as the term of sacramental, ecclesiastical and ministerial communion. To this each denomination

would add its present Formularies for government, discipline and mode of worship, which it might also change or amend from time to time, at its own option, and in its own way [page 393].

In this section, the author recognizes the necessity for and the possibility of formulating a common confession of faith. Whereas fundamental articles identify all true Christians, it would do well for the confederated body to understand precisely those points held in common. The Apostles' Creed is an excellent example of the confession in mind. Because of its history and thoroughness, the Apostles' Creed is incorporated as the first part of the bipartite "Apostolic, Protestant Confession."<sup>15</sup>

The second part is called the United Protestant Confession. The United Confession is an eclectic confession, that is, it "consists of a selection of those articles from the creeds of the prominent Protestant churches, in which all can agree, taking but one article on each subject" (page 393). The United Confession is the residue remaining after tremendous excising and comparing of several Protestant confessions. To its writer, it seemed only logical that any member of a denomination whose creed had been incorporated in the Apostolic, Protestant Confession will naturally accept the United Confession. Schmucker's reasoning ran somewhat like this:

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<sup>15</sup>The Apostolic Protestant Confession is discussed below, beginning at page 114.

1. Since all honorable Christians acknowledge some select articles of faith commonly proposed among all Protestant Christian creeds; and since
2. those select articles among all Protestant Christian creeds will comprise the United Protestant Confession; than
3. all honorable Christians will acknowledge the United Protestant Confession.<sup>16</sup>

The author of the United Protestant Confession, recognizing his fallibility, stipulated a "deletion" clause. If any church body should find a doctrine offensive, that portion of the confession may be deleted. Schmucker could employ such a proviso, since, according to his understanding, any portion of doctrine warranting difference of opinion is non-fundamental. The United Confession is to be comprised only of fundamental articles.

Like many other Protestant Christian creeds, the United Confession served an exclusivistic and inclusivistic function. This confession is to have a repelling force "in order to keep heretics out of the church of God" (page 394). Positively speaking, the confession is also

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<sup>16</sup>This statement, characterizing the logic for a common confession, is based on Schmucker's understanding: "Now, if a selection can be made from all the creeds, which will contain an article on every topic necessary to be introduced, and yet not include any peculiar aspects of doctrines on which the parties differ; all denominations can evidently adopt it; for they fully believe it, and have already acknowledged its christian character by acknowledging as brethren those who profess it." Schmucker "Fraternal Appeal," p. 395.

to vindicate the "great, acknowledged truths of Christianity" (page 395).

(d) A fourth feature of the confederated church body permits all pulpits and altars to remain open for those qualified. The clause reads:

There should be free sacramental, ecclesiastical and ministerial communion, among the confederated churches [page 400].

Following the practice of the early church, participants in the confederated union will be permitted to share in the ministry of Word and Sacrament in any other congregation. However, a congregation could require that proper credentials be presented. The author supposes that this open door policy will heighten the church's fraternal awareness, and aid in the elimination of the devilish sectarianism. It will do the church a great service for ministers to share one another's pulpits and for communicants to receive the eucharist in other churches, especially if this practice would cross denominational barriers.

(e) The fifth feature admonishes all denominations to tolerate the peculiarities of other denominations. The clause reads:

In all matters not relating to the government, discipline and forms of worship of individual churches, but pertaining to the common cause of Christianity, let the principle of cooperation regardless of sect, be adopted so far as the nature of the case will admit and as fast as the views of the parties will allow [page 403].

This "laissez-faire" policy is applicable to denominations which comprise the central organization and to the plenary body itself. In both instances, neither is to encroach upon the right of autonomy reserved for each denomination nor to criticize any liturgical usage of another denomination.

(f) The sixth feature of the confederated body is designed to foil any attempt to indoctrinate students with sectarian ideals. The clause reads:

The Bible should as much as possible be made the textbook in all religious and theological instruction [page 405].

Any literature which presents a particular bent in theology over and against another denomination mitigates against the aim of this union. Since this union is an attempt to restore Christianity in its primitive form anything which would work against it or in defiance of it is considered counter to the welfare of the church. To prepare students who have only the whole church in mind, Scripture must be the text of Christian education. Only then will all the church benefit:

The more we can fix the attention of the student to the word of God, the better shall we be able to raise up a generation of ministers disengaged from the shackles of sectarianism, and firmly planted on the broad platform of the Bible; men possessing the most enlarged views of the Redeemer's kingdom, and ready to devise and execute millennial schemes for its advancement [page 406].

Here the author proposes that by using only Scripture as its theology text, the church will have little difficulty uniting. The author assumes that all exegetes share common hermeneutical principles, that not everyone reads Scripture with the same assumptions and understandings.<sup>17</sup> Schmucker believes if each denomination would adopt Sacred Scripture as the only text in theology, every minister would be trained from the same text and eventually everyone would think on the same theological plain. Schmucker assumes that the real instigator in sectarianism is not so much indoctrination as hermeneutical deviance. When properly understood doctrinal dissonance is impossible in an arena of hermeneutical consonance.

(g) The seventh and final feature of a confederated body presents the missionary thrust of the "Fraternal Appeal." The clause reads:

The seventh and last feature, of union is that missionaries, going into foreign lands, ought to use and profess no other than this common creed, the Apostolic Protestant Confession, and connect with it whatever form of church government and mode of worship they prefer [page 406].

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<sup>17</sup>This presumption not only is impossible to verify, but it is erroneous. For a succinct description on how American churches differ in their principles of Biblical exegesis, see F. E. Mayer The Religious Bodies of America (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961). In particular read the author's assessment of each denomination's formal principle. Mayer makes it clear that not every denomination has a "sola Scriptura" understanding as a source for Christian doctrine, some add reason, others add tradition.

A united body will cease sectarian strife even in missionary work. Not only will confederated cooperation bring to an end all displays of partisan indoctrination it will also lend the church a united appearance. This will be more becoming to the heathen eye since it will be more consistent with its message of reconciliation. For this purpose, union is "supremely desirable."

Having brought his appeal to a close, the author has one task remaining. Following the appeal is attached the Apostolic, Protestant Confession. This document fulfilled the author's "third feature" of the confederated union noted above (page 108) that a creed including all the doctrines held in common by all orthodox Protestant denominations be written.

#### The Apostolic, Protestant Confession

Following the rather extensive appeal for the American churches to reconsider the purpose for their existence and to reexamine their relationship one to another, the author presents the confession "including only the doctrines held in common by all the orthodox Christian denominations" (page 393). Assuming that fundamental articles are an expression of the actual essence of Christianity, that fundamental articles are the "sine qua non" of true church membership, and that agreement in only

fundamental articles is necessary for church unity, the author explicates those fundamental articles in the Apostolic, Protestant Confession (hereafter referred to as APC). The APC is bipartite in form and seven pages in length. The second part includes twelve articles.

#### The Apostles' Creed

The Apostles' Creed is Part One of the APC. This creed, Schmucker suggests, was formulated by the early Christians as a condensed statement of the teachings held by the universal church. Profession of this Creed was required of all who desired to enter the church. Because the Apostles' Creed has endured many centuries and since it has been confessed by all orthodox churches, the author of the APC has deemed it a worthy requirement of all contemporary Christians.

The Apostles' Creed has been adopted, phrase by phrase, in its entirety, with the exception of one phrase. Because he finds the phrase "he descended into hell" as not a part of the original text, Schmucker concludes that it is an unnecessary article of faith. On the basis that many manuscripts lacked this phrase, Schmucker presumes it was questioned by the early church.

## United Protestant Confession

The second part of the APC is an eclectically formulated United Protestant Confession (hereafter referred to as UPC). The author of the UPC attempted to style a confession consisting of the fundamental articles of faith. He was of the opinion that any point of doctrine which is represented in every Protestant confession is a fundamental article. To construct the UPC the author excised portions of the creeds of seven Protestant denominations, including the Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Dutch Reformed, Lutheran, and Moravian. The Westminster Confession of 1646, the Thirty-Nine Articles (1563), the Articles of Religion (1784), the Augsburg Confession (1530), and the Cambridge Platform (1648) were employed in the UPC.<sup>18</sup>

Article I  
Of the Scriptures

The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. Under the name of the Holy Scriptures, or the word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testament, which are these: [at this point the author lists sixty-six canonocal books of the Bible]

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<sup>18</sup>These creeds may be found in Creeds of the Churches, a Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present, 2nd ed., ed. John H. Leith (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1973).

All which are given by inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life. The books commonly called Apocrypha not being of divine inspiration are no part of the canon of the Scripture.

In Article I the author notes the authority of Scripture for life and doctrine because it is the word of God. This section is significant. Schmucker frequently appealed to the Scriptures as a theological textbook and as the source of theology. Enumerating only sixty-six books as the canonical corpus eliminates any acknowledgment of deuterocanonical literature (for example, Apocrypha).

#### Article II Of God and the Trinity

Our churches with one accord teach, that there is one God, eternal, incorporeal, indivisible, infinite in power, wisdom and goodness, the creator and preserver of all things visible and invisible; and yet, that there are three persons, who are of the same essence and power, and are coeternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Article II is an adaptation of Augsburg Confession Article I. The doctrine of the Trinity, a Tri-une God, has long been acknowledged in the life of the church. This same article, however, underwent significant editorializing in the third edition of the Appeal. Comments pertaining to this will be made below.<sup>19</sup>

#### Article III Of the Son of God and the Atonement

They likewise teach, that the Word, that is the Son of God assumed human nature, so that the two natures hu-

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<sup>19</sup>See below page 139.

man and divine, united in one person, constitute one Christ, who is true God and man; born of the virgin Mary; and truly suffered, was crucified, died, and was buried, that he might be a sacrifice for the sins of men.

Article III affirms the two natures of and the personal union in Christ. This article explains why God became man; namely, that He might suffer and die as a sacrifice for sin. The reader must presume that the sacrifice was atoning, propitious, and vicarious for the individual's sins and for society's collective error.

#### Article IV Of Human Depravity

God having made a covenant of works and of life thereupon with our first parents; they, seduced by the subtlety and temptation of Satan, did willfully transgress and break the covenant by eating the forbidden fruit. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin. They being the root of all mankind, a corrupted nature is conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation. The condition of man after the fall of Adam, is such, that his will is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to do good or evil: but it does not possess the power, without the influence of the Holy Spirit, of being just before God.

Article IV underscores the condition of depravity which universally effects mankind. Such a condition, the article states, leaves man powerless to do neither good nor evil. If taken literally, this article suggests that only through the vivification of the Holy Spirit can man do good or evil. If man has not the power to do good or evil, then he is dead. But if man is to accomplish any act, whether good or evil, the Spirit is required.

Article V  
Of Justification

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith; and not for our own works or deservings. This faith must bring forth good fruits; and it is our duty to perform those good works which God has commanded, because he has enjoined them, and not in the expectation of thereby meriting justification before him. Good works cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgement.

Article V sheds some light on the meaning of the last phrase of article three "that he might be a sacrifice for the sins of men." The merits of Christ's sacrifice evidently are bestowed upon the believer. Faith, then, has a two-fold function. First, it merits the merits of Christ. Second, faith produces good works. Especially in this second instance, faith is expressed as the human capacity which does good. Schmucker states that we must produce good works which give evidence of our faith.

Article VI  
Of the Church

The visible church, which is catholic or universal under the Gospel (not confined to one nation), consists of all those throughout the world, that profess the true religion, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Unto this catholic, visible church, Christ hath given the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God. For the true unity of the church, it is not necessary that the same rites and ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere observed. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; nevertheless, Christ always hath had and ever shall have a visible kingdom in this world to the end thereof, of such as believe in him and make profession of his name. There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ: nor can the pope of Rome in any sense be the head thereof.

Article VI of the UPC defines the character of the Kingdom of God. Schmucker identifies the visible church as, first, consisting of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion and, second, as being the Kingdom of Christ. This visible church has five features: 1) it has the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God; 2) it does not have uniformity of rites and ceremonies; 3) it is subject to mixture and error; 4) it is everlasting, and 5) Christ is its head. It is important to note that Schmucker makes no attempt to distinguish between the visible and the invisible church, but seems to use the terms interchangeably.

Article VII  
Of the Sacraments, Baptism  
and the Lord's Supper

The sacraments were instituted not only as marks of a christian profession among men; but rather as signs and evidences of the divine disposition towards us, tendered for the purpose of exciting and confirming the faith of those who use them. There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of our Lord. Baptism is ordained not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church; but also to be unto him a sign of the covenant of grace, of regeneration of the remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life. The supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves; but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death.

In this sacrament Christ is not offered up, nor any real sacrifice made at all, for remission of sins of the quick or dead, as that the popish sacrifice of the mass, as they call it, is most injurious to Christ's one only sacrifice. That doctrine which maintains a

change of the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood (commonly called transubstantiation) by consecration of a priest, or in any other way, is repugnant not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense and reason. The denying of the cup to the people, and worshipping the elements, or carrying them about for adoration, are all contrary to the institution of Christ.

Article VII discusses the two sacraments instituted by Christ, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism, the article states, is ordained as a rite of "solemn admission into the visible church," is a "sign of the covenant of grace, of regeneration of remission of sins," and is a sign of the participants "giving up to God to walk in newness of life." Here the significatory aspect of the sacrament is emphasised.

The Lord's Supper is acknowledged as the second sacrament instituted by Christ. Outside of the fact that the eucharist is described as a sign of Christian love (one bread, therefore, hopefully, one body), is regarded as a sacrament of our redemption, and is contrasted to Roman Catholic sacramentology. The UPC offers little explanation concerning the nature and effect of the sacrament.

#### Article VIII Of Purgatory, etc.

The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, worshipping as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is repugnant to the word of God.

In Article VIII Schmucker speaks out against purgatory, the worship of images and relics, and the veneration of saints. These doctrines, he states, are repugnant, not because they mitigate against Christ's sacrifice, but because they are contrary to the Word of God.

#### Article IX Liberty of Conscience

God alone is the Lord of conscience and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any wise contrary to his word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and, the requiring of an implicit faith and an absolute and blind obedience is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also.

Article IX considers the absolute nature of God's will expressed in His commandments. The author of this article suggests that situations may arise in which an individual will find it necessary to follow the dictates of his heart even if his action opposes the expressed will of God.

#### Article X Of Civil Government

God the supreme Lord and king of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him, over the people, for his own glory and the public good; and to this end hath armed them with power, for the defence and encouragement of them that do good, and for the punishment of evil-doers. The power of the civil magistrates extendeth to all men, as well clergy as laity in things temporal; but hath no authority in things purely spiritual. Christians ought to yield obedience to the civil officers and laws of the land: unless they should command something sinful; in which case it is a duty to obey God rather than man.

Article X discusses the status, role, and extention of civil government. The UPC considers it important to note that government has been ordained by God for the common good of man. Moreover, it points out that members of the kingdom of God are, out of reverence to God, to obey the civil authorities. Such obedience has a limitation, however. Citizens may rightly disobey the authorities if and when such obedience would require transgression to the will of God.

#### Article XI Communion of Saints

Saints are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in preforming such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification: As also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities; which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended to all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

Article XI obliges the saints to 1) maintain a holy fellowship and communion in worship, and 2) tend various spiritual services for mutual edification, for example, to relieve one another in outward things.

#### Article XII Of the Future Judgment and Retribution

At the end of the world Christ will appear for judgment and will raise the dead, he will give to the pious eternal life and endless joys; but will condemn wicked men and devils to be punished without end. As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded, that there shall be a day of judgment, to deter all men from sin; so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come, and may be ever prepared to say, 'Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen'.

Article XII ends the UPC on an eschatological note. "Christ will appear" for a final task. This mission involves a two-fold judgment of the world, some unto "eternal life and endless joys," others "to be punished without end."

#### Evaluation of the Apostolic, Protestant Confession

Schmucker attempted to construct a confession which would appeal to every Christian. But in examining the APC one who is convicted to the notion that a Confession must be an exposition of Scripture can find doctrinal error in virtually every article of this ecumenical creed. Sometimes the criticism is over specific words and phrases, often it is over those things which are left unsaid.

The Apostles' Creed deletes the phrase "He descended into hell." Was the author justified in the omission? J. N. D. Kelly<sup>20</sup> reminds us that the descent into hell was a portion of Christ's exaltation. The record of this event is found in New Testament literature. For example, in Matt 12:38-41, Christ encountered some of the Scribes and Pharisees who demanded a sign from Him as proof of His divinity. Christ responded that the only

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<sup>20</sup>For an historical treatment of the statement's ("He descended into hell") inclusion in the Apostle's creed see J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Creeds 3rd ed. (Great Britain: William Cloves and Sons, 1972), pp. 378-83.

sign He would give is the sign of Jonah. "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the belly of the earth." The church has understood this to mean that for three days, from His crucifixion to His resurrection, Christ was in the "belly of the earth" (hell). First Peter 3:18-20 is the "sedes doctrinae" of the "descensus inferos."<sup>21</sup> There we read that following His crucifixion Christ "preached to the spirits in prison."<sup>22</sup> The church understood that Christ descended into hell to preach to the spirits. Kelly affirms that the doctrine "was explicitly mentioned by St. Ignatius, St. Polycarp, St. Irenaeus, Tertullian, and others." Schmucker justifies his excepting the phrase by claiming "it was not found in the creed of the Latin churches, until the sixth century." Kelly does not deny this, and to substantiate

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<sup>21</sup>For a more detailed treatment of the doctrine "descensus ad inferos" see Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics 3 vol. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), 2:314-20.

<sup>22</sup>φυλακή is rendered "of the underworld or the place of punishment in hell" as in 1 Peter 3:19, in William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 875. For a Reformed assessment see: Alan M. Stibbs, The First Epistle General of Peter, Vol. 17 of The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), pp. 142-45.

his position, Kelly cites Tyrannuis Rufinus' Commentarius in Symbolum Apostolarum (ca. 404 A.D.). Kelly also points out that the silence does not indicate that the church did not believe that Christ descended into hell. To determine the status of the phrase, which perhaps was inserted later, Kelly suggests one must ask why the church even entered the "descensus ad inferos" into the creed. Kelly maintains, "the doctrine was coming to be interpreted as symbolizing Christ's triumph over Satan and death, and, consequently, the salvation of mankind as a whole." In essence, the insertion of this phrase gave greater weight to Christ's triumph over the powers of evil. In deciding whether Schmucker was justified in omitting the phrase in his APC, one must consider the APC's compromising and irenic intention. As far as Scripture and the testimony of the Church Fathers is concerned such an omission was made in haste.

The UPC was composed of twelve brief articles. Article I: Of the Scriptures, enumerated sixty-six canonical books. Listing the canonical books certainly is out of line with Lutheran tradition, and falls more in line with Reformed bodies. This is not to suggest that Lutherans do not designate sixty-six canonical books. From a Lutheran point of view, each book of Scripture has equal authority but unequal value. The book of Romans, for example, contains more valuable doctrinal material than, say, the Song

of Solomon. Moreover, each section of Scripture is subject to proper hermeneutical interpretation. A statement pertaining to the treatment and interpretation of Scripture would have been appropriate.

Article III: Of the Son of God and the Atonement, acknowledges the personal union in Christ but does not develop the concept of the personal union, an unfortunate pitfall consistent throughout the creed. Presumably, the glorified body of Christ resides on the right hand of the Father. The omission of a statement indicating Christ's presence in the eucharist (see Article VII) leads one to suspect that the UPC allows for the notion of Christ's absence in that sacrament. If this is the case the phrase "personal union" has its limits in that it excepts the "genus maiestaticum."<sup>23</sup> Orthodox Lutherans understand according to the "genus maiestaticum" that Christ's human nature is retained in a glorified state since His exaltation. This "blending" ("communication of attributes") of the divine with the human explains that a communicant receives the crucified body and blood of Christ in the sacrament of the altar.

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<sup>23</sup>For a discussion of the second genus, the "genus maiestaticum," see Pieper, Christian Dogmatics 2:152-79, especially see "The Communicated Omnipresence and the Lord's Supper," pp. 190-95.

Article IV: Of Human Depravity, misrepresents the Scriptural witness concerning natural man's capabilities. Article IV explicitly states that natural man does neither good nor evil. The doctrine of "active disobedience" elicits one to further investigate into the meaning and depth of the fourth article of the UPC. Omitting a statement which speaks of man actively disobeying the will of God takes away from the graciousness of God by which He saves man. But if we can agree with St. Paul who writes that apart from the Spirit the mind is at enmity with God (Romans 8:7) we certainly must conclude that natural man is not spiritually neutral. Besides, Paul states natural man is actually disobedient to God. Paul writes: "Though they know God's decree that those who do such things deserve to die, they not only do them but approve those who practice them" (Romans 1:32; author's emphasis]. The UPC fails to recognize the doctrine of active disobedience.

Article V: Of Justification, likewise misrepresents Scripture. Evidently, the author takes some precaution not to mix justification with sanctification when he writes "good works cannot put away our sins." But to speak of good works in an article which deals with justification seems theologically vague and suggestive.

Perhaps it will do well to inquire exactly what the author means when he states that by faith we are accounted righteous before God; specifically we should ask, what or

who is the efficient cause of faith? On this matter, the author is unclear. In Article IV, the APC maintains that the human will "does not possess the power, without the influence of the Holy Spirit, of being just before God." Article V clarifies this and essentially states that the human will requires also the Holy Spirit to believe in God's gracious acts. Therefore, the APC submits that man is unable to grasp spiritual matters but that the will is not totally dead, since, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, it can come to know the truth.

But perhaps the author may counter the semi-Pelagian accusation by referring to the statement in Article IV which reads that natural man is not determined to do good or evil but by the Holy Spirit's influence is made just. Taken to its logical conclusion this rebuttal implies that one man is justified because the Holy Spirit elected to give him faith while another man is condemned because God decreed not to give him faith. This view weakens the Scriptural teaching that man alone is responsible for remaining at enmity with God. Thus, Article V has opened the doors to two soteriological heresies, namely: double predestination and Pelagianism.

Perhaps one may object that such criticism is uncalled for since the author expressed his opinion regarding the dependent relation of sanctification to justification. But if the author intended to clearly delineate the

two doctrines, perhaps a separate article on sanctification would have proven beneficial. As the article on justification stands, the work of God in the salvation of man becomes either confused with man's effort, or predetermined by God's will.

Article VI: Of the Church, confuses the visible church with the invisible church. According to the Lutheran understanding, one becomes a member of the invisible church through faith in Christ. Faith is the "sine qua non" for membership. The invisible church permeates all spatial and man-made boundaries. By virtue of faith, members of the invisible church enjoy "unitas," a Spirit-given unity. Christ has promised that the invisible church will last until the end of time.

On the other hand, ecclesiastical structures constitute the visible church. The visible church is not, strictly speaking, the true church because it is composed of true and false members; the visible church appears fractured. Historically, division and schism have followed human inaccuracies and greed. Sometimes conflict has been over matters which are unnecessary and at other times it has been over matters quite significant and crucial to the testimony of Scripture. The Lutheran Church is an example of the latter. The Lutheran Reformers did

not intend to leave Rome. But when Rome insisted that the Lutherans submit to Roman theology, the Lutheran Reformers felt obligated first to Scriptural truth.

Schmucker mixes the two doctrines. In doing so he justifies his attempt to establish a super-church on the basis of fundamental articles of faith.

Article XI: Communion of Saints, likewise confuses the visible church with the invisible communion of saints. According to Lutheran theology, membership the communion of the saints is a spiritual gift, even as the third article of the Apostles' Creed indicates. In this article, however, the author presumes that membership in the communion of saints is effected through human effort. Perhaps he was attempting to honor a reformed principle whereby one may identify members of the true church on the basis of works. The visible church is not the true church, since it is a mixture of both true and false members. Because God only is able to see the devotion of man false members may pass into the visible church without our awareness. At this time it is impossible to determine true members of the church on the basis of works since even false members might do good works.

Article VII: Of the Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, speaks of the signficatory aspect of the sacraments but glosses over their effacious nature. Schmucker states that the sacraments were instituted for a

two-fold function; namely to "excite" and "confirm" faith. It is important to note that the phrase "the sacraments create faith" has been omitted. "Excite" is not synonymous to "create," and if the exchange was blindly made, the word "excite" is a poor substitute for "create." "Excite" suggests that something pre-exists to excite. This something is faith. The question here is, does faith precede the sacraments? In the case of the eucharist, saving faith is Scripturally presupposed. For example, Paul in First Cor. 10:16 instructs his hearers as if they already had an understanding and knowledge of Christ's saving work. But in the case of baptizing children, Scripture indicates that children are faithless prior to baptism (see for example, Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal. 3:26,27). Therefore Baptism also has the power to "create" faith in the unbelievers heart. Therefore, Lutheran theology maintains that through the water of regeneration God works faith in the unbeliever. The power of baptism is the power of God's grace; it is not determined by the participant's succeeding quality of life. In Baptism, God lays claim on an individual and works all things to strengthen and nurture that faith, and, as the individual remains faithful, God rewards him with the promised inheritance. An individual who falls from the faith after baptism bears the burden of responsibility.

The explanation of the eucharist (as well as every other article in the UPC), or lack thereof, permits a tremendous amount of interpretation. Here, for example, it is significant that Christ's presence in the eucharist is not even hinted at. Consequently, any Protestant sacramental system can easily buy into the UPC's sacramental statement (by design?). Should a church body which emphasizes Scripture as its theological text avoid the instruction of Scripture? The Host of the supper says "This is my body," and "This is my blood."

Article VIII: Of Purgatory, etc., is a surprise. Including in a document intended to serve as a display of fundamental articles a precarious statement rejecting romish errors seems at the very least to be an unnecessary waste of space. Perhaps the author would have done well to expound on the meaning and significance of the Gospel, specifically, of Christ's vicarious satisfaction and its implication for the soul after death.

Article IX: Liberty of Conscience, directs one to obey his conscience rather than God's Word. This is an issue over the legitimacy of situational ethics. The issue behind situational ethics is not whether God directs the conscience, rather, it is objectivity versus subjectivity. A society basing its behavior on individual consciousness would be chaotic. Conscience is a gift of God,

to be sure, but it is also formed and shaped by experience. In short, let it be concluded that consciences vary. Any decision left to the conscience would most likely vary from one person to another.

Article X: Of Civil Government, permits the Christian to obey his own civil consciousness if government transgresses the divine will. How would a Christian determine whether government is encroaching upon divine dictate according to the UPC? It is no coincidence that this provision is made in light of the immediate article, "Liberty of Conscience." According to the UPC, Christians have the inalienable right to personally determine the will of God. Consequently, a Christian may, to use an example, refuse to pay taxes if, in his opinion, the revenue would be used for an ungodly purpose.

Article XII: Of the Future Judgment and Retribution, promises an eternal reward for the pious. Actually the deciding factor in this judgment is unclear. The statement cites the "pious" as worthy of the eternal reward of heavenly peace. Unfortunately, nowhere is the modifier "pious" defined. Therefore, it is impossible to know with certainty who the author has elected for such a great reward.

Subsequent Editions of the 'Fraternal Appeal'

The first edition of the "Fraternal Appeal" created no small stir among churchmen both at home and abroad.<sup>24</sup> The initial success of the article which appeared in the American Biblical Repository prompted a second edition, in 1839. A third edition was printed nearly twenty-one years later.

The 1839 Edition of the 'Fraternal Appeal'

Schmucker issued a circular<sup>25</sup> to American clergymen in March of 1839. The object of the circular was to announce that the "Fraternal Appeal" had been written; to excite the clergymen into ordering copies of the "pamphlet"; and to provoke ecumenical discussions along denominational lines. The circular evidently prompted many to submit statements approving Schmucker's work. Representative statements were gathered and included in the third edition under the title "Witnesses for the Unity of the Savior's Body."<sup>26</sup> The circular letter is important

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<sup>24</sup>The history of the effect the Fraternal Appeal had upon the General Synod and American Christianity is most intriguing. This discussion is considered the topic for Chapter IV, see below.

<sup>25</sup>A copy of the circular is available in Schmucker's The True Unity of Christ's Church (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph and Co, 1870), pp. 261-62.

<sup>26</sup>A copy of the "Witnesses for the Unity of the Savior" is in True Unity, pp. 244-60.

because it prompted Schmucker to publish a second edition of the "Fraternal Appeal."

The second edition is an enlargement of the first. In structure, content, and form the 1839 edition was virtually a restatement of the first edition.<sup>27</sup> The UPC was duplicated.

The second edition included three insertions. The first insertion was entitled "Post-Apostolic, External Bonds of Union" (pages 109-14). This section explained the development in ecclesiastical polity following the Apostolic age, namely, a description of how regularly convened councils and a closer union between church and state finally led to the establishment of the papacy. Throughout, the author notes that the church was violating the governing principles established by the primitive Christians. At the end he implies that the church's current situation is a descendent of the ecclesiastical concept which developed after the Apostolic Age.

The second and third insertions are intended to serve as missionary statements. In the first the author includes an extensive quotation from missionary Richard

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<sup>27</sup>The second edition was enlarged. It contained three extensive additions. For the sake of space and reading ease, pagination of the second edition refers to Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal, edited by Frederick K. Wentz.

Baxter (pages 72-74). In his missionary work Baxter observed the Gospel's stabilizing effect among pagans. The quotation expresses a desire for the Christian Church to complete its foreign missionary work. Baxter appeals for further cooperation among Protestant churches. In doing so he describes that the church's disunity has often placed him in a precarious situation. As an example, Baxter recalls a common reaction when a heathen learns of the church's lot:

'What,' they would reply, 'we thought ye all professed to preach Jesus Christ; we thought your religion was harmony and love. What are these other names which we hear? What means this strife among yourselves? First settle your system among yourselves before you attempt to propagate it. First learn to love one another, and then we will begin to believe that love prompts your endeavors to convert us. For the present we will remain content with the religion of our fathers, which has at least the merit of consistency, and does not embroil us with each other in matters of faith' [pages 72-73].

It is impossible to determine whether these words were actually spoken by a missionary's candidate, or are the epitome of Baxter's embarrassment. It is reasonable to suggest that Schmucker borrowed this quotation to confirm his thesis; visible disunity stifles the Spirit's work in the world. His logic was: it is necessary for the church to unite when one person (fictional or non-fictional) decides against the kingdom of God because the church appears to contradict its principle of universal brotherhood.

The third insertion likewise is missionary-minded. This addition, entitled "The Conversion of the World" (pages 187-96), hails societies which are designed to foster missionary work and recalls that the church has been entrusted the task of bringing Christ to the remotest parts of the earth. Missionary work must be initiated, encouraged, and pursued and for the sake of efficiency, the church ought to unite. Schmucker perceives optimum missionary benefits as the church is in a state of unity. He believes then and only then will "this glorious, this millennial enterprise . . . lead to an enlargement of education and missionary operations to a millennial scale" (page 196).

The Third Edition of the 'Fraternal Appeal',<sup>28</sup>

A third edition of the "Fraternal Appeal" appeared in 1870 under the title The True Unity of Christ's Church. The 1839 Fraternal Appeal comprises a major portion of True Unity. In addition to this ecumenical document an extensive presentation of the ecumenical movement is included in the "Introduction." The discussion covers the twenty-one year interim from the second to the third

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<sup>28</sup>See note 25 for bibliographic information of True Unity, the third edition of the Fraternal Appeal. Pagination in this section will refer to True Unity, 1870.

edition.<sup>29</sup> A copy of "Witnesses for the Unity of the Savior's Body,"<sup>30</sup> and a proposal for the formation of the American Branch of the Evangelical Alliance entitled "Modified Plan Proposed"<sup>31</sup> is included in the last section of the book. The Fraternal Appeal is a reprint of the second edition. The third edition is important because three significant alterations in the UPC were made.

The first alteration in the UPC occurred in Article II, "Of God and the Trinity." The first and second editions acknowledge God's "Triuneness" as "one God . . . yet three persons." True Unity (209), although it mentions "one God . . . yet three persons," omits the phrase "and yet, that there are three persons, who are of the same

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<sup>29</sup>In his introduction to True Unity, pp. 13-49, Schmucker records significant data for any study of the ecumenical movement from 1839 to 1870. Here, he includes a discussion on the Society for the Promotion of Christian Union (1839), the Overture for Christian Union (1745), the General Synod's committee for Christian Union, and the formation of the Evangelical Alliance (1846) a world ecumenical organization somewhat prompted by Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal.

<sup>30</sup>See above, note 26.

<sup>31</sup>The Evangelical Alliance was established in 1846 in London by representative of a number of Christian church around the world. It was designed somewhat after the confederative vision of Schmucker in his Fraternal Appeal. The Evangelical Alliance was geographically divided for administrative purposes. The American Branch of the Evangelical Alliance had difficulty establishing itself, presumably due to the rising tide of societal discontent. Schmucker desired to see such a branch implemented, however, and to this cause he submitted his own thoughts for its formation and government.

essence and power, and are coeternal." This omission is significant. As the third edition stands, the persons of the Godhead might be construed unequal in power, essence, and eternity. This confusion of the Trinity would permit a modern form of Monarchianism. Modal Monarchianism, for example, maintains that the Holy Spirit is of less divinity than the Son who is of less divinity than the Father.

A second omission in True Unity's UPC is to be found in Article IV, "Of Human Depravity." Actually, the omission resulted as two phrases were conflated. In the first and second edition the paragraph read:

By this sin they [speaking of Adam and Eve, our first parents] fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin. They being the root of all mankind, a corrupted nature is conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.

This same passage was reordered in True Unity to read:

By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so a corrupted nature is conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation.

True Unity omits the phrase:

and so became dead in sin. They being the root of all mankind . . . <sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>The brevity of this phrase ought not be confused with its significance. True Unity infers that mankind inherits only a "corrupted nature." In essence, the article implies that natural man is only partially dead in his sin. It also implies that within his capabilities man has the power to aid his Creator in his conversion, even if that work is a lesser resistance to God's call. Pp. 209-10.

A third and final alteration may be found in Article VI, "Of the Church." To the phrase, "Unto this catholic, visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God," True Unity adds "and out of it there is no 'ordinary' possibility of salvation" (page 211). The addition of this phrase seems to indicate the author's attempt to represent current theological discussions concerning the possibility of salvation apart from faith in Christ. A call through the church, the steward of the Word and Sacraments, is the "ordinary" means of receiving God's grace and favor. This article permits extraordinary means of salvation.<sup>33</sup> This "proto-anonymous Christianity" concept posits that God offers His salvation with and/or without the preaching of the Gospel. Essentially, the UPC permits one to believe that Christ is not the only key to salvation. Jews, Muslims, and atheists may be illuminated by the truth through their own knowledge and gain eternal salvation by their own righteousness.

#### Concluding Observations

We have considered the content of Schmucker's "Fraternal Appeal" which appeared in three editions, 1838,

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<sup>33</sup>The Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner has proposed a theory entitled "Anonymous Christianity." This contemporary form of universalism maintains that all people will be eternally rewarded on the basis of behavior, conduct, and attitude.

1839, and 1870. It is an ecumenical document which calls for church union on the basis of Apostolic principles. Unity for the sake of missionary enterprise is his thesis. The author maintains that disunity is the cause of inefficiency in the work of bringing the Gospel to the heathen. Moreover, disunity is a poor witness in the face of a message of unity, brotherhood, and reconciliation.

The "Fraternal Appeal" is addressed to all clergymen and friends of the Savior. It is an appeal that the church resurrect those principles which were alive in the primitive church. Specifically these principles reckoned unity on the basis of fundamental articles of faith, in a universal recognition of discipline, in name, and in intercommunion. Can this be duplicated today?, asks Schmucker. Considering the present situation of the church, Schmucker realizes that tradition will not permit denominations to disregard their heritage. Schmucker, therefore, suggests that the church unite around a confederated body. This system would permit each denomination to keep its autonomy and exercise its freedom in non-fundamental articles and in government. The confederated body would be ecumenical because it would consist of representatives of every Protestant denomination. Above all, this advisory body would coordinate mission work. Conceivably, the church would benefit as the cooperation would pool all the resources at the church's disposal.

Properly weighing the worth of any church union is a complex matter. One must consider whether the union would defeat or work against the Christian message. One must determine if an "improvise to unionize" attitude is proper and sound. And, perhaps most difficult of all, one must consider all the possible repercussions which such a unity may elicit. Schmucker desired that denominations unite for the sake of mission work. Is this a legitimate case of where the ends justifies the means? Perhaps these same questions were asked by members of the General Synod. They, after all, had to deal with this ecumenical treatise since it was examined and recommended by the Synod in convention. The verdict of the General Synod toward the viability, practicality, and theology of the "Fraternal Appeal" is included in the discussion of Chapter IV.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GENERAL SYNOD'S REACTION TO THE 'FRATERNAL APPEAL'

#### Introduction

The Fraternal Appeal spawned several distinct unionistic resolutions by and within the General Synod. But was the Fraternal Appeal the primary cause of the ecumenical events through the 1840s? This is difficult to say with absolute precision, because in a certain respect the Fraternal Appeal was one expression in a series of historic ecumenical endeavors by the General Synod. It is true, an abridged version of the the Fraternal Appeal was officially adopted by the Synod, but this resolution came a decade following its first publication. The General Synod's attitude toward this work was more complex than what meets the eye. In the end, one must underscore the contradiction that this Synod had, on the one hand, an established experience of interdenominational fellowship, but on the other hand, it was sluggish in adopting a significant ecumenical treatise by one of its prominent theologians and leaders. Furthermore, one must also appreciate the riddle that although the leaders of the synod were

praising the Fraternal Appeal, nevertheless, the issue passed with little comment and more often with silence in virtually every quarter of the General Synod.

Resolutions Pertaining to the 'Fraternal Appeal'  
by the General Synod and Its District  
Synods to 1845

The Fraternal Appeal was addressed to every denomination in the United States. Since Protestants were already cooperating through the auspices of interdenominational societies, presumably the author reasoned that it was an opportune time to consider a universal unity of the church. Quite possibly, Schmucker felt that perhaps this overture for Christian unity would be accepted as a natural, logical step in the evolution of American Christianity.

Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, June 1839

The topic of Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal was first addressed by the General Synod in June 1839. Dr. E. L. Hazeliuss of the Southern Theological Seminary was president of the General Synod. Review of this book was not an extraordinary matter. The General Synod considered it constitutionally its right and duty to offer a critique of various theological or liturgical works. Whatever the

committee would report, the plenary session of the General Synod would consider and resolve accordingly. The procedures were clear. Whatever the General Synod resolved, for example a book critique, would be relayed to the district synods.<sup>1</sup> The district synods actually were the final authority in theological matters.<sup>2</sup>

At Chambersburg a committee of five was appointed to report on Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal. This committee was "ad hoc" in nature, that is, its function terminated upon completion of its assignment. In 1839 it consisted of three clerical delegates: B. Kurtz of Maryland (also editor of the Lutheran Observer), August Wacherman of New York, and A. H. Lochman of West Pennsylvania; and two lay delegates: P. W. Engs and P. N. Barested of New York. After examining Schmucker's work the committee expressed the book was designed "to promote union on apostolic principles among the several Protestant branches of the Christian Church."<sup>3</sup> The committee's appraisal could not have been more favorable,

The work is ably written, and bears strongly the marks of deep thorough, extensive observation and anxious solicitude for the prosperity of Zion, and, if

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<sup>1</sup>See above, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>John Tietjen, Which Way to Lutheran Unity? (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Proceedings of the 10th Convention of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (Gettysburg: H. C. Neinstedt, 1839), p. 19.

extensively and attentively read, cannot fail to promote the cause of Christian love and harmony of action in the Church of God.<sup>4</sup>

The committee's recommendation was equally favorable,

We accordingly find pleasure in recommending it to the members of this Synod, and indeed of all our Synods and Churches throughout our whole Church.<sup>5</sup>

The committee then proposed the following resolutions which were adopted by the General Synod,

XI. Resolved, 1. That this Synod approve of the several features of the Plan of Union proposed in Prof. S. S. Schmucker's Appeal to the American Churches, and regard them as consistent with the principles of the New Testament.

XII. Resolved, 2. That this Synod recommend said Plan to the serious consideration of the several Synods connected with this body, and the Churches at large.<sup>6</sup>

Evidently, this resolution was not an endorsement of the Fraternal Appeal.<sup>7</sup> The General Synod merely resolved to accept the features of the work, for example, to regard the discussion of Christian Union as an item important and timely in the deliberations of the church. Furthermore, the delegates were instructed to carry on the discussion in their respective district synods.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>The General Synod did not endorse the Fraternal Appeal until 1848. See below, p. 162.

## Maryland and Virginia Support the Work

Two General Synod Conventions literally passed by without any mention of the Fraternal Appeal. This silence is most peculiar, but perhaps it is indicative of the mood among the district synods toward Schmucker's treatise.

It was considered proper procedure in every district synod convention that the minutes of the previous General Synod be read, discussed, and accepted. We can assume, therefore, that resolutions XI and XII of the Chambersburg convention were duly shared in every synod affiliated with the General Synod. Upon examining the procedures of each district synod convention<sup>8</sup> only two synods, Maryland and Virginia, mention the Fraternal Appeal.

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<sup>8</sup>This examination has involved the minutes of district synods from 1838 to 1850. In some cases, the minutes of the district synod were incomplete. Included are: Allegheny, 1842, 1844, 1846; East Pennsylvania, 1842; Hartwig, 1838, 1840-1843; Maryland, 1838-1844, 1846, 1848-1850; Miami, complete; New York, 1840-1844, 1846-1850; North Carolina, 1838-1841, 1843-1845, 1847, 1849-1850; South Carolina, 1838-1841, 1843, 1846, 1847, 1849; Virginia, complete; ELS of the West, 1838-1841, 1843, 1846; West Pennsylvania, 1840-1843, 1845-1850; and West Virginia, 1842-1844, 1845-1846, 1849-1850. These minutes are available at the Concordia Historical Institute. Not included in this survey were English (joined in 1840), Olive Branch (joined in 1850), Wittenberg, Illinois, West (formed in 1848), and South West (the last four joined in 1848). For an overview of these synods, see above pp. 56-65 and for a time line indicating when these synods were formed and when they joined the General Synod see chart on page 57.

The Maryland Synod, the former "home synod" of Schmucker, officially accepted the recommendation of the General Synod. Resolution XXVIII of Maryland's 1839 convention reads,

Resolved, That this Synod adopt the following resolution (XI) passed by the General Synod: [resolution XI is spelled out].<sup>9</sup>

It cannot be determined with accuracy what this resolution implied for the congregations in Maryland. What is clear, however, is following the passage of resolution XXVIII, 1839, Maryland spoke no more of the Fraternal Appeal until after 1846.

The Virginia Synod also responded favorably toward the Fraternal Appeal. It is quite probable, however, that the delegates to the Virginia convention were drawn into this decision through the patronizing speech of Virginia's president, B. J. Davis. In his annual report to the convention the president asserted:

As bigotry and sectarian prejudice exert a commanding influence over the Church in the region of our labors, we feel urged to beg your attention to some plan that would measurably counteract their blighting and deadly influence. In order to neutralize this fatal poison which has found its way into the Church, and is literally incorporated with her various branches, would it not be advisable to give a free circulation to Dr. Schmucker's Appeal to the American Churches. This little work, so consistent with the principles of the New Testament, and embodying those views of benevolence and brotherly love which run through all the productions of its amiable author,

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<sup>9</sup>Proceedings of the 20th Annual Session of the E.L.S. of Maryland (Baltimore: John Murphy, 1839), p. 87.

should certainly be prayerfully and interestedly read by all Christians. In relation to the various benevolent projects so distinctive of the present enterprising age, it is unnecessary to advise, inasmuch as the members generally composing this body, are ever in readiness to contribute to their influence for their promotions.<sup>10</sup>

Interesting, however, was the nature of Virginia's resolution. Virginia did not go as far as her northeastern neighbor, who adopted the features of the Fraternal Appeal. Virginia merely agreed to circulate copies of the work. Report II of Virginia's 1840 convention reads:

The second item is a recommendation to this body to circulate more extensively, Doctor Schmucker's 'Appeal to the American Churches.' On motion, Synod,

Resolved, That the members of this Synod exert themselves to circulate among the Churches, not only the 'Appeal,' but also . . .<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, of the two synods which mention the Fraternal Appeal in their synodical proceedings, only one, Maryland, actually made a significant and noteworthy step toward adoption of the work. In the case of Virginia, one must maintain that that synod actually made no landmark decision either for or against the Fraternal Appeal. Moreover, as in the case of Maryland, Virginia did not mention the Fraternal Appeal again until after 1845.

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<sup>10</sup>Minutes of the E.L.S. of Virginia (Winchester, VA: Virginian Office, 1840), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 6

But, one must ask, what of the other synods? If Maryland and Virginia were only two of the synods affiliated with the General Synod, what did the other synods have to say with regard to Resolution XI and XII? The answer is stunning. On the basis of what has been investigated<sup>12</sup> it can be stated that no other synod mentioned the Fraternal Appeal from the time of its first edition in 1838 to 1850. Numerically, that means that by 1850 only two district synods of seventeen spoke approvingly of Schmucker's ecumenical work. Other facts add to the mystery. Of some of the "senior" districts such as New York and North Carolina, the minutes make no mention of Schmucker nor any allusion to the movement for Christian Union. And again were it not for the fact the Schmucker frequently was a guest preacher or guest speaker at their conventions, his name would not have appeared in the minutes of the East and West Pennsylvania Synods. English, South Carolina, Allegheny, and Hartwig may be categorized with New York and North Carolina. And the synods of the 1840s, for example, Miami, West, West Virginia, Southwest, and Olive Branch evidently were too busy establishing themselves to be concerned for Schmucker's treatise.

Can an hypothesis be made with regard to the silence which met the Fraternal Appeal at the level of

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<sup>12</sup>See above, note 8.

the district synods? Certainly one must hesitate in making too hasty a conclusion, granting that a thesis grounded on silence may be regarded as weak and faulty. To conclude that the Fraternal Appeal was rejected by the body of the General Synod is not yet warranted but remains subject to verification and further investigation. Nevertheless, one fact remains. The 1839 convention of the General Synod requested that the district synods examine Schmucker's treatise. The district synods did not follow through with this request. This indicates at least one of two things. Either the district synods did not take their affiliation with the General Synod all that seriously or the district synods were not of the same ecumenical mind as Schmucker and his unionistic cohort.

Resolutions Pertaining to the 'Fraternal Appeal'  
By the General Synod and Its District  
Synods to 1850

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, May 1845

At the 1845 Convention of the General Synod, Schmucker made another bid to promote his treatise on Christian union and the ecumencial cause. Henry N. Pohlman of New York was the president of the General Synod. Schmucker's proposal appears in the minutes under the title "Memorial on the subject of Christian Union, addressed to the General Synod of the Lutheran Church." The proposal is prefaced with a statement decrying the

present condition of the church, Schmucker writes:

The undersigned, deeply impressed with the importance of unity of spirit in the body of Christ on earth, and believing that the entirely separate organization of the different members of this body, without any, or with but little stated intercourse between them and mutual recognition of each other's ecclesiastical standing, is seriously detrimental to unity of spirit, feels constrained, as he trusts by love to the church of the Redeemer, to present this memorial to the General Synod.<sup>13</sup>

Schmucker continues with a recapitulation of the events since the General Synod's motion in 1839. He writes,

Some years ago the subscriber presented to a former General Synod, a copy of a work containing in detail his views on the important subject of Christian Union. That work was submitted to a committee for examination, and the plan proposed in it, was, after discussion before the Synod, recommended to the churches of our land. Owing to internal contentions in several principal denominations, but little progress was made in this good work for several years.<sup>14</sup>

In spite of the slow start Schmucker reminds the Synod that positive measures toward Christian union had been taken, he writes,

Yet, during all this time, this important subject has held deep possession of many leading minds throughout our country. The contentions, which for a season retarded the progress of union, have in the providence of God, tended to diffuse a deeper conviction of its importance. Numerous expressions of interest, and calls for progressive action have of late been heard

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<sup>13</sup>Proceedings of the 14th Convention of the General Synod of the E.L.C. in the United States (Baltimore: Publication Rooms of the E.L.C., 1845), pp. 38.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

throughout our land; and the signs of the times seem to indicate the will of Providence, that judicious and cautious, but cordial and open action should be had as far as harmony of views on the subject may be found to prevail.<sup>15</sup>

Schmucker then calls upon the General Synod to take the initiative and the lead in ecumenical pursuits,

It seems to be peculiarly appropriate that the Lutheran church, the oldest, the mother-church of the reformation, should take the lead in this glorious work of healing the great schism; and the undersigned has recently been assured by distinguished brethren of different churches, that if some step were at this time taken in the Lutheran church, it would be cordially responded to by some sister denominations. As the General Synod may be regarded as the fairest exponent of the sentiments of the Lutheran Church, this memorial is addressed to your body, and the following resolutions proposed as indicative of the plan of action recommended.<sup>16</sup>

Following this introduction, Schmucker proposed, in four memorials, that the General Synod establish a committee distinctly for the purpose of fostering Christian union. The committee is to be styled "Committee of Conference on Christian Union." The duty of this group of three clergy and two lay delegates is to

. . . confer with similar committees appointed by other religious denominations, and with other prominent individuals of different denominations, on the great subject of Christian Union, and report to the next General Synod, such measures as may be agreed

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 28-29.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

upon in such conference, to be recommended to the different religious denominations.<sup>17</sup>

The purpose of this committee, and the aim of all ecumenical deliberations is not to create an organic union with other church bodies. Visible unity was the aim, that is, a unity in attitude and a mutual recognition of each other's ministry. The desire to avoid the embarrassment which a divided church might elicit is a strong impulse in the drive for church unity. In fact the power and the nature of this committee was restricted,

The design to be aimed at by the measures thus to be recommended, shall be, not to amalgamate the several denominations into one church, nor to impair in any degree the independent control of each denomination over its own affairs and interests; but to present to the world a more formal profession and practical proof of our mutual recognition of each other as integral parts of the visible Church of Christ on earth, as well as our fundamental unity of faith and readiness to cooperate harmoniously in the advancement of objects of common interest.<sup>18</sup>

The General Synod adopted Schmucker's resolution and appointed the Committee of Conference on Christian Union. The committee consisted of Schmucker (professor at Gettysburg), as chairman, Charles Philip Krauth<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>The name Charles Philip Krauth is not to be confused with his son Charles Porterfield Krauth who in the 1850s lead the confessional movement in the General Synod.

(professor at Gettysburg) and G. B. Miller (professor at Hartwig) as clerical members, and of C. H. Brouck (Hartwig Synod) and C. A. Morris (Virginia Synod) as lay members.

Evidently Schmucker's proposal for church unity was not the only design presented to the 1845 General Synod convention. The minutes report that one T. H. Stockton<sup>20</sup> submitted a plan for union. This plan was examined by the Committee for Christian Union which "cordially commend[ed] the object of enlarged benevolence, contemplated by it, as deserving the kindest sympathy of the christian world."<sup>21</sup>

#### Interim from 1845 to 1848

The General Synod did not reconvene until 1848. During the interim significant measures were made within the Christian church toward the object of Christian union. The highlight of the ecumenical movement during the nineteenth century was the formation of the Evangelical Alliance, in 1846. The General Synod participated in these endeavors. Although its status was indefinite and

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<sup>20</sup>Evidently T. H. Stockton was not a member of the Lutheran Church. This can be assumed by referring to the "Clerical Roster" appended to 14th Convention Proceedings of General Synod, pp. 85-96.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

uncertain,<sup>22</sup> nevertheless the General Synod's Committee for Christian Union attended the formative meeting of the Evangelical Alliance in London in 1846. The committee viewed the efforts of the Evangelical Alliance as being similar to its own spirit. Benjamin Kurtz, editor of the Lutheran Observer, joined the entourage in the stead of Charles Philip Krauth.<sup>23</sup>

The Lutheran Observer was one of several periodicals which served the Lutherans at this time. Benjamin Kurtz of Baltimore was its editor. But unlike many of its competitors, the Lutheran Observer was officially accepted and promoted by the General Synod. For this reason one can say that the Lutheran Observer was an unofficial organ of the General Synod. Two questions arise. What did the Lutheran Observer have to say about Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal, and how did it deal with the Evangelical Alliance? By examining the issues from 1839 to 1850, it can be concluded that the Lutheran Observer was virtually silent in regard to Schmucker's ecumenical treatise. In fact, the Lutheran Observer mentions the work only once and even then it merely summarizes the position of the

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<sup>22</sup>Only one synod made special notice that the General Synod appointed a Committee for Christian Union. See Minutes of the 16th Annual Session of the E.L.S. of Virginia (Baltimore: Publication Rooms of the E.L.C., 1846), p. 14.

<sup>23</sup>A. R. Wentz, Pioneer in Christian Unity: Samuel Simon Schmucker (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), p. 300.

United Apostolic Protestant Confession.<sup>24</sup> It can be concluded, therefore, that this magazine which was prominent in Lutheran circles considered the Fraternal Appeal as insignificant and unnewsworthy.

The Lutheran Observer was comparatively more concerned with the events around the Evangelical Alliance. For example, the Lutheran Observer announced the gathering of an ecumenical council in December 1845; its editor attended the meeting and frequently wrote letters detailing its proceedings; and it gave a summary of the proceedings in October 1846.

Only two district synods responded to the issue of the Evangelical Alliance, and in both instances it was with magnanimous praise. It is interesting to note that the two synods in this instance were the same two which responded to the General Synod's resolutions XI and XII of 1839.

To his own Maryland Synod, Benjamin Kurtz reported on the proceedings of the Evangelical Alliance. Essentially, Kurtz submitted that the Evangelical Alliance complies with the ecumenical wishes of the General Synod. Following the rather lengthy report, the committee proposed seven statements. The memorials recognized the aim

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<sup>24</sup>Lutheran Observer 12 (February 13, 1846).

of the Evangelical Alliance as being similar to the General Synod's; underscored the right of every denomination affiliated with the association to maintain its peculiar features; restricted the power of the ecumenical council; reiterated the General Synod's conviction to cooperate with other denominations; recommended that the General Synod encourage all its members to take part in the evangelical societies; directed the clergy to examine more closely and diligently the issue of Christian union; and acknowledged the formation of the Evangelical Alliance as a significant step in the drive for Christian union.<sup>25</sup>

From 1846 on, the Maryland Synod spoke no more of the Evangelical Alliance nor of Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal.

Virginia was the second district synod which spoke of the Evangelical Alliance. But in addition to hailing the Evangelical Alliance the Virginia minutes also indicate that the General Synod was holding union discussions with the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. Therefore, president B. J. Davis' report mingles the two fronts of the ecumenical drive. In the case of the ecumenical discussions between the Lutheran and the Presbyterians, Davis writes,

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<sup>25</sup>Proceedings of the 28th Annual Session of the E.L.S of Maryland (Baltimore: Publication Rooms of the E.L.C., 1846), pp. 10-11.

We hail this movement on the part of the two churches with feelings of unmingled pleasure, and most heartily do we wish that it would be taken up, and responded to in terms of the greatest satisfaction by all the Presbyteries and Synods of the land.<sup>26</sup>

And later in his presentation Davis comments on the noble effort which the Committee on Christian Union is making toward the goal of union by attending the ecumenical convention in London. He writes,

To hush the jarring clamor of excited partizans, to avoid the bickerings and heed the heart burnings of denominational bigotry, and to drive from the face of the earth the monster which disturbs the order and harmony of the church; as well as the diverse ways and means for the successful preservation of peace, and harmony, in every dept of the protestant church, is the object of the Evangelical Alliance.<sup>27</sup>

The Virginia Synod followed Davis' lead. In resolutions XXXV through XXXVIII of its 1846 convention, the Virginia Synod clearly expressed its approval of the Evangelical Alliance and supported the presence of the General Synod's Committee for Church Union at that convention.

New York, May 1848

By 1848 Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal was used in a different medium. The Committee for Christian Union condensed the features of the Fraternal Appeal to a very simple and concise document. This document was entitled the

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<sup>26</sup>Minutes of the 16th Annual Session of the E.L.S. of Virginia (Baltimore: Publication Rooms of the E.L.C., 1846), p. 38.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

"Plan for Union," 1845. It was used in two contexts, first as a paper presented to the 1846 Ecumenical Alliance, and second as an item of ecumenical deliberation between the Lutherans and the Presbyterians in America.

The "Plan for Union"<sup>28</sup> is included in the minutes of the General Synod's 1848 Convention.<sup>29</sup> The committee of Schmucker, C. P. Krauth, and G. B. Miller recommended that the church unite in name, in fundamental doctrines, in mutual acknowledgement of discipline, in sacramental and ministerial intercommunion, and in "pro re nata" conventions. The plan gives the plenary body four restrictions of power. It cannot impose doctrines, it must allow every denomination to retain its traditional polity, it can only mediate in interdenominational disputes, and it must be applicable to every situation. With this understanding the church is to implement the following: first, every judicatory is to resolve that every other denomination teaches pure and sound doctrine; second, there is to be an exchange of delegates; third, there is to be universal cooperation in evangelical efforts among all denominations; fourth, the Bible is to be the only theological

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<sup>28</sup>The Plan for Union caused a schism in the Synod of the West. See above, p. 68.

<sup>29</sup>See also the Lutheran Observer 14 (October 9, 1846); 26.

textbook; fifth, there is to be sacramental and ministerial intercommunion; sixth, a central and universal religious celebration is to be held periodically; and seventh, affiliation into this united church hinges on adoption of one or several features of the plan.

By way of closing, the committee appended the comment that the document had been favorably received by "about fifty of the most distinguished and influential divines of ten different denominations."<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, it informed the General Synod that concerted measures were being made to foster the unity effort between the Lutherans and the Presbyterians, and assured the convention that positive steps toward merger are definitely underway.

Charleston, South Carolina  
April 1850

For two years the issue of merging with the Presbyterian church passed without comment by the district synods of the General Synod. Often, the district synods made no comment regarding the ecumenical efforts of its central body. This is the peculiar feature of the General Synod during the 1840s.

In 1850 the Committee for Church Union reported on the status of the ecumenical effort with the Presbyterian

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<sup>30</sup>Proceedings of the 14th Convention of the General Synod of the E.L.C. in the United States, p. 13.

church. The committee chairman, Schmucker, reported that the Plan for Union did not meet with universal approval among the Presbyterians but that the document and its revisions were still being reviewed.<sup>31</sup> Following this 1850 report, the Committee made no further recommendations or overtures.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, one can observe that the Committee for Church Union joined Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal as an item which sparked little to no interest in the General Synod.

Resolutions Pertaining to the 'Fraternal Appeal'  
by Synods Disassociated from the General Synod

As indicated in Chapter II,<sup>33</sup> the General Synod represented approximately one-half of the Lutherans in America by 1850. Of the sixteen synods disassociated from the General Synod, Franckean and Tennessee were selected as representing the two extreme ends of the confessional spectrum. Franckean was characterized as being extremely non-confessional while Tennessee was described as being very confessional by contemporary standards. Both synods evaluated Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal.

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<sup>31</sup>Proceedings of the 15th Convention of the General Synod of the E.L.C. in the United States (Gettysburg: H. C. Neinstedt, 1850), pp. 21-23.

<sup>32</sup>This is based on an examination of the General Synod convention proceedings through 1860.

<sup>33</sup>See above, p. 68.

## The Franckean Synod

The Franckean Synod favored every effort for Christian Union. In 1841 a "select committee" reported on the issue of Christian Union. The committee commented that Christ's call for unity has relevance for the church today. Finally the committee proposed and the synod,

Resolved, That Christian Union is one of the most important subjects that is at present engaging the attention of the Christian churches, and that it loudly demands the hearty co-operation and prayers of all Christ's true followers.<sup>34</sup>

To a certain extent, the committee's recommendation paralleled Schmucker's idea that the church unite in name.

Resolved, That, though churches may be free from sectarianism while they are designated in their organized capacities by sectarian 'titles,' yet it is believed that it is not the least hinderance to the Union of Christians, and that it is the duty of all churches and ecclesiastical bodies, as far as possible under the circumstances, to divest themselves of every name, which, to any extent, may prove prejudicial to the cause of Union.<sup>35</sup>

The committee also recommended that ecumenical leaders admonish those churches which were against the idea for a universal church.

Resolved, That the most effectual way of promoting union among individuals, christians and ecclesiastical

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<sup>34</sup>Journal of the 4th Annual Session of the Franckean Evangelic Lutheran Synod (Fort Plaine, NY: Lutheran Press Association, 1841), pp. 25-25. Also examined in this investigation were the minutes of the 1844 and 1847 Franckean Synod Convention.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

bodies, is to manifest in their intercourse the spirit of Christ and faithfully admonish and reprove, but avoiding all unnecessary censoriousness and harsh and disrespectful treatments.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, the committee recommended that Schmucker's ecumenical treatise be used in the synod as an ecumenical handbook.

Resolved, That we recommend Prof. Samuel Simon Schmucker's 'Appeal for Christian Union' to the careful and attentive perusal of all our ministers and churches.<sup>37</sup>

#### The Tennessee Synod

The Tennessee Synod was the only Lutheran church body which spoke against Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal. Its appraisal was most interesting in that Tennessee attacked Schmucker's assumption that the church is not united. At its 1841 convention a petition from a New Market congregation<sup>38</sup> requested that the synod rule on Schmucker's treatise. The minutes read:

The subject of a general union of all the different denominations into one great body, was then taken up, and, after considerable discussion, it was

Resolved, That inasmuch as the Church of Christ is a collection of all true believers, and is not now, nor never was divided, and as it is impossible for different and conflicting doctrines all to be in accordance

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Incidentally, New Market was the location of Schmucker's first parish. See above, p. 23.

with the word of God, and a Christian union of the different denominations to be effected without a unanimity of sentiments, and as professors greatly differ in their religious sentiments and modes of church government, the union of all different denominations into One Great Body, is impracticable and inexpedient; and if effected, instead of promoting, would prove detrimental to the true interest of the Redeemer's kingdom, and endanger the civil and religious liberties of our happy country.<sup>39</sup>

Tennessee resolved that the church is invisibly united. The notion of an invisible unity of the church through faith in Christ is a doctrine of long standing in the Lutheran Church. Lutherans believe that the "una sancta ecclesia" exists even when "concordia" has ceased.<sup>40</sup> It is intriguing that already in the 1840s two American Lutheran ecumenical definitions were in effect. Tennessee, on the one hand, insisted that the Christian church is united by virtue of the believer's faith in Christ. Tennessee would grant that the visible church is splintered by theological error but this condition does not take away from the true unity which exists. Moreover, the

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<sup>39</sup>Report of the Transaction of the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod During its 21st Session (New Market, VA: S. Henkel, 1841), p. 4. All the minutes of the Tennessee Synod were available for investigation.

<sup>40</sup>For an explanation of "una sancta ecclesia" and "concordia" as well as Missouri Synod's stance toward the ecumenical movement see Theology of Fellowship, A Report (St. Louis: The Commission on Theology and Church Relations, 1965); A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism, with applications for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, A Report (St. Louis: Commission on Theology and Church Relations, 1974); and The Nature and Implications of the Concept of Fellowship, A Report (St. Louis: Commission on Theology and Church Relations, 1981).

church can be visibly united only through complete doctrinal agreement. The General Synod and Franckean, on the other hand, proposed that the church is not united. To remedy the situation, this second group proposed that the church must reunite on the supposed apostolic principles enumerated in Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal. Essentially, the basis for unity was doctrinally minimalistic. That is, the church is to unite because it is in agreement on certain points.

#### Summary

In 1838 Schmucker published the Fraternal Appeal. This treatise was addressed to every American church body, including the author's own Lutheran General Synod. The way the General Synod responded to the Fraternal Appeal can be ascertained by its convention proceedings. This chapter sought to trace the issue of Schmucker's work from 1838 to 1850. The following points have been observed and the following conclusions can be made:

1. In 1839 an ad hoc committee reported on Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal. The committee proposed and the convention resolved that the work and the topic merited prudent examination by the district synods. It is important to keep in mind that the entire Fraternal Appeal was not ratified by the General Synod. In 1839 the treatise was recommended to the district synods for investigation.

2. Two synods, Virginia and Maryland, followed the General Synod's recommendation. These synods, likewise, viewed the work with favor.

3. The remaining synods did not comment on the work. Moreover, following the General Synod's 1839 resolution, and the follow-up resolutions by Maryland and Virginia, the Fraternal Appeal was not an item for discussion in all the General Synod until 1845.

4. In 1845 Schmucker revived the Synod's interest to participate in the ecumenical arena. At its 1845 convention, the General Synod appointed a Committee for Church Union. The committee's task was to promote and foster church union. The committee was composed of several men who all along were at the heart of the General Synod's ecumenical thrust. These men include: Schmucker, professor at Gettysburg Seminary; Charles Philip Krauth, professor at Pennsylvania College; Benjamin Kurtz, editor of the Lutheran Observer; B. J. Davis, president of the Virginia Synod; G. B. Miller, Professor at Hartwig Seminary; and H. N. Pohlman, onetime president of the General Synod.

5. In 1845, the committee composed the "Plan for Union." This "Plan" was a condensed version of Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal. This document was used as a union blueprint between the Lutherans and Presbyterians, and was

submitted for consideration to the 1846 Evangelical Alliance. The "Plan" appeared in the minutes of the General Synod's 1848 convention.

6. By 1850, it appeared that the "Plan for Union" would not be accepted by the Presbyterian Church. This speculation is enhanced by the fact that after 1850 no mention of the Committee for Church Union is made in the minutes of the General Synod.

7. Overall a vast majority of the General Synod did not comment on Schmucker's treatise nor on the General Synod's ecumenical efforts.

8. Even the Lutheran Observer did not comment on the Fraternal Appeal.

9. The "Plan for Union" caused a schism in the Synod of the West. This Synod, which was a member of the General Synod, divided into four Synods of which the Indianapolis faction defected from the General Synod.

10. The opinion of two non-General Synod Lutheran bodies were considered relative to the Fraternal Appeal. The Tennessee Synod flatly rejected the Fraternal Appeal while the Franckean Synod approved the treatise.

It remains to be explained why the General Synod apparently over-looked a treatise of one of its prominent theologians. On the surface the proceedings of the General Synod give the impression that the work made a considerable impact. For example, it was the basis for the

1845 "Plan for Union". Yet, as one begins to investigate the proceedings of district synods and take into account the time lapses which separate one resolution from the next a certain discontent among the members of the General Synod toward the work is suggested.

Perhaps a majority of the General Synod was displeased over Schmucker's treatise and over the Committee for Christian Union's effort to bring Lutherans and Presbyterians closer together. This supposed discontent can be explained on two counts. First, Lutherans were on the threshold of the confessional revival. More and more Lutherans were appealing to the symbols of their faith for doctrinal guidance. Committed Lutherans insisted that the confessions did not aim to divide the church, rather, they submitted that the confessions were truly catholic. Lutherans were increasingly becoming aware that the symbols of the church are a correct and sound exposition of the Sacred Text. A second reason why Lutherans were dissatisfied over the ecumenical theory of the Fraternal Appeal was because the 1840s began an era of disenchantment for American Christianity. Prior to the 1840s the American scene was rich in good feelings. Churches were cooperating, denominations joined together in mission work, and Christians, by and large, commonly worked side by side in

evangelical societies. Perhaps the prospects of an ecumenical treatise was at an advantage in this milieu. However, a different feeling emerged during the 1840s. Denominations were commonly in conflict, revivalism was a divisive issue, and the country, as well as the church, was at odds over the slavery issue.

Schmucker's Fraternal Appeal certainly possessed doctrinal errors. This fact ought not be underplayed by any study relative to this topic. Its theological difficulties were an item for contempt by the Tennessee synod. In addition to this quality which prevented the treatise's adoption, perhaps one might add that the work was out of tune with the religious context. In short, the Fraternal Appeal came at a poor time in American religious history. When it first appeared Christian denominations were beginning to have disagreements among themselves. So rather than reaching out to merge with other groups, many denominations were beginning to "clean house." Even the General Synod was about to erupt into a devastating controversy. During the 1850s the General Synod divided between "American Lutheranism" and Confessional Lutheranism, and the Philadelphia Seminary was a result of that controversy. Had the Fraternal Appeal appeared at another time it is possible that there would have been a more extensive and positive reaction.

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