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SHORT TITLE PAGE

THE TENNESSEE SYNOD

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*Prof. [unclear]*



THE TENNESSEE SYNOD--IT'S HISTORY  
AND CHURCH POLITY

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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

Alvin V. Kollmann

June 1958

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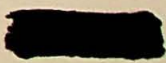
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## CHAPTER I

### FACTORS LEADING TO THE ORGANIZATION OF THE TENNESSEE SYNOD

In considering the factors that played an important role in causing the establishment of the Tennessee Synod, it is necessary to consider the conditions in the Lutheran Church in America especially during the years between 1800 and 1820. The conditions that must be considered are, in the order in which they will be treated in this chapter, rationalism, unionism, the language problem, the training of pastors, education and literature available at the time, and revivalism. A few observations on the pros and cons about the Tennessee Synod joining the General Synod or remaining out of that organization will then conclude this chapter.

In those years immediately following the emergence of the United States of America as an independent country, the feeling of nationalism was naturally quite strong in the new land. This growth of a new American nationalistic spirit meant the severance of many former European ties. This severance of European ties occurred in the intellectual and religious life of the people as well as in their economic and political life. Religious life in America, and also in Europe, was in a state of decadence at the end of the eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Both the French Revolution and the American War of Independence had the immediate effect of shattering religious and political ideals. As a result of the close alliance between France and the new American republic a great deal of French



infidel literature came into this country.

Lutheranism in America had begun to make great strides forward when Henry Melchior Muhlenberg came to this country in 1742.<sup>1</sup> This was towards the end of the Great Awakening. However, when Muhlenberg died in 1787, a new period in American Lutheranism began, for the men who followed him were of a different spirit, "an eindern Geist." During the later years of his life, Muhlenberg and his co-workers had begun to see the changes that were taking place. They did not like the theological discussions that were then going on at Halle and other German universities, and the rationalism which was rapidly gaining control in Germany.<sup>2</sup> They were afraid that sooner or later this same rationalism would degrade the pulpits of America. Their fears certainly proved to be well founded, for these men who followed Muhlenberg did not guard and protect the distinctive features of Lutheranism as he had done. These men were, of course, all Lutherans, true to the whole body of confessions to which they had given their pledge; and yet they differed in opinion as to the manner in which this faith should be defended. The Lutheran pulpits in America were still almost entirely filled by pastors from Europe, and these men had received their education from Halle and other European universities in which rationalism had become predominant. These men also absorbed this rationalistic spirit from their teachers, and so, the worse that the deterioration and rationalism got in Germany,

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<sup>1</sup>Lars P. Qualben, The Lutheran Church In Colonial America. (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1940), pp. 204-16. This is a fine account of Muhlenberg and his activities.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 101-06. Here he explains the origin of rationalism in Germany.



the worse it became also in America. Those Lutheran pastors who were trying to resist this rationalism felt drawn to ministers of other denominations who also were resisting this encroaching rationalism and deterioration. Because of this feeling of oneness and closeness these Lutheran pastors also felt that some of the tests that had before seemed so necessary to safeguard Lutheranism could not be removed in the face of this greater and more immediate danger. This laxity of Lutheran principles and beliefs soon became quite evident and presented a new problem. The laxity that was creeping in could be seen already in the revised Synodical Constitution of the Pennsylvania Ministerium of 1792. One noted historian describes the situation in this way:

The most serious change in this constitution was the elimination of all confessional tests. The only allusion, and that of a very remote character, is where catechists are required to preach the Word of God in its purity, according to the law and the gospel. All reference to either the Augsburg Confession or to the other symbolical books, so prominent in the first constitution, has vanished.<sup>3</sup>

Sometime before the year 1800, and no doubt shortly after this constitution was revised, catechists were only asked to make the following promise:

I, the undersigned, promise before God and my Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, that I will preach God's Word in its purity, according to law and gospel, as it is presented, according to its chief parts, in our catechism and hymn-book. I promise also diligently to hold instruction for children, to visit the sick, to feed souls, and to administer holy baptism according to the order of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Henry E. Jacobs, A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (Second edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1893), p. 313.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 313.



There is no doubt that the catechism and the hymn-book are insufficient as confessions, but they are still Lutheran standards, and this was still a promise to preach according to the Lutheran faith, even though it was a very vague promise. There was a great deal of this confessional laxity in the Pennsylvania Ministerium at this time, both in practice and in the clear expression of the Lutheran faith, and yet there never was any outright renunciation of the distinctive doctrines of the Lutheran faith. Neither was there any particular antagonism to distinctive Lutheran doctrines, but simply a general toning down of Lutheran convictions. The main fault of the Pennsylvania Ministerium was that she was too tolerant.

The effects of this rationalism were much stronger in the New York Ministerium. This was mainly the result of the powerful influence of one man, Dr. Fred Henry Quitman. Dr. F. H. Quitman was the president of the New York Ministerium for twenty-one years, succeeding Dr. J. C. Kunze as president after his death in 1807. Dr. Quitman had been educated in Europe, and he followed closely in the footsteps of his teacher, Professor John Semler, the "father of rationalism" at Halle. Dr. Quitman had a commanding personality, was able to handle both German and English with equal facility, and was a very intelligent man. His influence was far-reaching. In 1812, he prepared and published an English catechism as a substitute for Luther's Catechism. This was done with the consent and approval of the New York Ministerium. This catechism of Dr. Quitman clearly brings out the rationalistic tendencies of the time. It very skillfully presents and offers a rationalistic exposition of the faith of the church as a substitute for Luther's



catechism. It denied the inspiration and the authority of the Bible and the validity of the Apostle's Creed and the chief Lutheran confessions.<sup>5</sup> A few years later, Dr. Quitman published a distinctly un-Lutheran liturgy and hymnal, and also succeeded in getting it officially accepted by the Synod. Both of these books were clearly rationalistic. Because of his commanding presence and great intellectual force, Dr. Quitman was able to make his strong rationalistic influence persist for a generation. And yet rationalism did not win out in the end. This is evident from the fact that a new English edition of Luther's Catechism was published which outsold Dr. Quitman's rationalistic catechism. This is but one example of how rationalism finally died out, after causing much difficulty and indifference.

In North Carolina as early as 1788, Dr. John Caspar Velthusen's Helmstaedt Catechism had been published for American use and became known as the North Carolina Catechism. This catechism was also full of the spirit of German rationalism. When the Synod of North Carolina was organized in 1803 its first constitution contained no confessional statement or reference to the great confessional writings of the church; in fact, the word Lutheran does not occur at all in this document. Dr. Quitman's rationalistic liturgy was officially recommended for use by the congregations. But these effects of rationalistic thinking died out more swiftly in North Carolina than elsewhere. A new

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<sup>5</sup>D. Nicum, Geschichte Des Evangleisch-Lutherischen Ministerium Vom Staate New York (Reading, Pa.: Druck von Theodor Wischan, 1888) pp. 97-99. Harry J. Kreider, History of the United Lutheran Synod of New York and New England (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1954), pp. 42-45. Both explain the catechism in detail.



constitution in 1818 made the North Carolina Synod the first since Muhlenberg's day to make official avowal of the Augsburg Confession. This new constitution further provided that only ministers ordained or licensed by an American Synod could be admitted to the Synod of North Carolina.

These controlling rationalistic influences were bound to shatter confessional convictions. For the men who later organized the Tennessee Synod and who had already begun to lean toward a strong confessional position, rationalism thus became an important factor in the organization of the Tennessee Synod. One of the results of this rationalism, as was pointed out briefly, was that the points of difference between the different denominations were obscured. Thus unionism became the second problem to disturb the church in those days. This spirit of unionism was partly the result of religious indifference. Motives of expediency also played their part. Union with other church bodies appeared to be the easiest solution to the problem confronting the church. Even the opponents of rationalism considered it wise to unite with other denominations in the common cause of evangelicalism. This very evident decline in denominational consciousness was also felt in the Lutheran Church, and for a time this new impulse toward union threatened the very existence of the Lutheran Church here in America.

In New York the tendency at first was toward union with the Episcopal Church. Even the conservative Dr. Kunze fell under the charm of the idea, for it was under his leadership that the following resolution was passed in 1797:

That on account of an intimate relation subsisting between the English Episcopalian and Lutheran churches, the identity of



their doctrine and the near approach of their church discipline, this consistory will never acknowledge a newly erected Lutheran church in places where the members may partake of the services of the said English Episcopal Church.<sup>6</sup>

Because of this feeling of oneness, negotiations were begun between the two church bodies with the idea of effecting organic union and episcopal ordination of the Lutheran pastors. The records of the convention of the Episcopal Church of the same year show that negotiations were actually in progress for such a union. At this convention of the Episcopal Church, the Rev. Thomas Ellison, Rector of St. Peter's, Albany, informed the members that some of the Lutheran clergymen, representing the New York Ministerium, had expressed their desire that the two church bodies unite, and that the Lutheran ministers receive Episcopal ordination. This matter was referred to a committee but nothing came of it. Seven years later in 1804 the resolution of the New York Ministerium quoted above was unanimously repealed. However, even though the negotiations were not completed, a number of individual congregations did go over from the Lutheran to the Episcopal Church. For example, in 1805, many members of Zion English Lutheran Church of New York, and some members of Christ Lutheran Church, withdrew from their congregations under the leadership of the Rev. George Strebeck, and founded St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Five years later, the rest of the congregation of Zion English Lutheran Church, under the leadership of their pastor, the Rev. Ralph Williston, a former Methodist, joined the Episcopal Church. There was a great need at this time for closer union among the Lutherans themselves to stimulate their denominational

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<sup>6</sup>Jacobs, op. cit., p. 318.



consciousness and save the life of their church.

The unionistic tendency in Pennsylvania was toward union with the Reformed Church. Lutheran and Reformed people had worked together in erecting many church buildings in the rural districts. In some instances the congregations worshiping in the same building were even united under one church council and merely alternated their services between Lutheran and Reformed pastors. They even practiced intercommunion. Lutherans and Reformed co-operated in managing the affairs of Franklin College at Lancaster, each trying to secure candidates for the ministry. The religious magazine, Evangelisches Magazin, which was founded by the Pennsylvania Ministerium in 1812, made a special bid for both Reformed and Moravian subscribers. The magazine was indorsed by the Reformed Synod for circulation in its congregations. In 1817 the Common Hymnbook in German appeared and took the place of the Muhlenberg Hymnal, having been endorsed by Dr. Quitman and recommended by both the Lutheran and Reformed synods in Pennsylvania. The next year, 1818, active efforts were made to establish a joint theological seminary, for there were many ministers in both church bodies who favored the organic union of these two conservative, German-speaking bodies. This consideration of a joint theological seminary was only one of the many manifestations of a desire for union between these two large German bodies in Pennsylvania, which frequently came to view during this period and during the early part of the succeeding period. An historian of the Reformed Church, Dr. J. Dubbs, has well said:

It must be confessed that many ministers of the Reformed and Lutheran churches favored the organic union of these two bodies, not because they had reached a proper doctrinal basis for such



union, but because they knew little and cared less about the questions at issue between them.<sup>7</sup>

This thought of union between the two bodies was influenced by the movements preliminary to the Prussian Union of 1817 combined with motives of expediency growing out of intermarriage, propinquity, and a common language. The rationalism prevalent in the Lutheran Church at the time, clearly expressed in Dr. Quitman's catechism of 1814, also helped to draw the more conservative members of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches closer together in combating this common enemy.

The unionistic tendencies of both Pennsylvania and New York were to be found in the North Carolina Synod. Already in 1794, before the foundation of any synod, the Lutheran ministers in North Carolina had ordained a Scotchman, Robert Johnson Miller, and pledged him to "ye Rules, ordinances, and customs of ye Christian society, called ye Protestant Episcopal Church in America."<sup>8</sup> Under this pledge, Rev. Miller served as pastor of Lutheran congregations for 27 years. The North Carolina Synod was organized in 1803. In 1810, they ordained a Moravian, Gottlieb Schober, who remained a Moravian all his life even though he served Lutheran congregations. In 1812, Rev. Miller was elected President and Rev. Schober was elected Secretary of the North Carolina Synod. Thus there was the strange mixture of a Lutheran Synod with an Episcopalian for President and a Moravian for Secretary. Later, when the Episcopalian Church was organized in North Carolina, Rev. R. Miller joined this organization and was made a Bishop. The North

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 319.



Carolina Synod and the Episcopalian Church then agreed to an exchange of delegates who would have both a seat and a vote in each body. This arrangement was later broken by the North Carolina Synod.<sup>9</sup> A noted historian further describes this unionism which prevailed in North Carolina:

Union churches for Lutherans and Reformed were also common in North Carolina, with common hymnbooks and catechisms in use among the congregations. In a book prepared to celebrate the tercentenary of the Reformation in 1817, Pastor Schober, one of the leaders of the North Carolina Synod, explained the articles of the Augsburg Confession in a Reformed sense and declared that among all the denominations of "those who worship Jesus as God there is nothing to prevent a hearty union." This book was endorsed and published by the synod.<sup>10</sup>

This tendency toward unionism was also clearly seen in the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation in 1817. The Lutherans wanted other Protestant churches to join them in celebrating this 300th anniversary of the Reformation. The celebration quite naturally, therefore, showed the current tendency to emphasize the beliefs that were common to all Protestants, and to tone down the distinctive teachings of Lutheranism. The rationalism prevalent in the Lutheran Church at the time was also reflected in this celebration. The initiative was taken by the New York Ministerium who, in 1815, invited the Pennsylvania Ministerium and the North Carolina Synod to help them in making this celebration one that would encompass the whole land. The invitation was accepted. The plans called for the holding of simultaneous services of worship on Reformation Day, October 31, 1817, with

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<sup>9</sup>Nicum, op. cit., pp. 121-23.

<sup>10</sup>Abdel R. Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1955), pp. 75-76.



special music and sermons on Reformation themes. Each Synod, and more particularly, each congregation, was to work out the many details involved. Two Reformation services were held in New York City, one in the Lutheran Church in the morning, and one in the Episcopal Church in the afternoon. In the morning service Dr. F. C. Schaeffer preached in German, assisted in the service by a Reformed and an Episcopal clergyman. The three-hour afternoon service, held at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, was attended by at least 5,000 people. Dr. F. C. Schaeffer again preached, this time in English, and was assisted in the service by a Moravian and two Episcopal clergymen. The Handel-and-Haydn Society and an orchestra provided special music for the occasion. The New York Ministerium also used this occasion of the 300th Anniversary of the Reformation, as an opportune time to publish two sermons of Dr. Quitman, their President, sermons which were decidedly rationalistic in character.

The Pennsylvania Ministerium invited the German Reformed Synod, the Moravians, the Episcopal, and the Presbyterian churches to help them in celebrating this festival. Some, like Bishop William White of the Episcopal Church, accepted this invitation. In his letter of October 14, 1817, in which he informed Rev. Lochman of his pleasure in accepting such an invitation, Bishop White also said:

This occasion must, of course, be the more welcome to me on account of the agreement in doctrine which has always been considered as subsisting between the Lutheran churches and the Church of England, the mother of that of which I am a minister.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>F. Bente, American Lutheranism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919), I, 105.



The initiative in almost every case seems to have been left with the Lutheran churches in a community, and the people from the other denominations then simply attended the special services that were held in the Lutheran churches. In Zion Church, Philadelphia, Dr. Helmuth preached, accompanied in the service by soloists, choir, and orchestra, who provided special music for the occasion. The Protestant clergy of the city attended this service in a body. In York, Dr. J. G. Schmucker delivered the sermon, and the choir of the Lutheran Church presented a concert of music written especially for the occasion. The Augsburg Confession and a sketch of the Lutheran Reformation were also printed. At Frederick, Maryland, Dr. David F. Schaeffer preached the sermon. In emphasizing the agreement between Luther and Calvin, he said in his sermon that they "were agreed on all points, with the exception of one which was of minor importance."<sup>12</sup> A hymn, specially written for the occasion, also stressed the essential agreement between Luther and Calvin. The hymn was sung according to the tune of "Wie schoen leuchtet der Morgenstern," and was worded as follows:

One hundred years, thrice told this day,  
 By heavenly grace truth's radiant ray  
 Beamed through the Reformation;  
 Yea, glorious as Aurora's light  
 Dispels the gloomy mists of night,  
 Dawn'd on the world salvation.  
 Luther! Zwingli! Joined with Calvin!  
 From error's sin The church to free  
 Restored religious liberty.<sup>13</sup>

The celebration in North Carolina also consisted of special

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 105.



services by the individual local ministers. The Synod recognized the occasion by publishing a book entitled Luther. The author was Gottlieb Schober, a Moravian who had joined the North Carolina Synod. The book was a history of the Reformation and the Lutheran Church during the last 300 years. It also strongly advocated a general union of all Protestant denominations.

One of the main results of this Reformation celebration, at least in Pennsylvania, was to activate union attempts between the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, especially through the attempt to establish a joint seminary which would prepare ministers for both Churches.

This was indeed a time when the very existence of Lutheranism was at stake. There was a need for a synod which would uphold the Lutheran teachings. This need was met by the organization of the Tennessee Synod. The general confusion threatened to drive even more Lutherans into other denominations. Special efforts were necessary to counteract the special danger of unionism. Lutheran literature and a thoroughly trained ministry were desperately needed. But there were other difficulties facing the Lutheran Church of this period besides rationalism and unionism.

The third great difficulty that hindered the progress of the Lutheran Church during this period was the language problem. This was the first time in the history of American Lutheranism that the language question reached a critical stage. Muhlenberg and other German and Swedish pastors had preached in whatever language the people could best understand. They had also preached in the English language without meeting any serious opposition, but now the situation had



changed. Dr. J. C. Kunze of the New York Ministerium was still following Muhlenberg's example and was active in preparing literature for the English-speaking Lutherans. But the majority of the Lutherans were against the English language and the way in which it was gradually creeping into the life of the church. The language problem caused much strife and great losses to the Lutheran Church.

In 1792 the Pennsylvania Ministerium introduced the word "German" into its title. In 1805 it forbade the use of any other language than German in synodical sessions. An example of the trouble caused by language can be seen in the case of St. Michael's Church in Philadelphia. There the English-speaking members of the church demanded that an English speaking pastor be called to supplement the work of the two German ministers, Helmuth and Schmidt. At the annual congregational meeting in 1806, they were defeated by a narrow margin. They lost by 130 votes, 1,400 votes having been cast. The English party then withdrew and founded St. John's Lutheran Church. Ten years later another controversy on the same subject broke out. This time it was even carried into the secular courts, and there the German party lost. The argument that seems to have convinced the court to rule in favor of the English party was the necessity of using the English language to build up a congregation here in America rather than to depend on immigrations from abroad. Other congregations had similar troubles on the language question. Trinity Lutheran Church in Lancaster refused to contribute to the synodical treasury until young men should be educated to preach in English.

Similar controversies occurred in other congregations, especially



in New York.<sup>14</sup> During these controversies such statements as the following were recorded in congregational minutes:

As long as the grass grows green and as long as the water will not run up hill, this is to remain a German speaking congregation.

And again:

Even in Paradise the Lord spoke to Adam in German, for do we not read in the third chapter of Genesis: "The Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, 'Wo bist du?' (Where art thou?)." <sup>15</sup>

While such remarks are not to be taken too seriously, they do show the blind fanaticism that was displayed during the discussions. Nevertheless, English gained the ascendancy more rapidly in New York than in Pennsylvania and in 1807 English became the official language of the New York Ministerium. The situation was very similar in the south.

During these controversies many arguments were presented for keeping the German language. A. R. Wentz has summarized these arguments nicely.

The Lutheran Church, it was said, cannot exist apart from the German language. English is the language of the Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches and is too shallow to furnish an adequate translation of Lutheran doctrinal and devotional literature. It was observed that children of German parents, as they learned to speak English, became frivolous and indifferent in matters of religion. Since much of the rationalism that made its way into the Lutheran Church was clothed in the English language, many people regarded German as the bulwark of sound faith and evangelical theology. For example, the Evangelische Magazin, established by the Pennsylvania Ministerium in 1812, had the twofold purpose of conserving the German language and fighting rationalistic unbelief.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Kreider, op. cit., pp. 32-37. Here he gives a good example of this.

<sup>15</sup>J. L. Neve, A Brief History of the Lutheran Church in America (Second edition; Burlington, Iowa: The German Literary Board, 1916), p. 82.

<sup>16</sup>Wentz, op. cit., p. 77.



Dr. John Bachman, in an anniversary sermon preached in St. John's Lutheran Church in Charleston, South Carolina, on January 10, 1858, had this to say about the conditions of the Lutheran Church in America at the time of his arrival in 1815:

Our ministers, with very few exceptions, performed service exclusively in the German language. This was a great error, inasmuch as it excluded from the Church the descendants of Lutherans, who had by education and association adopted the language of the country. Our doctrines were not objectionable to them, but they could not understand the language in which they were promulgated. Thus the progress of the Church was greatly retarded in consequence of the bigoted attachment of our ancestors, and especially their clergy, to a foreign language. Since the introduction of the English language into our ministrations the Church has made rapid progress.<sup>17</sup>

The persistent and bigoted efforts of these German majorities to keep the English language out of the churches alienated many, and caused many of the young people to join churches of other denominations, a fact which explains the origin of some of the strongest Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal Congregations. During the language controversy many Lutherans were lost, but gradually, and in many cases, reluctantly, English came to be accepted as the language of the Lutheran Church in America. Language was also an important factor at the time of the organization of the Tennessee Synod as well as a little later.

A few words about the pastors and their training is also necessary for a complete picture of the conditions in the Lutheran Church in those days.

Instruction for the ministry was almost entirely in the hands of

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<sup>17</sup>G. D. Bernheim, History of the German Settlements and of the Lutheran Church in North and South Carolina (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Book Store, 1872), p. 420.



the pastors. Some of these pastors, like Dr. Kunze, did try to establish a school for ministerial candidates. Dr. Kunze made several attempts to establish such a school, first independently, then in connection with the University of Pennsylvania, and again in connection with Columbia College in New York. All of these attempts at establishing a school for ministerial candidates failed, but as a result of his private instructions to young men studying for the ministry, Dr. Kunze had the distinction of having instructed the first English Lutheran pastors in America. Other pastors, such as Drs. Helmuth and Schmidt, both professors at the University of Pennsylvania, had a semi-official character as they were considered the faculty of a private theological seminary. In this way they prepared young men for the ministry. Some pastors, such as Dr. H. E. Muhlenberg and Dr. J. G. Lochman, were well known as private theological instructors. In many cases the parsonages furnished the ministerial candidates as well as their training. Thus F. D. Schaeffer instructed his four sons in theology, and Paul Henkel his five sons. On several occasions, as in the case of Drs. Helmuth and Schmidt mentioned above, the Pennsylvania Ministerium appointed pastors who were to be regarded as its official theological instructors. This method of private theological instruction became too burdensome for these busy pastors. Then, too, it was inadequate for the needs of the times. Education of proper range and depth was clearly the work of a special institution, but the founding of the first official synodical Lutheran seminary in this country did not come until 1826 when Gettysburg Seminary in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, was begun.

In the meantime candidates for the Lutheran ministry were attending



denominational and other colleges that were coming into existence, such as Columbia College, the University of Pennsylvania, Dickinson College, Jefferson College, and Princeton Seminary. These colleges either had or were soon to have students and graduates in the Lutheran churches and ministry. These Lutheran pastors who were educated in such colleges by other Christian men of decided convictions and different religious beliefs were, of course, unavoidably influenced.

There were also at this time quite a few pastors, often not too well educated themselves, who served large parishes of from six to twelve congregations, ministering to an uneducated rural people. Although they preached the Word of God and distributed the Sacraments, they were just as much occupied with the secular demands of their farms as they were with the spiritual interests of the people. Such degeneracy and secularization should have and did arouse a protest from the Pennsylvania Ministerium itself. A printed "Appeal," sent out in its name in 1810, strongly encouraged such ministers to devote themselves properly to their great calling.

The men who organized the Tennessee Synod were also aware of this problem for they placed a strong emphasis on qualified, well trained pastors. There certainly was a need for a better trained ministry, and for an American trained ministry, but there was also an urgent need for the proper literature that these pastors might study and thus help to further educate themselves. This necessary literature was not to be found. The English language had become prominent in the church, but English Lutheran literature was not yet being published to any great degree. The English speaking Lutheran laymen had to resort to a



devotional literature full of Methodistic and Puritanic suggestions, while ministers, barely familiar with the German language, filled their library shelves with books of Reformed authorship and assimilated erroneous view-points. Even though a reaction had occurred in Germany against the Prussian Union, the English speaking Lutherans of America were unable to study this theological movement because of the language. Because of this lack of proper literature, many Lutherans forgot the distinctive doctrines of Lutheranism, and became more and more aware only of those teachings that were held in common by all the denominations.

Lutherans soon had their own denominational periodicals, but they were not nearly enough to supply the need for proper literature. There was a little German paper full of missionary news that was published even before 1812 by the Mosheim Society of Zion's and St. Michael's, Philadelphia. In 1812, by a resolution of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, Das Evangelische Magazin (The Evangelical Magazine) was published, with Dr. Helmuth of Philadelphia editor-in-chief. The magazine was written mainly for the laity, and was filled with such things as devotional material, synodical reports, letters from missionaries, accounts of foreign missions, various appeals, and religious poetry. But even this magazine was not what we would consider proper literature, for its avowed purpose was not to represent Lutheranism, but specifically to oppose the introduction of the English language. Thus the "Proposal to Synod" concerning this new German paper states:

1. We want to aid the German language as much as we can, because we are convinced that, with her language, our Church



will lose unspeakably much, and, finally, for the most part, even her very existence under her (Lutheran) name.<sup>18</sup>

In 1813 the Magazin carried a series of articles urging the Reformed and Lutherans to stand together against all attempts to introduce the English language. Another object of the German Evangelisches Magazin evidently was to bring about a more intimate union between all German Evangelical bodies, for it was not called "Lutheran," but "Evangelical," and the preface to the first volume declared:

Our undertaking would be greatly furthered if the brethren of other communions would beautify it with their pious contributions, and also solicit subscriptions. The brethren of the Moravian Unity have expressed their satisfaction with this imperfect work, and assured us of their abiding love in this point.<sup>19</sup>

This magazine was discontinued in 1817, having appeared only as an annual during its last three years. The first English magazine for Lutherans in this country was the Evangelical Lutheran Intelligencer. It was begun in March, 1826, edited by Dr. D. F. Schaeffer, and lasted five years.

It is quite obvious that proper literature was not easily found or accessible and the need for such literature was great. One of the main objectives of the Tennessee Synod was to provide proper literature for American Lutherans. But there was one other great problem which faced the church in these early 1800's and that was the problem of the revivals.

As has already been pointed out, the spirit of the times was non-denominational. There was a fellow-feeling among the churches. Thus

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<sup>18</sup>Bente, op. cit., I, 102.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 103.



revivals also found their way into the Lutheran Church. The first great revival in this country took place between 1727 and 1750. After the War of Independence (1776-1783) a great wave of unbelief and atheism swept across the country. The reaction against this unbelief and atheism was a religious fervor which found expression in revivals. This reaction has been referred to as the Second Great Awakening in America. This was the time also when Wesley's Methodism formed itself into an independent church, and soon became a power throughout the land. Camp-meetings were the craze of the day.

The time was ripe for revivals both in the settled portions of the country and on the new frontiers. Methodist circuit riders were the first to gather the people together from a wide area for preaching and administering the sacraments. This was around the year 1799. Baptist and Presbyterian missionaries soon followed their example. The people came from great distances to attend these revivals, sometimes traveling as far as a hundred miles or more. Harvesting and other necessary work was often neglected. The people gathered by the thousands in the woods for these religious services that continued day and night for a week. The revivalists preached, prayed, and sang. Holy Communion was administered on a large scale. The excited appeals made by these preachers to these crowds of people often produced sobs or shrieks and sometimes "the jerks." The purpose of it all was the new birth. When this was accomplished, there was singing and rejoicing. The "holy laughter" and the "jumping-fit" were supposed to reveal an extraordinary state of grace and were attributed to a special activity of the Holy Spirit. Ministers of all denominations co-operated in these meetings and



sometimes preached simultaneously.<sup>20</sup>

The Lutheran Church was also affected by these revivals. Many Lutherans attended these meetings, either out of curiosity or for other reasons. The journals and reports of Paul Henkel and other Lutheran frontier missionaries indicate that they felt it was wise to take advantage of the opportunity that these camp meetings afforded to preach to the large groups of Lutheran people that had come together. "Occasionally the synods in the East warned their missionaries against participating in these revivals. Camp meetings were branded as 'deviations from our Lutheran ways.'<sup>21</sup> The method of the revivalist is certainly not in harmony with Lutheran teaching. The revival preacher attempts to replace the work of the Holy Spirit with artificial means such as sensational sermons and stirring appeals, and tries to force the new birth upon man. One result of these revivals was that religious instruction lost its importance. The Catechism was neglected. People spoke scornfully of "head Christians," "memory Christians," and "Catechism Christians." Another result of these revivals was a stronger leaning toward unionism, because both Lutheran ministers and laity participated in these meetings.

Some of the Lutheran people on the frontier believed in and participated in these religious revivals. In the more settled parts of the country the English Lutheran Church was greatly affected by these

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<sup>20</sup>William W. Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (Second revised edition. New York: Harper & Brothers' Publishers, c.1950), pp. 225-31. He has quite a bit to say about these revivals.

<sup>21</sup>Wentz, op. cit., p. 89.



revivals, whereas the German Lutherans were not. These more settled parts of the country were more affected by a later series of revivals that occurred from 1827 to 1832. While it is true that the Lutheran Church received many new members through the methods of revivalism who later acquired an appreciation of Lutheran teaching, the revivalist movement as a whole was nevertheless detrimental to the development of the Lutheran Church in America.

The needs of the times certainly called for a general organization that would conserve the denominational consciousness of Lutheranism. Such an organization would bring the Lutherans more closely together and would counteract the growing tendency to break off into smaller synods. (In 1818 there were only three synods, Pennsylvania, New York, and North Carolina, but by 1820 when the General Synod was organized there were two more, the Joint Synod of Ohio and the Tennessee Synod, with many more synods in the making.) United effort was also needed to supply the acute need for a larger and better trained ministry.

The initiative came from the mother synod of Pennsylvania. The idea had originally come from two pastors of the North Carolina Synod, the Revs. C. A. G. Stork and Gottlieb Schober, who had suggested such a union already in 1811. Seven years later, at its convention in Harrisburg in 1818, the Pennsylvania Ministerium went on record as favoring such a movement. It resolved that "in its judgment it would be well if the different Evangelical Lutheran Synods in the United States were to stand, in some way or other, in true union with one another."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 78.



At its next meeting in 1819, the Rev. G. Schober submitted "A Proposed Plan" for the constitution of such a general body. This proposed constitution was, in many respects, similar to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. A committee revised this proposed constitution and it was then adopted in its revised form with the understanding that if three-fourths of the existing synods would adopt it in its fundamental features, the President of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, Dr. J. G. Schmucker, would call a convention of delegates.

This convention for the organization of a General Synod was called and held in Hagerstown, Maryland, on October 22, 1820. The synods of Pennsylvania, New York, North Carolina, and Maryland and Virginia, sent their representatives. Two synods, Tennessee and Ohio, did not attend. The Joint Synod of Ohio rejected the proposed constitution for a number of practical reasons, such as their fear of an hierarchical trend and the possible prevalence of the English language in the new body. The Tennessee Synod objected on doctrinal grounds, pointing out that the proposed constitution made no mention of either the Bible or the Augsburg Confession. They also objected to the rule of majorities in general church affairs and said that Christ had never said anything about a church government. The four synods that were represented at this meeting organized themselves and drew up a constitution. A year later in October, 1821, the first regular convention of the General Synod of the Lutheran Church in the United States was held at Frederick, Maryland, with the three synods of Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Maryland and Virginia present and having adopted the constitution. The New York Ministerium had withdrawn, declaring the plan



impractical.<sup>23</sup>

Now because of this great need for such a general organization of Lutheran bodies as pointed out above, the question quite naturally arises as to whether the Tennessee Synod was justified in organizing at this time and in staying aloof from the General Synod. Even if we, for the moment at least, grant the justification of the organization of the Tennessee Synod, should it not perhaps have affiliated with the General Synod? Certainly such a conservative body as the Tennessee Synod could have done a great deal of good in the General Synod, especially in view of the fact that it soon became so liberal. The Tennessee Synod could have been a sound stabilizing influence.

The men who founded the General Synod were anxious to preserve the identity of the Lutheran Church in this country. It was unfortunate, however, that they had become doctrinally lax and indifferent, and thus did not realize that the historic Lutheran Church can exist only on a confessional basis. It was also unfortunate that the Tennessee Synod did not cooperate with the General Synod. The Tennessee Synod was one of the few synods that closely adhered to the Lutheran confessions, and they would have given an entirely different character to later developments if they had taken a part in the forming of the General Synod. Because the Tennessee Synod and the Ohio Synod did not cooperate in the forming of the General Synod and because the Pennsylvania Synod withdrew shortly after the formation of the General Synod, the General Synod assumed an English physiognomy from the very beginning and thus lost the

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 78-79.



advantage of German influences. This was at a time, also, when Germany, reacting against rationalism and the Prussian Union, was experiencing a great revival of Lutheran consciousness. Thus the laymen and ministers who arrived from Germany with their faith renewed and strengthened, avoided the General Synod, and joined other synods, who thus acquired excellent material for their congregations, and especially a superior class of theological scholars. The confessional element in the General Synod remained in the minority. The press and seminary were controlled by the leaders of "American Lutheranism." When other synods like the Hartwick, Franckean, East Ohio, and Melancthon Synods, which preferred the General Synod because of their own doctrinal laxity, joined the General Synod, the character of the General Synod became increasingly more liberal, until it reached the climax of liberalism in the "Definite Theological Platform" of 1855.<sup>24</sup>

Divisions in the Church are always terrible things, and should always be avoided, except in cases of doctrinal differences. Nevertheless, when divisions do occur, they sometimes accomplish much good in revitalizing dormant energies and in reestablishing the pure faith of the Gospel. Certainly this was the case in the Tennessee Synod separating from the North Carolina Synod and remaining out of the General Synod. As a smaller body, it was able to care for many neglected congregations, and its emphasis on the Lutheran confessions made its ministers very energetic, zealous, and faithful in discharging their duties, and in trying to restore pure Lutheranism to the Lutheran

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<sup>24</sup>Neve, op. cit., pp. 432-33.



Church in America.

The existence of the Tennessee Synod accomplished a special purpose, in fact, a three-fold purpose, for the welfare of the Lutheran Church in America.

First, it attracted attention once more to the pure doctrines and confessions of the Lutheran Church, and awakened new study of these Lutheran confessions. The departures from the confessional faith of the Lutheran Church and the assimilation of the teachings and practices of other denominations had been so gradual, but nevertheless sure, that for a long time no one seemed to notice it and only a learned few really knew what the faith of the Lutheran Church was. There were many admirers of Luther even among other denominations. Very few, however, knew anything of the secret which made Luther the conscientious, fearless, and zealous man that he was. Many admired Luther's energy and labors, but they knew very little about the faith which actuated those labors, and they knew even less about the doctrines upon which that faith was founded. If more Lutherans had known and experienced it themselves, certainly much more could have been accomplished at that time in the Lutheran Church in America. Then there would not have been such a strong desire to unite all denominations into one church, but there would have been instead a stronger desire to advance the interests of the Lutheran Church in America.

Secondly, because of the founding of the Tennessee Synod the confessions of the Lutheran Church were translated into the English language. This was a need that had existed for a long time, but no one previously had possessed the patience and the energy to apply himself



to this task. Many had manifested a desire to make the Lutheran Church in America an English as well as a German Church, but no one had manifested a desire to translate the confessions and the theology of the Lutheran Church into the English language. This work was not undertaken until the Tennessee Synod set itself to the task, and this work has accomplished more in preserving the faith of Lutheranism in this country than any similar undertaking in the English language. One hopes that the monumental undertaking of recent years to translate the works of Luther into English will accomplish a like purpose in history.

Thirdly, the Lutheran Church in America has had many printing and publishing establishments which have accomplished a great deal of good, but the oldest establishment of this kind is the one in New Market, Virginia, which began in 1806. It was established by the Henkel family and upon the founding of the Tennessee Synod it came at once into the service of that body, and has issued more truly theological works in English than any similar institution in the world, at least at that time and for many years thereafter. Because of the tremendous advances made in printing in recent years it is likely that some printing establishment has surpassed them, but for the early years of Lutheranism in our country the record of the New Market printing establishment has been unsurpassed.<sup>25</sup>

Having thus considered the conditions in the Lutheran Church in America, particularly in the years immediately preceding the founding of the Tennessee Synod, and having seen some of the good results of this

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<sup>25</sup>Bernheim, op. cit., pp. 444-46.



organization, we now want to consider in some detail, the reasons for the organization of the Tennessee Synod and the history of the Synod itself.

## ORGANIZATION AND A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DEVELOPMENT

### OF THE TENSSESSEE SYNOD

#### The North Carolina Synod

There were many things which helped to bring about the organization of the Tennessee Synod in 1789. In order to obtain a clear picture of the events, it is necessary to consider the North Carolina Synod as well as its leaders, activities, and practices that concerned. This will be done in the next part of this chapter. With this proper background material, it will then be possible to see the doctrinal differences which arose among the ministers of the North Carolina Synod, how the so-called "Germany Synod" of 1789 arose and its difficulties, and finally how the final break-up of the North Carolina Synod and the resultant organization of the Tennessee Synod occurred in 1789. After the first meeting of the Tennessee Synod has been considered, a brief history of this Synod will follow.

Most of the Germans in North Carolina had migrated from Pennsylvania. In 1771 the congregations of Salisbury, Rowan County, and Rockingham County, sent a delegation to seek aid from sister societies in England, Holland, and Germany. They were successful in obtaining the help of the Lutheran Mission Society of Germany. Several pastors and teachers were provided by the Society in the following years, but apparently around 1779, the Lutheran Mission Society either dissolved or ceased to extend the mission field in North Carolina. The ministers



## CHAPTER II

### ORGANIZATION AND A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TENNESSEE SYNOD

#### The North Carolina Synod

There were many things which helped to bring about the organization of the Tennessee Synod in 1820. In order to obtain a clear picture of these events, it is necessary to consider the North Carolina Synod as far as its leaders, doctrine, and practice are concerned. This will be done in the first part of this chapter. With this proper background material, it will then be possible to see how doctrinal differences arose among the ministers of the North Carolina Synod, how the so-called "Untimely Synod" of 1819 added more difficulties, and finally how the final break-up of the North Carolina Synod and the resultant organization of the Tennessee Synod occurred in 1820. After the first meeting of the Tennessee Synod has been considered, a brief history of this Synod will follow.

Most of the Germans in North Carolina had migrated from Pennsylvania. In 1771 the congregations of Salisbury, Rowan County, and Mecklenburg County, sent a delegation to seek aid from mission societies in England, Holland, and Germany. They were successful in obtaining the help of the Helmstaedt Mission Society of Germany. Several pastors and teachers were provided by the Society in the following years, but apparently around 1790, the Helmstaedt Mission Society either dissolved or ceased to assist the mission field in North Carolina. The ministers



of North Carolina no longer had an organization backing them in their work. This was also the time when the revival of 1801 was causing a great deal of anxiety and distraction in the Church. Because of this situation, and because they felt a need for an organization of their own to examine and ordain men to the ministerial office, they decided to work together in a more organized way. This was the beginning of the North Carolina Synod. Its first convention was held in Salisbury, North Carolina, on Monday, May 2, 1803. The ministers who were present at that first convention were: Rev. Gottfried Arndt and Rev. Robert J. Miller, both of Lincoln County; Rev. Carl A. G. Stork, near Salisbury; and Rev. Paul Henkel, from Abbot's Creek, Rowan County.<sup>1</sup> These ministers, together with fourteen lay delegates representing most of the congregations, formed the North Carolina Synod, which is the oldest Lutheran Synod in the Southern States, and thus truly a "mother synod" to all Lutherans in the South. It was the third Lutheran Synod in America in point of time, having been preceded by the Pennsylvania and New York Synods. The North Carolina Synod expanded rapidly to include congregations in South Carolina, southwestern Virginia, and eastern Tennessee. By 1820 it numbered 26 ministers and catechists, about 60 congregations, and over 6,000 members.

In order to clearly understand the reasons behind the organization of the Tennessee Synod, it is necessary to see what kind of men organized the North Carolina Synod, and what kind of men were in control

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<sup>1</sup>G. D. Bernheim, History of the German Settlements and of the Lutheran Church in North and South Carolina (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Book Store, 1872) p. 358. Stork is also spelled Storch. F. Bente, American Lutheranism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919), I, 119 says the one pastor was J. G. Arends instead of Arndt.



when the split within the Synod occurred. The Rev. Gottfried Arndt, who died in 1807, apparently had a very clear conception of the Lutheran doctrine. The Rev. C. A. G. Stork was instructed in Germany by Dr. Velthusen and acquired his unevangelical and rationalistic tendencies.<sup>2</sup> Dr. A. L. Fox gives this description of Stork and of a clash between him and David Henkel on doctrinal differences:

He was not a man of pronounced orthodox convictions. His attitude to the Symbolical Books was negative. He did not fully accept them, yet he did not oppose them. His religious thought lay in the sphere of practical religion, and was tinged with a rationalistic background. He could call Christ the Son of God, Master, Lord of the Church, and Savior, as Quitman did without believing that He is God. He was fond of preaching about the sufferings, death, and resurrection without holding the doctrine of the atonement. Once at least he gave expression to his Unitarian sentiment when he said to David Henkel, "I would not believe it if a hundred Bibles said so." It may have been an impetuous exclamation. He was so pressed by young Henkel with arguments from the Bible proving the Lutheran doctrine of the Person of Christ that in the heat of irritation he may have spoken without weighing his words.<sup>3</sup>

Rev. Robert J. Miller was a member of the Episcopal Church and remained so as long as he lived. He had been licensed by the Methodist Church and was preaching among some of the Lutheran Churches who then petitioned his ordination. Accordingly, five of the Lutheran ministers in North Carolina ordained him on May 20, 1794,<sup>4</sup> not as a Lutheran minister, but

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<sup>2</sup>J. T. Mueller, The Work of the Pioneers of the Tennessee Synod (An address by B. D. Wessinger 1920, n.p., n.d.), pp. 10-11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>H. E. Jacobs, A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (Second edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1893), p. 319. D. Nicum, Geschichte Des Evangelisch-Luthersichen Ministeriums vom Staate New York (Reading, Pa.: Druck von Theodor Wischan, 1888), p. 121. He has the date as 1805, but he has the wrong date as this ordination occurred before the organization of the North Carolina Synod in 1803.



as a minister of the Episcopal Church, and pledged him, not to the Augsburg Confession, but to the Thirty-nine Articles of the Episcopalians. When the actual organization of the North Carolina Synod took place in October of 1803, Rev. G. Arndt was elected president, and Rev. R. Miller, the Episcopalian, was elected secretary.

In 1810 when Synod met, the Rev. G. Schober was ordained and elected secretary. Rev. Schober was a member of the Moravian Church, so at that time there were two ministers in the Synod who were not Lutherans. By this time the great wave of revivalism which struck North Carolina in 1801 was making itself felt in the Lutheran Church, and thus at this same convention in 1810, Rev. Philip Henkel made the following motion:

Inasmuch as awakenings arise in our days by means of three days' preaching, and the like is to be wished among our brethren in the faith, that a trial of such preaching be made with the proviso that three ministers of our connection hold those meetings, to which also ministers of the Moravian and Reformed churches, whether German or English, be welcomed. At each of these meetings the communion is to be administered.<sup>5</sup>

In this motion of 1810 we see how another member of Synod, Rev. Philip Henkel, had been affected by the spirit of the times. Openly on the floor of Synod he advocated both pulpit and altar fellowship in the same resolution. He also practiced this in his own congregations. He was also one of the committee which passed upon and approved of Schober's book called Luther which we shall consider later. At this time he was certainly moving along with the spirit of the times. He later became more conservative due to the influence of his younger

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<sup>5</sup>Mueller, op. cit., p. 12.



brother David. In general what has been said of Rev. Philip Henkel may also be said of his father, Rev. Paul Henkel, one of the founders of the North Carolina Synod. Rev. Paul Henkel was president of Synod in 1804, and Rev. R. Miller, the Episcopalian, was serving as secretary the same year. Both he and his son Philip were members of Synod when Rev. Schober, the Moravian, was ordained, and no protest was made. In 1811 the Pennsylvania Ministerium felt it necessary to advise Rev. Paul Henkel to have no dealings with camp meetings. Neither Rev. Paul Henkel or his son Philip protested when in 1812 Rev. R. Miller was elected president and Rev. G. Schober secretary of the North Carolina Synod, thus making the strange mixture of a Lutheran Synod with an Episcopalian for president and a Moravian for secretary. The initiative for the founding of the Tennessee Synod waited for Rev. David Henkel who alone had the convictions and the courage to rise up and attack the liberalism of the day.

As far as the doctrine of the North Carolina Synod is concerned, much of the liberalism and the moving along with the spirit of the times that prevailed, can be seen from the description of the leaders of the Synod as just given. This liberalistic and false doctrine of the North Carolina Synod played an important role in the separation and organization of the Tennessee Synod. The book called Luther, which had the approval of the North Carolina Synod, also brought out the liberalistic theology that prevailed at the time. This was a book that was written in conjunction with the great tercentenary celebration of the Reformation in 1817. In 1816, on a motion by Rev. Philip Henkel, it was resolved that the secretary, Rev. G. Schober, compile all the rules



adopted by the North Carolina Synod, and publish them in the English language, since very little was known among the English inhabitants about the Lutheran Church. In accordance with this resolution, the secretary, Rev. G. Schober, prepared and presented to the Synod in 1817 a manuscript compilation entitled A Comprehensive Account of the Rise and Progress of the Reformation of the Christian Church by Dr. Martin Luther, actually begun on the 31st day of October, A.D. 1517; together with views of his character and doctrine, extracted from his books; and how the Church, established by him, arrived and progressed in North America; as also the Constitution and Rules of that Church in North Carolina and adjoining States as existing in October, 1817.<sup>6</sup> A committee, consisting of Rev. R. Miller, Philip Henkel, and Joseph Bell, was appointed to examine this manuscript. They did so and a few days later reported:

that they had examined said manuscript, and do highly approve of its contents, and recommend it to be published, believing that it will have a beneficial effect throughout our congregations, and give succinct information to other Christians what the Lutheran Church is.<sup>7</sup>

The Synod unanimously adopted this report and directed the treasurer to have 1,500 copies printed.

The contents of this book familiarly entitled Luther are a history of the Reformation; a history of the Lutheran Church which was transplanted to America, particularly in North Carolina and other Southern States; the Augsburg Confession; the Constitution and Rules adopted by

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<sup>6</sup>Bernheim, op. cit., p. 432.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 433.



the North Carolina Synod; extracts from Luther's writings; and some concluding remarks. The character of the book appears to be soundly Lutheran on some of its pages, and compromising and unionistic on other pages. The tenth and eleventh articles of the Augsburg Confession are accompanied by a footnote, which weakens their force and makes them agreeable to all denominations. In the Preface, Rev. Schober expresses the hope that all Protestant churches and their individual members would, by reading his book, be moved

to pray to God that He would awaken the spirit of love and union in all who believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and men, in order to attain the happy time prophesied, when we shall blissfully live as one flock under one Shepherd.<sup>8</sup>

Rev. Schober also says:

Why are we not all united in love and union? Why these distances, controversies, disputes, mutual condemnations, why these splittings of formulas? Why cannot the Church of Christ be one flock under one Shepherd? My friends, at the proper time the Lord will unite us all. Thank God, we see the morning star rising; the Union approaches, in Europe through Bible-societies, in America, too, through mission-societies, through the efforts of the rich and poor in sending out religious tracts, through the hundred thousand children who now learn to know their God and Savior in the Sunday-schools. Through frequent revivals and many other signs it becomes apparent that the earth will soon be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Among all classes of those who adore Jesus as God I see nothing of importance which could prevent a cordial union; and what a fortunate event would it be if all churches would unite and send delegates to a general convention of all denominations and there could settle down on Christ, the Rock, while at the same time each denomination would be permitted to retain its peculiar ways and forms. This would have the influence on all Christians that, wherever and whenever they met each other, they would love one another and keep fellowship with each other.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>F. Bente, American Lutheranism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919), I, 121.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 121. He quoted from Rev. G. Schober's book Luther, pp. 208ff.



In the Conclusion, Rev. Schober declares:

I have attentively examined the doctrine of the Episcopalian Church, read many excellent authors of the Presbyterians, know the Methodist doctrine from their book, "Portraiture of Methodism," and am acquainted with Baptist doctrine, so far as they admit and adore Jesus the Savior. Among all those classes, who worship Jesus as a God, I see nothing of importance to prevent a cordial union; and how happy would it be if all the Churches could unite and send deputies to a general meeting of all denominations. . . .<sup>10</sup>

The North Carolina Synod had declared through the committee appointed to study this book that it would give to their fellow Christians in other denominations a clear view of what the Lutheran Church really is. Yet, in this book Rev. G. Schober denied the Lutheran doctrines of the Lord's Supper and of Absolution, and enthusiastically advocated a universal union of all Christian denominations. By their action with regard to this book, in appointing a committee to examine it, in adopting it without a dissenting voice, in having it published at the expense of the Synod, and in having it generally circulated among its congregations, it is naturally assumed, therefore, that the North Carolina Synod was perfectly satisfied with its contents, that the sentiments expressed therein were the sentiments of the North Carolina Synod at that time, and that all of its ministers were united in the faith as exhibited therein. This certainly shows that the doctrine of the North Carolina Synod and the inclinations of its ministers were sympathetic to the spirit of the times in 1817.

Also in its practice the North Carolina Synod showed that it was moving right along with the unionistic and rationalistic spirit of the times. As early as 1788, Dr. J. Velthusen's Helmstaedt Catechism had

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<sup>10</sup>Bernheim, op. cit., p. 434.



been published for American use and became known as the North Carolina Catechism. It was full of the spirit of German rationalism. In its first constitution in 1803 when it was organized, there was no confessional statement or reference to the great confessional writings of the Church; in fact, the word "Lutheran" does not even occur in this document. Dr. Quitman's rationalistic liturgy was officially recommended for use by the congregations.<sup>11</sup> By 1818, however, the effects of rationalistic thinking were beginning to die out, for in a new constitution made in 1818 official avowal of the Augsburg Confession was made. This new constitution further provided that only ministers ordained or licensed by an American synod could be admitted to the Synod of North Carolina. As far as the unionistic tendencies of the North Carolina Synod are concerned, it has already been mentioned that the Lutheran ministers in North Carolina had ordained a Scotchman, Robert J. Miller, and pledged him to the Thirty-nine Articles of the Episcopalian Church. This was in 1794, even before the organization of a synod. In 1810 they ordained a Moravian, G. Schober. In 1812 they had the unusual mixture of an Episcopalian president, Rev. R. Miller, and a Moravian secretary, Rev. G. Schober, in a Lutheran synod. The North Carolina Synod and the convention of the Episcopal Church also had an arrangement of exchanging delegates who had the power to vote in the other body. The same church was often used in North Carolina by both the Lutherans and the Reformed, who used the same hymnbooks and catechisms.

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<sup>11</sup>A. R. Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1940), p. 74.



## Reasons for Organizing

Those members of the North Carolina Synod who later formed the Tennessee Synod were not in sympathy with this un-Lutheran practice. When the Tennessee Synod was formed they were very conscientious in being doctrinally correct in their practice as well as in their teaching.

The un-Lutheran practice of the North Carolina Synod in those years can also be seen in the way in which the ordination question was handled at its convention in 1816. The licensure system is an entirely American feature as far as the Lutheran Church is concerned, and it arose because of the great need for ministers of the Gospel here in America. This licensure system was first begun by the Pennsylvania Ministerium.

Because of the same need for ministers, and in order to preserve harmony and uniformity with the Pennsylvania Ministerium, this licensure system was likewise adopted by the North Carolina Synod. The various Lutheran congregations that had been organized here in America requested the different Synods to furnish them with preachers or pastors, but what could they do towards answering these repeated calls? There were few ministers that came over from Germany. There was as yet no university or college established for the education of candidates for the ministry of the Lutheran Church in this country. It was thought that the solution to this problem was to license persons who could exhort and catechize, to take charge of these vacant churches. They were not to administer the sacraments, however. This was to be done as frequently as possible by the ordained ministers residing in the vicinity. These exhorters were called catechets. There was a regular course of study



prescribed for them in Latin, Greek, and theology, to be studied privately or with some of the older ministers. As soon as these exhorters were able to pass a satisfactory examination, they were advanced in their ministerial standing and received license to administer all the ordinances of the church. This license, however, had to be renewed every year. Now they were called candidates. They were obliged to continue their studies, report their ministerial acts to Synod, bring a written sermon annually for examination, and whenever they were able to pass a satisfactory examination on their studies, character, and ministerial usefulness, they were solemnly ordained to the Gospel ministry. They were then called pastors and enjoyed all the privileges of the older ministers. This arrangement was regarded as an educational arrangement, and not as an arrangement which established different grades or orders of the ministry. This was the licensure system.<sup>12</sup>

In Lincoln County, North Carolina, a great opposition arose to this system, because the candidates were authorized to perform all ministerial acts without having been previously ordained. The impression had been given in Lincoln County that it was antichristian for anyone to administer the sacraments without ordination, and thus they vehemently insisted that the candidates be ordained. This matter was brought before the convention of the North Carolina Synod in 1816. At this convention it was then explained why the Synod had adopted and continued the licensure system, namely, that it had been a blessing to the Church, and that the Synod wished to conform also in this matter

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<sup>12</sup>Bernheim, op. cit., pp. 425-27.



to the long-established practice of their brethren in Pennsylvania. At this same convention the report of the Pennsylvania Ministerium on this subject, as found in its minutes of 1814, was given, which report reads as follows:

Upon motion, the ordained ministers were called upon to express their opinion on the question proposed by the North Carolina Ministerium, namely, "Have candidates the right to perform the Actus Ministeriales without a previous laying on of hands?" Some expressed their opinions verbally, others in writing. It was unanimously "Resolved, That, according to the testimony of the Bible and the history of the Church, a written authority is equally as valid as the imposition of hands, that our ministerial arrangement is not in opposition to the principles of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and that, therefore, licensed candidates can perform all Actus Ministeriales with a good conscience."<sup>13</sup>

The majority of the ministers in the North Carolina Synod were inclined to accept this view. However, because there were a few ministers who strongly opposed it, Rev. G. Schober made a motion

to make the following alteration for one year only: that if the present candidates can pass through their this year's examination, their license be handed them publicly before the congregation, after having affirmatively answered that they would observe all what the Bible and the Augsburg Confession requires of a minister, and that in the name of the Church a blessing be pronounced upon them with imposition of hands.<sup>14</sup>

Even though the president, Rev. C. A. G. Stork, protested against this innovation, the resolution was adopted. Pastor Stork then requested Rev. G. Schober to attend to this duty for him, since he could not conscientiously perform the ceremony. The opinion is also recorded in the minutes that this action might eventually cause a division in the Church. It was indeed one of several doctrinal differences that

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 427-28.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 428.



eventually led to the founding of the Tennessee Synod.

The causes which gave rise to the organization of the Tennessee Synod in 1820 are chiefly found in the position which the Church at that time occupied in regard to doctrine and practice. The conditions of the Lutheran Church in America about this time have been extensively described in the first chapter. The leaders, conditions, doctrine, and practice existing in the North Carolina Synod have just been described. The corrupt and disturbing influences in the Church during that period was also evident in the lax and unsettled condition of the North Carolina Synod with regard to both doctrine and practice as the year 1820 approached. There was not a Synod in America at that time that unreservedly accepted the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, not to mention the other Symbolical Books.

In view of such corrupt and unionistic tendencies, differences in regard to doctrine and practice arose among some of the ministers of the North Carolina Synod and caused more difficulties. The Rev. G. Schober charged the Rev. D. Henkel with teaching false doctrines, who then appealed to the Book of Concord to defend himself. Pastor Henkel had his own Latin copy of the Book of Concord, from which he had learned the true Lutheran doctrine, and was thus able to distinguish between that which was Lutheran doctrine and that which was not. The people were inclined to believe Henkel, and the fact that he appealed to the Book of Concord certainly helped his position. To offset this advantage, Schober said that Henkel's translation from the Latin was incorrect. This confused the people, because they did not know Latin and thus had no way of knowing who was right. Shortly after this incident, while on



a journey to South Carolina, Pastor Henkel accidentally discovered a German copy of the Book of Concord in a home where he was spending the night. Books were very precious at that time, but Pastor Henkel persuaded the man to let him have the book, which he then brought back to North Carolina, and used to prove the correctness of his Latin translation and the position which he had taken. This German copy the people could read and understand, and as they did so, they became convinced that Pastor Henkel and his position on doctrine were correct. Many of the people, therefore, took his side and defended him against the false charges of his opponents. The elders of the congregation then met and discussed the matter. After careful deliberation, one of the elders, Captain John Stirewalt, presented this Book of Concord to their pastor, Rev. G. Schober, and asked him if he would follow and preach according to the teachings of that book. The pastor hesitated and tried to evade the question, but when he was pressed for an answer, he picked up the book, slammed it down on the table, and said: "From this day henceforth, I will not; it is nothing but a controversial book." The elder, Mr. Stirewalt, then picked up the book, brought it down on the table, and said: "From this day henceforth, you won't be our preacher."<sup>15</sup>

The differences in doctrine became more apparent. The controversies and conflicts assumed a wider range and more formidable aspects, affecting some of the more vital doctrines of the Church. The authority of the Lutheran Confessions were questioned. These things furnished

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<sup>15</sup>Socrates Henkel, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod (New Market, Va.: Henkel & Co., Printers and Publishers, 1890), p. 14.



occasion for rupture and schism, and gave rise to the chief causes or reasons which ultimately resulted in the organization of the Tennessee Synod. All that was lacking was a suitable opportunity to bring about the final rupture. The elements were at work, and the opportunity for separation came quickly.

Reference has already been made to the argument between Rev. David Henkel and Rev. C. Stork on the Person of Christ. Also mentioned was Rev. D. Henkel's appeal to the Book of Concord in defense of his teachings. In addition there is a letter, written by Andrew Hoyle to the North Carolina Synod, April 24, 1819, in which he charges Rev. D. Henkel with teaching dangerous doctrine, chief among which was baptismal regeneration and the real presence in the Lord's Supper.<sup>16</sup> Personal troubles are also mentioned, but it is very evident that the differences about doctrine had arisen much earlier. Rev. D. Henkel had succeeded his brother Philip as pastor of a church in Tennessee in 1814. Between that time and 1819 he had preached that doctrine to which Andrew Hoyle took exception. Thus it appears that already in these early years of his ministry Rev. D. Henkel was taking a decided stand for confessional Lutheranism. During this time Rev. G. Schober became the leader of the North Carolina Synod. Rev. G. Schober was a lawyer as well as a minister, a very able man, advanced in years, self-centered, and very determined. On the floor of Synod he had encountered young D. Henkel who was equally decided and unyielding. Rev. D. Henkel always asserted his convictions and defended them with marked ability. The

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<sup>16</sup>Mueller, op. cit., p. 13.



Rev. G. Schober had already realized that in Rev. D. Henkel he would encounter a strong antagonist in his scheme of church federation. The two did not get along too well with each other. As early as 1816 Rev. D. Henkel refers to his licensure by Rev. G. Schober as having occurred with great dissatisfaction. The Rev. D. Henkel saw Schober's lack of Lutheranism, his tendency toward unionism, and his arbitrary rule in the Synod. He dared to oppose Schober. The time had come when two men like G. Schober and D. Henkel could no longer remain in the same Synod. The specially called meeting of Synod in 1819, the meeting of a number of pastors at the regularly set time, the ordination of David Henkel under an oak tree when they were denied admission to the church, were only incidents that hastened the rupture. The rupture itself did not occur until 1820. To get a complete picture of events and to be able to understand the position of the men who formed the Tennessee Synod, it is necessary to study these incidents in more detail.

At the regular meeting of the North Carolina Synod on October 17, 1817, it was resolved that because of the prevalence of sickness during the fall season, the time when the meetings of Synod had been generally held, the Synod should from then on be convened on Trinity Sunday of each year. This new time of meeting was "firmly fixed" (fest gesetzt).<sup>17</sup> It was also resolved at that meeting of the Synod to hold the next convention on Trinity Sunday of 1819. The convention of 1818 was to be omitted because that year's Trinity Sunday occurred only about seven months after this meeting of October 17, 1817. This arrangement

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<sup>17</sup>Bernheim, op. cit., p. 435.



became the occasion for much difficulty. Nineteen months without a meeting of Synod was too long a time to intervene for the welfare of the Church. Many evils could no doubt have been avoided if the Synod had met in 1818. There was no opportunity during this time for any united, official efforts to calm the conflicting elements in regard to differences in doctrine, and thus the breach grew wider and wider. Then, also, the call from the Pennsylvania Ministerium to consult with that body in its regular meeting in Baltimore on Trinity Sunday of 1819 about the propriety of organizing a General Synod presented another difficulty. This time conflicted with the time that had been set for the regular meeting of the North Carolina Synod.

In compliance, therefore, with the call of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, the North Carolina Synod was convened on the second Sunday after Easter, six weeks before the appointed time. Now this change of meeting dates was made even though the date of the meeting, Trinity Sunday of 1819, had been firmly fixed by the last convention of Synod, and in spite of the fact that on that day a considerable number of candidates for the ministry were to be ordained. This had also been decided at the last regular convention. The reasons that were given for this unconstitutional change were that a communication had been received by the secretary of the North Carolina Synod from the secretary of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania to the effect that there was a general desire among its ministers to effect a more general union, and since the date set for this meeting, the regular session of the Pennsylvania Ministerium on Trinity Sunday, 1819, conflicted with the regular set meeting of the North Carolina Synod on the same day, it was necessary,



if the North Carolina Synod desired to take part through a delegate or delegates in considering the propriety of such a move, to convene the North Carolina Synod sooner than the constitutional time. Therefore, a portion of the ministers of the North Carolina Synod, particularly those living in the vicinity of the president, who were also in favor of such a general union, after some consultation requested the president, with the consent of two or three ordained ministers in the vicinity, to convene the Synod before the time fixed in the constitution. However, the interval between the time when the call was made and that of the meeting was too short to enable ministers at a distance to reach the place of meeting. In fact, some of the ministers knew nothing of this meeting until after it was all over. It was at this meeting, then, that Rev. G. Schober was elected as a delegate to represent the North Carolina Synod in the meeting which took place in Baltimore on Trinity Sunday, 1819.

Now this unconstitutional calling of Synod might have been well enough, if this matter of sending a delegate to Baltimore had been urgent, and if the time of the meeting of the North Carolina Synod had not been firmly fixed. This question concerning the establishment of a General Synod did not, however, require speedy action at that time. This is evident from the fact that the meeting in Baltimore in 1819 was simply an annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, where the question was to be discussed as to the propriety of organizing a General Synod. It was certainly injudicious haste on the part of the North Carolina Synod to disarrange its own Church affairs merely to send a delegate to a meeting of the Pennsylvania Ministerium at which



meeting no steps could possibly be taken except to discuss the question and call for a convention of delegates from all the Synods. That there was no great need for haste is also seen from the fact that Rev. G. Schober was the only delegate that appeared upon the floor of the Pennsylvania Ministerium from other Lutheran Synods. Thus the North Carolina Synod should have had more consideration for its own regularly scheduled Church affairs. This specially called meeting of Synod thus became known as the "untimely Synod."<sup>18</sup>

When Trinity Sunday, 1819, came, which was the regularly scheduled time for Synod's meeting, a minister of Tennessee and several of North Carolina, together with a number of lay delegates, met at the place appointed for the meeting of Synod. Not finding the president of Synod there, a minister and an elder were sent to his home which was only a few miles away with a written request that he should come to the church, in order that everything might be arranged and done in a regular, orderly manner. The president replied that he was not very well, and even if he were, he would not go as the meeting of Synod had already been held, and there was no need for holding it over again. He also commanded the elders not to open the church, but after the messengers reasoned with him about this, he consented to opening the church for preaching, but not for any synodical business. Therefore, after opening services, the Synod met under several shade trees nearby, and since three petitions in due form from Rev. David Henkel's congregations requesting his ordination to the office of pastor were presented, and

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<sup>18</sup>Bente, op. cit., p. 122.



since his lay delegates demanded it in accordance with the resolution passed at the previous meeting of the Synod, which stated that he and a number of other candidates for the office of the ministry who had sustained their examinations and were approved should be ordained at this meeting of Synod on Trinity Sunday, 1819, Rev. David Henkel and Joseph Bell were ordained in the regular manner, according to the custom of the Church and the resolution of the Synod. Afterwards, some of the ministers who strongly favored a general union among all Protestant denominations questioned the validity of Rev. David Henkel's ordination, and invalidated it, while they at the same time recognized the ordination of Joseph Bell who was ordained at the same time with him and under the same circumstances. The other party, however, sustained the ordination of Rev. David Henkel, asserting that it had taken place strictly in accordance with the resolution of the previous regular Synod which had provided that this should be done on Trinity Sunday of 1819 according to the regulations of the Church.

These controversies in regard to doctrinal differences grew more intense and assumed a wider range. There was strong opposition to the move for the organization of a general union, especially against one including different Protestant denominations, and also against the Proposed Plan of this union which did not have a well defined doctrinal or confessional basis. The persons who became the leaders in these conflicts or differences in doctrine and policy, were Rev. Gottlieb Schober on the part of the unionists and Rev. David Henkel on the part of the anti-unionists. Rev. Dr. Bernheim, a well-known historian, gives us the following description of these men:



Rev. Schober was a man of decided opinions, unyielding in everything which he considered right, as may be seen from a sketch of his life in the *Evangelical Review*, vol. viii., pp. 412-414; "With a mind that knew no dissimulation, a lofty independence, an ardent temper, and a character decidedly affirmative, he frequently experienced difficulties and encountered points other than pleasant in his pilgrimage through life, and which a disposition more pliant could have averted."

"The lineaments of his countenance gave indications of a strong and active mind." "He was one of the most active defenders of (the) General Synod, as he had also been prominent among its early founders." But Rev. Schober was no Lutheran, he was a member of the Moravian Church, and never disconnected himself from communion with the same; he lived and died as a member of that Church. This information the writer received from his own daughter, the widow of Bishop Herrman. He merely served the Lutheran Church in the capacity of one of its ministers, being the pastor of several neglected Lutheran congregations in the vicinity of his place of residence, Salem, N. C. It may be readily perceived that no compromise could be expected on his part in the difficulties which distracted the Lutheran Church at that time.

Firm as was the Rev. G. Schober, he found his equal in that respect in Rev. David Henkel, who, though a young man then, was equally as decided and unyielding in his opinions. He was a hard student and well educated, not only in the German and English languages, but also in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Theology, all of which he had principally acquired by private study and close application. He was the best informed candidate for the ministry the North Carolina Synod had at that time, and wielded even then a considerable influence in the Church. It is not to be supposed that he would readily yield his opinions to others, or permit himself to be led about at the will of even those who were older than himself, when he believed his cause to be just. In him the Tennessee Synod had a champion who could not be easily overcome. He had a mind that was clear, active, and penetrating; he was quick in discerning an advantage, and not slow in making use of it. These characteristics are gathered principally from his own writings.<sup>19</sup>

"The difficulty was at first a personal one,<sup>20</sup> and as the North

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<sup>19</sup>Bernheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 441-443.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 443. Henkel, *op. cit.*, p. 23 says: "It is true, efforts have been made to make it appear that personal difficulties were among the first causes which gave rise to the rupture. The facts will not justify such a conclusion. For these did not occur till after many of the conflicts in regard to differences in doctrine and practice had taken place and been agitated. The truth is, the personal matters



Carolina Synod admitted, errors had been committed on both sides."<sup>21</sup> However, it soon took a wider range, occasioned by the opposition to the formation of the General Synod, and as the controversy raged, the doctrinal differences that existed between the opposing parties became manifest. This widened the breach already existing and all attempts at a reconciliation during the meeting of the North Carolina Synod in Lincolnton, North Carolina, on May 28, 1820 were unsuccessful.

This meeting at Lincolnton, North Carolina on May 28, 1820, which followed the so-called "Untimely Synod" of 1819, was marked by painful scenes and disputes and the final breach between the majority, who were resolved to unite with the General Synod, and the minority, who opposed such a union and who also accused the leader, Rev. C. Stork, not only of high-handed, autocratic procedure and usurpation of power in violating the constitution, but also of false doctrine, and publicly refused to recognize them as Lutherans. The meeting of Synod was opened with a service on Sunday, May 28, in which Rev. C. Stork preached in German and Rev. J. Bell preached in English. On Monday morning the preachers, delegates, and a great multitude of people from the neighborhood returned to the church and found it occupied by Pastors Paul Henkel, Philip Henkel, David Henkel, and Joseph Bell, who refused them admission. The unionistic party, claiming they had a majority, apparently made no proposition to the other party to investigate and adjust the difficulties

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referred to by some were not between ministers, but between one minister and a member of the German Reformed Church. That idea seems rather to grow out of an after-thought, to palliate."

<sup>21</sup>Bernheim, op. cit., p. 443.



and differences according to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures in a friendly, Christian manner, but before they approached the other party who were already at the church, they sent one of their ministers to one of the ministers of the other party, with two questions. The first question asked was: "Will you withdraw from the Synod?" The second question asked was: "Will you submit to the decision of the majority of the ministers and lay-delegates, relative to the controversies and differences?"<sup>22</sup> This minister who was asked gave no decisive answer and so the minister asking the questions went to the rest of the party in the church and asked them the same questions. The party in the church then answered the questions in writing, stating:

We will not withdraw from the Synod, nor will we be ruled by a majority, but are ready and willing to investigate and decide every thing according to the teachings of the Augsburg Confession and the Constitution of the Synod, but not otherwise.<sup>23</sup>

After the party in the church was gathered together again, this same minister who had been delegated by the unionistic party, again approached them and demanded a verbal answer to the same questions. The answer to the questions was then given verbally as demanded. To this answer, the delegated minister replied with a defiant mien, and in a domineering tone: "That is not the thing. I only ask, Will you, or will you not?" The party in the church replied, "We will not." The delegated minister then said: "This is all I want to know," and quickly turned around, and briskly walked away.<sup>24</sup> Then the delegated minister and his

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<sup>22</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1820), pp. 22-23 as translated by S. Henkel, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 23 as translated by Henkel, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 23 as translated by Henkel, op. cit., pp. 20-21.



friends of the unionistic party came and asked the same questions and received the same reply that had been given before. The leader of the unionistic party then attempted to show that in deciding this dispute, or others, the Synod was not bound to any fixed or definite regulation, but that such things were to be decided only according to the majority of the votes of the ministers and lay-delegates. Since they had the majority, they claimed that it was only reasonable and just that their opponents should be thus governed in this dispute. The other party contended, however, that the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession, which they felt certain could be proved to be in accord with the teachings of the Bible, ought to be of greater consideration than the majority of votes of men who are opposed to the doctrines and regulations of the Church.

After a short interchange of words of a similar character, the unionistic party went into the church, and were followed by the other party. There, the president, Rev. C. Stork, delivered a long speech in German, trying to prove what he had asserted just before. Then the secretary, Rev. G. Schober, followed with a still longer speech in the English language, in which he attempted to show that the Synod was not bound to act according to the Constitution or Regulation of the Synod; and even though he, with the approval of the Synod, had written the constitution and had it printed, he still contended that it was not done with the intention of making it a rule or standard by which the members of Synod were to be guided in their transactions, but it was only meant to be a sort of plan or model which might be used to formulate a good constitution if this should become necessary in the future.



The other party, the Henkels, then proved from the constitution itself that it had been received as an official document, for it had been examined first by a committee of ministers appointed by Synod and favorably recommended, and then was approved by Synod and ordered to be printed.

Rev. G. Schober then replied that that had not been the intention of Synod. Haste and lack of time had caused him to write it thus without previous careful consideration. Therefore, everything now had to be regulated and determined by the majority.

The other party, the Henkels, regarded that construction of the matter as being very unsatisfactory, especially in view of the fact that the constitution, in accordance with a resolution of Synod, had been printed and bound in 1,500 copies, at a cost of 75 cents per copy, the money being taken out of the synodical treasury.

This question concerning the violation of the constitution would, no doubt, have been settled in favor of the Henkels, but the controversy then turned more directly to differences in doctrine. Some of the unionistic party called into question and even denied some of the doctrines that were clearly taught in the Augsburg Confession, while the other party, led by the Henkels, defended the teachings of the Augsburg Confession with zeal and earnestness. The unionistic party were not only opposed in their union schemes, but were here charged also with false doctrine and apostasy from the Lutheran Church. The Henkels declared that they could have no fellowship with people who were addicted to false doctrines concerning Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and who rejected the clear teachings of the Augsburg Confession. They



also declared their impatience with the contemplated general union of all religious denominations.<sup>25</sup> In the midst of the discussion on these doctrinal matters which was so vitally important, one of the officers of the Synod, who was so enthusiastic in regard to his idea of a general union, dissolved the meeting and leaving the church, exclaimed: "Whoever is a right Lutheran, let him follow us out to J. H.'s hotel,"--this was John Harry's hotel--"there we will begin our Synod!" The other side replied: "Whoever is a real fanatic" (Schwaermer), "let him follow; for you are no true Lutheran preachers; you are fanatics, and to such you belong."<sup>26</sup> Then the unionistic party left the church and went to the hotel and commenced their Synod. The other party who remained in the church, after some deliberation and consultation, adjourned, especially since only a few ministers from Tennessee were present at the time. On the 17th of July of the same year, 1820, they met again in Solomon's Church, Cove Creek, Green County, Tennessee, to organize a synod according to the teachings and doctrines of the Church.

The chief doctrines about which these conflicting parties differed were Original Sin, the Person and Nature of Christ, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.<sup>27</sup> The discussion of these doctrines caused the Rev. James Hill, a Methodist minister who was present, to address a letter to Synod asking for its position with regard to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. This was done later in the sessions. The following reply was adopted:

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-26 as translated by Bente, op. cit., pp. 125-26.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 27 as translated by Henkel, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>27</sup>Edmund J. Wolf, The Lutherans in America (New York: J. A. Hill & Company, 1889), p. 373.



To the Rev. James Hill. Reverend and Dear Sir: In answer to your question, "whether water baptism effects regeneration," we say that we do not fully know what you mean by the word "effect" as it may have many definitions. But we say that baptism is beneficial and ought to be attended to as a command of God; but we do not believe that all who are baptized with water are regenerated and born again unto God, so as to be saved without the operation of the Holy Ghost; or in other words without faith in Christ. And as to the second question, we do not believe nor teach that the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are corporeally received along with the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper; but that the true believer does spiritually receive and partake of the same through faith in Jesus Christ and all the saving benefits of His death and passion.<sup>28</sup>

As can be seen from this answer of the North Carolina Synod, the first part was somewhat evasive, while the second part clearly shows how far the Synod had wandered from the true teachings of the Bible and the Lutheran Church.

#### The Tennessee Synod

As just mentioned, the party that had remained in the church after the heated argument on doctrinal differences, after some consultation and deliberation, had adjourned. These men afterwards met with others in Solomon's Church, Cove Creek, Green County, Tennessee, on July 17, 1820 to organize a conference or synod, in accordance with the teachings, doctrines, and policy of the Word of God, as set forth in the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

At this meeting there were 5 ministers and 19 lay-delegates. The five ministers were: Revs. Jacob Zink, of Washington County, Virginia; Paul Henkel, of New Market, Shenandoah County, Virginia; Adam Miller, of Sullivan County, Tennessee; Philip Henkel, of Green County, Tennessee;

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<sup>28</sup>Mueller, op. cit., pp. 14-15.



and George Esterly, of Green County, Tennessee.<sup>29</sup> Of these five men, only two were ordained pastors, Rev. Paul Henkel and his son Philip. Jacob Zink and Adam Miller were licentiates, and they were ordained at this meeting. George Esterly, an applicant, was promoted to the office of deacon. Even though he was not present at this first meeting, Rev. David Henkel, of Lincoln County, North Carolina, should certainly be included. He had been unavoidably detained at home, but acquiesced in the object of this meeting, and was recognized as a member. Rev. David Henkel was the real founder of the Tennessee Synod. He was a young man at the time of the founding of the Tennessee Synod, only 25 years old, highly endowed with the capacity for leadership. He had conceived the thought of the new synod, formulated the plans for its organization and government, and, although he was not present at its first meeting, he was recognized as its champion and leader till his death. In fact, he was the animating spirit of the Synod long after he was dead. He laid the foundation for all that it afterward became. His fearless leadership and dauntless courage corrected the irregularities of his brother Philip and strengthened his aged father, both of whom knew the Lutheran doctrine very well, but had lacked the initiative and courage to defend it at all times. He so inspired the young Tennessee Synod with the value of the Lutheran Confessions that they became the shibboleth of Lutheranism.

The representatives of the various congregations who were present at this organizational meeting were:

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<sup>29</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1820, p. 3.







and for other necessary expenses. Every minister was to keep a record of his pastoral acts and report them to Synod each year. It was especially mentioned that none of the members of the Tennessee Synod could take a seat and vote in the North Carolina Synod because it could not be recognized as a true Lutheran Synod.<sup>31</sup>

These are the basis and regulations under which the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Conference or Synod was organized. The name Tennessee was adopted on account of the state in which they met and organized. At this time there were also congregations in the Carolinas and Virginia. Thus it is clear that the name Tennessee was not intended to indicate boundary, but simply to distinguish this Conference or Synod from other Synods already in existence, such as the Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, North Carolina, and Ohio Synods. This is also evident from statements in its own proceedings, where it is said,

But if it should be deemed necessary that the said Conference should meet in an adjoining State, it may be held in such State. But the Conference shall always retain the name Tennessee Conference or Synod; although it may have ministers and lay-delegates also in other States.<sup>32</sup>

Again, in the proceedings of its eighth session in 1827, during which its basis was revised and improved to make it more clear and simple, it is stated,

This body shall be entitled "The Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod." But this title shall by no means be construed; so as to give the members, who reside in the state of Tennessee the least prerogative: for this body is principally composed of members, who reside, in other states: but this title is designed to

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-10 as translated by Henkel, op. cit., pp. 25-29. A full reprint will appear in an Appendix.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 8 as translated by Henkel, op. cit., p. 28.



distinguish this body from that called "the Synod of North Carolina and adjoining states" who are a branch of the General Synod.<sup>33</sup>

At first the German language alone was used in the transactions of the Synod mainly because nearly all of the ministers as well as most of the lay-members used that language at that time. The English language was introduced at a later date.

After having agreed on a basis and regulations, the newly organized Tennessee Synod proceeded with the transaction of such other business as seemed necessary.

First, it set forth its reasons for organizing this Synod. These reasons are based chiefly on the differences in doctrine as was mentioned earlier in this chapter on page 55. Then there was a Dissertation of Holy Baptism with particular reference to the differences of the conflicting parties. Then there occurs in the proceedings the constitution or plan of the General Synod, accompanied by objections and criticisms on every article. Next follows a paper signed by several Ohio Synod ministers showing why they cannot endorse or adopt the plan or constitution of the General Synod. Finally, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, in its twenty-eight articles, in the German, is printed in the proceedings. This is perhaps the first edition, or at least among the first editions, of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession that was ever printed in the United States in the German language and including all twenty-eight articles.

After regular services and preaching, the Conference adjourned to

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<sup>33</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1827), p. 23.



meet again at the time and place mentioned above.

Thus the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod was organized and took its position in the Church.

The chief object of the organization of this Synod was the restoration of the Church to its normal condition in regard to doctrine and practice. This is evident from the position it took, the basis it adopted, and the course it pursued in promulgating, circulating, and maintaining the pure, Scriptural doctrines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church according to her Confessional Writings in the family, in the catechetical class, from the pulpit, and through the printing press, from the time of its organization and onward.

The Tennessee Synod at its conception was the only Synod at the time which formally and unqualifiedly accepted the Augsburg Confession. In its Basis and Regulations as accepted at its organization it was stated:

All teachings relative to the faith, and all doctrines concerning Christian conduct, as well as all books publicly used in the Church in the service or worship of God, shall be arranged and kept, as nearly as it is possible to do, in accordance with the doctrines of the holy Scriptures and the Augsburg Confession.<sup>34</sup>

In 1827 its constitution was revised, but there were no material changes made in regard to its confessional basis, or in any other respect, except as to arrangement. During a period of forty-five years the Augsburg Confession was recognized as a sufficient exponent of the Lutheran faith, while Luther's Small Catechism was the manual for the instruction of the young. The members of the Tennessee Synod considered

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<sup>34</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1820, pp. 4-5 as translated by Henkel, op. cit., pp. 25-26.



it their special mission to preserve and develop the pure Lutheran faith in America. In 1866 the other Lutheran Symbols were declared to be a faithful scriptural explanation of the doctrines contained in the Augsburg Confession. In this revised constitution of 1866, the confessional basis is more fully presented, in order to express more clearly its doctrinal position, as follows:

The Holy Scriptures, the inspired writings of the Old and New Testaments, shall be the only rule and standard of doctrine and church discipline. As a true and faithful exhibition of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures in regard to matters of faith and practice, this Synod receives the three Ancient Symbols: the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession of Faith. It receives also the other Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, viz.: The Apology, the Smalcald Articles, the Smaller and Larger Catechisms of Luther, and the Formula of Concord, as true Scriptural developments of the doctrines taught in the Augsburg Confession.<sup>35</sup>

As general indifference to those features which characterize the Lutheran Church had long prevailed, the apprehension of Lutheran doctrines was to these men of the Tennessee Synod like a new and rich discovery, and the opposition against them had the effect of making them very firm and zealous in their maintenance of the Lutheran Confessions. Great stress was laid upon the Confessions in their preaching. They were talked about constantly by the way and at the fireside and made an all important element in the examination of candidates for the ministry. Thus the clergy were always well grounded in Lutheran dogmatics. Every minister and teacher was required to take an obligation not to teach anything that is in conflict with the confessed doctrines and practices of the Church, and all the books used in the Church were required to

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<sup>35</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1866), p. 19.



conform to these doctrines and practices. Because these men of the Tennessee Synod were fully persuaded that the doctrines of the Lutheran Church were the doctrines of God's Word, and because they recognized the duty of those who have come to a knowledge of the truth to publish it to the world, they used the printed word and from time to time issued a number of translations from German theological works, as well as original doctrinal, devotional, and polemic treatises. In this respect as well as in their unreserved acceptance of the Confessions they were well in advance of other Lutheran Synods.

The work of the Tennessee Synod soon prospered, and extended into North Carolina, then to Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, and Missouri, and afterwards to South Carolina, thence to Alabama, and so on. At its beginning in 1820 the Tennessee Synod had 6 pastors, but by 1827 the number of pastors had increased to 14, by 1856 to 32, and by 1900 to 40. In 1919 the Tennessee Synod numbered about 130 congregations and 14,500 communicants.

The Tennessee Synod maintained its independence until in July, 1886, at Roanoke, Virginia, it united with the synods of the General Synod South and with the Holston Synod to form the "United Synod in the South." A union was thus effected of bodies which had antagonized each other for fifty years. There were many reasons for this union. Time had softened the asperities of religious controversy. Old prejudices had died away. A spirit of concord and cooperation had made itself felt. A sense of responsibility to gather the harvest which Providence had ripened, pointed to union as the condition of success. By education, by long contact and personal association, both parties had mutually come to a



better understanding of each other's spirit, principles, and work. The Tennessee Synod was not conscious of any relaxation of Lutheran orthodoxy and yet in some respects a more liberal tendency prevailed. The majority, however, were sufficiently satisfied with the confessional advance of the other synods to enter into organic relations with them.

The development of these synods show how this was indeed the case. The General Synod South was organized at Concord, North Carolina, in 1863, by delegates of the Synods of Virginia, Southwest Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. The doctrinal basis then adopted was:

1. We receive and hold that the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice.
2. We likewise hold that the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Augsburg Confession, contain the fundamental doctrines of the Sacred Scriptures, and we receive and adopt them as the exponents of our faith.
3. Inasmuch as there has always been, and still is, a difference of construction among us with regard to several articles of the Augsburg Confession; therefore we, acting in conformity with the spirit and time-honored usage of our Church, hereby affirm that we allow the full and free exercise of private judgment in regard to those articles.<sup>36</sup>

In 1867 the General Synod South resolved:

That we feel bound as an ecclesiastical body to withhold our imprimatur from any religious publication, of whatever form, which shall inculcate principles opposed to the doctrine of the Augsburg Confession as construed and defended by our Church in her symbolical writings.

That we feel in like manner bound to appoint or employ no professor in our theological schools who shall teach doctrines at variance with our time-honored confession.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>E. T. Horn, and Others, The Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, c.1893), p. 171.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 172.



In 1880 the General Synod South said "of the Symbols adopted subsequently to the Augsburg Confession as a further defense of the truth of God's infallible Word,"

We acknowledge said additional testimonies as in accord with and an unfolding of the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession; or in the exact language of the Formula of Concord concerning them, and the Augsburg Confession as well, that they have not the authority of a judge, for this honor belongs to Sacred Scriptures alone; but that they only bear witness to our holy faith, and explain and exhibit in what manner in every age the Holy Scriptures were understood and set forth in all articles contested in the Church of God by teachers who then lived.<sup>38</sup>

Finally, in 1882, the General Synod South declared that she was ready to cooperate with other Lutheran bodies towards organic union "on an unequivocal Lutheran basis." Thus the General Synod South had come to an unreserved and sincere adoption of all the Confessions of the Lutheran Church.

In 1883 propositions were laid before the Synods composing the General Synod South looking to a new union which should embrace the Tennessee and Holsten Synods also. A meeting was held at Salisbury, North Carolina, November 12 and 13, 1884, in which a "Basis of Union" was considered in committee, amended, and ultimately adopted. The "Confessional Basis" as finally adopted is that of the Tennessee Synod, and reads as follows:

The Doctrinal Basis of this organization shall be,

1. The Holy Scriptures, the Inspired writings of the Old and New Testaments, the only standard of doctrine and Church discipline.
2. As a true and faithful exhibition of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures in regard to matters of faith and practice, the three Ancient Symbols, the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds, and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession of

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 174-75.



Faith; also, the other Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, viz.: The Apology, the Smalcald Articles, the Smaller and Larger Catechisms of Luther, and the Formula of Concord, consisting of the Epitome and Full Declaration, as they are set forth, defined and published in the Christian Book of Concord, or the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church, published in the year 1580, as true and Scriptural developments of the doctrines taught in the Augsburg Confession, and in the perfect harmony of one and the same pure, Scriptural faith.<sup>39</sup>

In June, 1886, at a meeting at Roanoke, Virginia, the United Synod in the South was organized on the Basis and Constitution adopted at Salisbury. The General Synod South formally merged itself into this new organization and transferred to it all its possessions, works, and undertakings. Thus it was a new body planted squarely upon the Symbolical Books "as true and Scriptural developments of the doctrines taught in the Augsburg Confession, and in the perfect harmony of one and the same pure Scriptural faith." For years, however, the United Synod in the South was obliged to discuss the troublesome questions of secret societies and pulpit and altar fellowship. But the church in the South was averse to controversy and declined to legislate on these subjects. It was finally agreed to leave the questions undecided and to recognize that difference of opinion exists, though sentiment constantly gravitated towards the stricter practice.

Early in 1921 the Lutherans in the North Carolina and the Tennessee Synods formed the United Evangelical Lutheran Synod of North Carolina. For a hundred years they had been divided into two synods. In 1836 both Synods had united with others in the United Synod in the South, but they had continued their separate existence on the same territory. The North

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 180-81.







## CHAPTER III

### THE CHURCH POLITY OF THE TENNESSEE SYNOD

#### Doctrinal Basis

In considering the policy and church polity of the Tennessee Synod, it is necessary to refer once again to its doctrinal and confessional basis. The Tennessee Synod was the only Lutheran Synod in America in 1820 that unreservedly received and acknowledged the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. The conservative, confessional basis which the Tennessee Synod adopted is seen from the following summary of its Basis and Regulations which were adopted at its organization in 1820:

1. All doctrines of faith and teachings in regard to Christian conduct, as well as all books used in the public services of the Church, shall be so formulated and arranged as to conform, as nearly as possible, to the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and the Augsburg Confession of Faith.
2. The young and others who need instruction shall be taught from Luther's Small Catechism, according to the custom of our Church. And this Catechism shall always be the chief catechism in our Church. The Christian Catechism, printed at New Market, Shenandoah County, Virginia, may, however, be used for the purpose of explaining Luther's Catechism.
3. No one shall be a teacher or an officer in the Church who has not been received into the congregation according to the order of the Church, and does not bear a Christian character.
4. Whoever desires to be a teacher, shall make a sacred affirmation or promise that he will teach according to the Word of God, the Augsburg Confession, and the doctrines of our Church.
5. No one who has not been baptized according to the command of Christ, and confirmed by the imposition of hands, according to the order of the Christian Church, and partaken of the Lord's Supper, shall be a full member of our Church.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Socrates Henkel, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod (New Market, Va.: Henkel & Co., Printers and Publishers, 1890), pp. 32-33. A full reprint of this Basis and Regulations appears in the Appendix.



Furthermore, in this constitution the Tennessee Synod recognized only two grades in the ministry, Pastor and Deacon. It definitely opposed the licensure system then widely practiced by the Lutheran Church in America. The pastor was authorized to perform every ministerial act; while the deacon was allowed only to catechize, preach, and baptize.

In 1827, the Tennessee Synod revised its constitution, making it much clearer and simpler. Great changes were made only in arrangement, and not in regard to its confessional basis. Three statements from this revised constitution will serve to bring out the fact that the doctrinal and confessional basis remained the same.

The Holy Scriptures, or the inspired writings of the Old and New Testaments, shall be the only rule of doctrine and church-discipline.

The Augustan confession of faith, comprised in twenty-eight articles, as it is extant in the book, entitled "the Christian Concordia," is acknowledged and received by this body, because it is a true declaration of the principal doctrines of faith and of church-discipline.

Luther's smaller catechism is also acknowledged and received, because it contains a compendium of scriptural doctrines, and is of great utility in the catechising of youth.<sup>2</sup>

Each of the articles in this revised constitution were accompanied by remarks which explained and clarified the article.<sup>3</sup>

In 1866, the Tennessee Synod again revised its constitution. In this revised constitution the confessional basis is even more fully presented in order that the Synod's doctrinal position might be more

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<sup>2</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1853), pp. 20-21. A full reprint of this revised constitution of 1827 may be found in the Appendix.

<sup>3</sup>These "Remarks" may be found in the Tennessee Synod Reports of both 1828 and 1853, accompanying this revised constitution.



clearly expressed. A reprint here of the Second Article of this constitution will serve to explain the confessional basis of the Tennessee Synod which is being considered.

The Holy Scriptures, the inspired writings of the Old and New Testaments, shall be the only rule and standard of doctrine and church discipline.

As a true and faithful exhibition of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures, in regard to matters of faith and practice, this Synod receives the three Ancient Symbols: the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian creeds; and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession of Faith. It receives also the other Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, viz.: The Apology, the Smalcald Articles, the Smaller and Larger Catechisms of Luther, and the Formula of Concord--as true Scriptural developments of the doctrines taught in the Augsburg Confession.<sup>4</sup>

The doctrinal and confessional basis of the Tennessee Synod can be clearly seen from these three constitutions. After having accepted and adopted the true Scriptural basis, as set forth in the Confessions and authorized writings of the Lutheran Church, the Tennessee Synod adhered to it and maintained it in all its transactions and operations. This sound Scriptural position gave this Synod decided advantages for it had something fixed and positive on which it could build. The more this Synod was assailed, abused, and persecuted on account of its doctrinal position, to which it so closely adhered, and which it so fearlessly maintained, the closer it was driven to it, and the more necessary it became for it to investigate, promulgate, proclaim, maintain, and perpetuate the sound, Scriptural doctrines of the Lutheran Church, from

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<sup>4</sup>Henkel, op. cit., pp. 33-34. A reprint of this constitution is found here in Henkel on pages 33-36. It is also found in the Tennessee Synod Reports of 1866 which were unavailable to the author. Any reference, therefore, to the Minutes of 1866 will be taken from Henkel's reproduction of these Minutes. This revised constitution of 1866 is also reprinted in full in the Appendix.



the pulpit, in the family, and through the printing press.

The attitude of the Tennessee Synod toward the Scriptures is clearly brought out in the revised constitution of 1827. The First Article of this constitution reads as follows:

The Holy Scriptures, or the inspired writings of the Old and New Testaments, shall be the only rule of doctrine and church-discipline. The correctness or incorrectness of any translation is to be judged according to the original tongues, in which the Scriptures were first written.<sup>5</sup>

The Introduction of this same constitution declared:

Nothing relative to doctrines and church-discipline ought to be transacted according to the mere will of the majority or minority, but in strict conformity with Holy Writ.<sup>6</sup>

According to this revised constitution of 1827, which was officially adopted in 1828, it is clear that the Tennessee Synod recognized the Holy Scriptures as the only norm and rule of doctrine and life. This had indeed been the position of the Tennessee Synod from the very beginning. This is clear from the second point in its Basis and Regulations of 1820 which reads:

2. All teachings relative to the faith, and all doctrines concerning Christian conduct, as well as all books publicly used in the Church in the service or worship of God, shall be arranged and kept, as nearly as it is possible to do, in accordance with the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures and the Augsburg Confession.<sup>7</sup>

Also, as early as 1822 they had declared concerning the Holy Scriptures:

Forasmuch as the Holy Bible is the only rule of matters respecting faith and church-discipline, and because the Augsburg Confession of

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<sup>5</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1853, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>7</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1820), p. 4. Translation by Henkel, op. cit., pp. 25-26.



Faith is a pure emanation from the Bible, and comprises the most important doctrines of faith and discipline, hence it must always remain valid. Therefore our Synod can neither be governed by a majority nor a minority, now nor ever hereafter, with respect to doctrine and discipline. This is the reason why nothing can be introduced among us, now nor at any time hereafter, which may be repugnant to the Bible and the Augsburg Confession of Faith. Neither the majority nor the minority shall determine what our doctrine and discipline are, because they are already determined in the above-named rule. But that we assemble from time to time is neither to form new rules, doctrines, nor traditions, but as united instruments in the hand of God we wish to promulgate the doctrine of the Bible, and to execute the rules already laid down in the Holy Scriptures. But with respect to local and temporary regulations, such as the place and time of meeting, and such like things, which do not interfere with matters of faith and discipline, the Synod suit themselves to the conveniences of the most of their members. We refer the reader to the Seventh, Fifteenth, and Twenty-eighth Articles of the Augsburg Confession of Faith, where he may find more satisfactory introductions with respect to these things.<sup>8</sup>

The Tennessee Synod was also the champion of that basic truth of all normal church-government, namely, that no one is to govern the Christian Church except Christ and His Word alone, not the pastor, nor the ministerium, nor the synod, nor any sort of a majority. We have seen the attitude of the Tennessee Synod toward a majority as explained in detail in chapter two in the account of the strife that took place at the meeting of the North Carolina Synod in 1820. There, in that connection, they had declared:

We thought the doctrine of the Augsburg Confession, of which we are assured that it can be proved by the doctrine of the Bible, ought to be of greater authority to us than the voice of a majority of men who are opposed to the doctrine and order of our Church.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, (1822), pp. 8-9. Translation by F. Bente, American Lutheranism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919), I, 193.

<sup>9</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1820, op. cit., p. 23. Translation by Bente, op. cit., I, 199.



Nothing short of clear proof and conviction from the Word of God and the Augsburg Confession would satisfy them. In the quotation above from the Minutes of the Tennessee Synod of 1822, this conviction was again stated. And in a "Note" appended to this declaration in 1822, Rev. David Henkel defines the position of the Tennessee Synod as follows:

Herein is the difference between the government of the pure Evangelical Lutheran Church and the government of the General Synod. The established rule of the pure Christian Church is the Holy Scriptures and her supreme Head, Jesus Christ. Christ, by His Word, governs the Church in the doctrines of faith and discipline; there needeth no majority of votes to determine.<sup>10</sup>

These views were also embodied in the revised constitution of 1827, which was adopted in 1828, in the explanatory "Remarks" to the Fourth Article we read:

But no Christian Synod can have legislative powers, consequently have no right to make rules for churches. All necessary and salutary rules, pertaining to the government of the church, are prescribed in the Scriptures; therefore every body of men who make rules for the church, are in opposition to Christ.<sup>11</sup>

Thus the Tennessee Synod, in its policy on church government, took the position from the very outset that the rules and principles of church government are contained in the Holy Scriptures, and that no Christian organization has the right to make any rules or regulations which are not strictly in accord with the Bible. It condemned and rejected all human traditions, rules, or regulations imposed on the Church which are not clearly founded in the Holy Scriptures. It even denied the right of a majority to decide or control matters relative to

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<sup>10</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1822, op. cit., p. 9. Translation by Bente, op. cit., I, 199.

<sup>11</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1853, op. cit., p. 25.



doctrine and church discipline. The only standard by which such things could be decided was the Word of God. - The fact that a majority might decide against a doctrine clearly taught in the Bible would be no sufficient reason that the minority should reject or denounce such doctrine. The Word of God was the only rule and norm of faith, practice, and doctrine.

The attitude of the Tennessee Synod toward the Lutheran Confessions was as firm as their attitude toward the Holy Scriptures. The Tennessee Synod regarded the Book of Concord as a correct exhibition of the teachings of the Bible from the very beginning of its existence, even though at first only the Augsburg Confession was officially received into the constitution. At its organization in 1820 the Tennessee Synod declared in its Basis and Constitution:

2. All teachings relative to the faith, and all doctrines concerning Christian conduct, as well as all books publicly used in the Church in the service or worship of God, shall be arranged and kept, as nearly as it is possible to do, in accordance with the doctrines of the holy Scriptures and the Augsburg Confession. And especially shall the young, and others who need it, be instructed in Luther's Small Catechism, according to the custom of our Church, hitherto. This said Catechism shall always be the chief catechism in our churches.
3. Whoever desires to be a teacher, shall also take a solemn obligation, that he will teach according to the Word of God and the Augsburg Confession and the doctrines of our Church.<sup>12</sup>

In the Minutes of the Tennessee Synod of 1821, this motion is found:

Upon the motion of Peter Boger, it was resolved, that a copy of the Augsburg Confession, as well as a copy of the minutes of every Conference, should be deposited in every church.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1820, op. cit., pp. 4-5. Translation by Henkel, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

<sup>13</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1821), p. 9.



The Second Article of the revised constitution adopted in 1828 reads as follows:

The Augustan confession of faith, comprised in twenty-eight articles, as it is extant in the book, entitled "The Christian Concordia," is acknowledged and received by this body, because it is a true declaration of the principal doctrines of faith and of church-discipline. Neither does it contain anything contrary to the Scriptures. No minister shall therefore be allowed to teach any thing, nor shall this body transact any thing that may be repugnant to any article of this confession. Luther's smaller catechism is also acknowledged and received, because it contains a compendium of scriptural doctrines, and is of great utility in the catechising of youth.<sup>14</sup>

And in the remarks appended to this Article we read:

Lutherans acknowledge the Holy Scriptures as the only rule of doctrine and discipline; nevertheless they receive the Augustan confession, because it exhibits the same views they have on the Scriptures, and is a formal declaration of what they believe.<sup>15</sup>

In their revised constitution of 1866 the Tennessee Synod recognized the entire Book of Concord as being their doctrinal basis. In doing this they were merely giving expression to the position which they had actually occupied from the very beginning. This is seen from a letter of December 10, 1826, which was addressed to the pastors of the North Carolina Synod by Daniel Moser and David Henkel, who declared in this letter:

We also wish to appeal to the book called "Concordia," as it is one of the principal symbolical books of the Lutheran Church.<sup>16</sup>

The sixth of the "Alterable Articles" of the proposed constitution which was submitted to the Tennessee Synod in 1827 reads:

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<sup>14</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1853, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>16</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1827), p. 28.



The book entitled "Concordia," which contains the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church, shall be viewed as a directory in Theology.<sup>17</sup>

And after visiting the Tennessee Synod in 1855, Rev. Theodore Brohm of the Missouri Synod wrote:

Creditable witnesses have given me the assurance that, as far as their persons are concerned, all the pastors of the Synod adhere to the entire Concordia.<sup>18</sup>

Thus when the Tennessee Synod was organized and throughout its history, it was pledged to the Lutheran Confessions with an honest "quia," because it agrees with the Bible.

The Tennessee Synod did not regard the Lutheran Confessions as a mere dead document, either. This is evident from her attitude toward the Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and other unfaithful Lutheran Synods. In a treatise appended to the Minutes of the Tennessee Synod of 1827, which shows the propriety and scriptural grounds for a debate proposed to the ministers of the North Carolina Synod, it is stated:

It is necessary to correct a wrong opinion, which is: that Lutheran ministers are at liberty to deviate from the Augustan confession wherein soever they conceive it as erroneous. . . . Lutheran ministers have no right to deviate from any article of this confession; because the whole of it is viewed by the Lutheran community as true and scriptural. Let them remember their solemn vows!<sup>19</sup>

The Tennessee Synod was not satisfied with simply being called Lutheran. Its members were seriously determined to be Lutherans. The Lutheran Confessions were the living norm of both their preaching and their

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>18</sup>Bente, op. cit., I, 195. Quoted from Der Lutheraner 11, 78.

<sup>19</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1827, op. cit., pp. 37-38.



practice. The Tennessee Synod was also scrupulously guided and governed by the Lutheran Symbols in publishing books, in receiving pastors and teachers, in examining candidates, and in negotiating with other Synods. For example, in 1821 the Tennessee Synod resolved that Rev. Paul Henkel should compose and print a Liturgy which was to "be formed according to the Augsburg confession of faith and the Bible."<sup>20</sup> In 1826 it was resolved that Luther's Small Catechism should be translated into the English language, and Rev. Ambrose Henkel was given the task of translating it and publishing it.<sup>21</sup> At the meeting of Synod in 1827, Rev. Ambrose Henkel reported that he had completed the translation and was then encouraged by Synod to have it published which was then done.

The Tennessee Synod was also very strict on having its pastors meet all necessary requirements. There are various instances recorded in the synodical minutes which show how pastors were carefully examined with respect to doctrine before they were admitted to membership. Take, for example, the case of the Rev. W. C. Rankin, formerly a member of the Presbyterian Church, who applied for ordination in 1831. The Minutes of the Tennessee Synod of 1831 read as follows with regard to Rev. Rankin:

Mr. Rankin produced to this body several extracts from the Minutes of the Union Presbytery, in East Tennessee, to which he formerly belonged, shewing his good moral conduct, and literary acquirements. His good moral conduct was also testified to by several respectable men present. His doctrinal views were also found congenial to the tenets of the Lutheran Church.

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<sup>20</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1821, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>21</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1826), p. 7.



Mr. W. C. Rankin presented himself to the Committee, and was first confirmed a full Member of the Lutheran Church, and after having made the most solemn vows, was set apart and ordained a Pastor of the said Church, by the imposition of hands and prayer.<sup>22</sup>

That the Tennessee Synod was also careful in seeing to it that its members remained faithful to the Confessions and teachings of the Lutheran Church is also seen in the case of this same Rev. Rankin, as recorded in the Minutes of the Tennessee Synod of 1832 and 1833.

Whereas charges have been brought against Mr. Rankin, of having deviated from the Augsburg Confession of Faith, both in point of doctrine and discipline, as it appears from a letter directed to this body, by the Rev. N. Bonham, and other creditable sources of information, from Greene county, Tennessee; it was Resolved, That Mr. Rankin be requested to attend our next session, and to acquit himself of the above mentioned charges; otherwise we cannot consider him any longer a member of this body.<sup>23</sup>

When Mr. Rankin was informed that he was to appear before Synod to answer these charges he decided to withdraw from the Synod and the following action was taken at the next meeting in 1833.

The charges alledged by the Rev. Bonham and others, against the Rev. Rankin, respecting doctrine and discipline, which were laid over, for the investigation of this session, were now taken into consideration. Mr. Bonham being unable to attend, and the Rev. Rankin wishing to withdraw from this body, in a friendly manner; it was Resolved, That the Synod deem it unnecessary to make any further investigation concerning this matter, and that Mr. Rankin is no more a member of this body.<sup>24</sup>

The Tennessee Synod regarded the Lutheran Symbols and Confessions as very necessary to maintain and preserve. Thus, in the "Remarks"

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<sup>22</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1831), p. 8.

<sup>23</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1832), p. 9.

<sup>24</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1833), p. 16.



appended to the Second Article of the revised constitution which was adopted in 1828, the necessity of these Lutheran Symbols is explained as follows:

From the history of the reformation, it is evident that the Protestants were called upon, to deliver their confession of faith before the Diet assembled at Augsburg. Every Christian is not only privileged, but also commanded to confess what he believes. Although the Scriptures be a sufficient guide without any other; and though there be but one explanation on them which can be correct; yet not all who profess christianity explain them alike, for their views are widely different. Hence as all do not explain the Scriptures alike, it could not be known what each body of Christians believed; consequently others could not know whether they should fellowship with them: provided they had not a formal declaration of their views on the points of doctrine contained in the Scriptures. But when a body of Christians make a formal declaration of their views on the Scriptures, others are enabled to judge whether they be correct; and thus may know with whom to hold Christian fellowship. Now there is a considerable difference when a body of Christians receive a human composition as an unerring guide, in addition to the Scriptures; or, when they receive it to show what their views are respecting points of doctrine. Lutherans acknowledge the holy Scriptures as the only rule of doctrine and discipline; nevertheless they receive the Augustan confession, because it exhibits the same views they have on the Scriptures, and is a formal declaration of what they believe.<sup>25</sup>

#### Concept of the Task of the Church

The concept that the Tennessee Synod had of its task and purpose in the world and particularly in America is evident from the position it took, the confessional basis it adopted, and the course it pursued in promulgating, circulating, and maintaining the pure, Scriptural doctrines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Its chief object was to restore the Lutheran Church to its normal condition in doctrine, practice, and churchliness. It felt that it must do this in the family,

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<sup>25</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1853, op. cit., p. 22.



in the catechetical class, from the pulpit, and through the printing press. Fully persuaded that the doctrines of the Lutheran Church were the doctrines of God's Word and recognizing the duty of those who have come to a knowledge of the truth to publish it to the world, the members of the Tennessee Synod used the printing press in New Market, Virginia, which had been at their service since the forming of the Tennessee Synod in 1820, to issue from time to time a number of translations from German theological works, as well as original doctrinal, devotional, and polemical treatises.

The more that the Tennessee Synod was attacked and persecuted on account of its doctrinal position, the more necessary it became to investigate, maintain, and perpetuate the sound, Scriptural doctrines of the Lutheran Church. This it did, using every avenue of approach, the pulpit, the family, and the printing press. The members of the Tennessee Synod were assured that if these fundamental, Scriptural principles had power and vitality enough in them to effect the grand and glorious Reformation in the Church in the beginning of the sixteenth century, then they also had the power and vitality to effect similar results in the Lutheran Church in America in their century. Thus the members of the Tennessee Synod for a long time considered it their special mission to oppose the General Synod and to preserve and develop the pure Lutheran faith in America. Because of this idea they felt that they were justified in demanding a show-down on the part of the other American Lutheran Synods, to determine just exactly what they taught. They felt that in doing this, they were only asking what, according to the Word of God, it was their solemn duty to demand. They felt that it



was not only the privilege of a Christian to confess the faith which is in him, but it was also an obligation and a debt which he owed his brethren. Therefore they opposed the other Lutheran Synods in America and tried to get them to take a firm stand for Lutheranism.

The members of the Tennessee Synod were always imbued with a zeal for missions. However, the aggressive work of the Synod was very much hindered and has been largely misunderstood through a certain article in its constitution. This article reads as follows:

This Synod shall never be incorporated by civil government, nor have any incorporated Theological Seminary under their care. Neither shall they have any particular treasury for the purpose of supporting missionaries and Theological Seminaries.<sup>26</sup>

The Synod was prohibited from becoming an incorporated body and from having a treasury for either missions or theological seminaries because it feared anything that savored of a union between Church and State. Furthermore, the members of this Synod firmly believed that missionaries were to live on the gifts given them by grateful people whom they served. This was following the example of the first missionaries sent out by the Lord Jesus. This hindered an efficient organization and a business-like management of the work of missions. Although this did interfere materially with the gathering of the harvest, it did not dampen the ardor of the members, nor did it arrest the activity of sowing and spreading the Word of God. The ministers, almost to a man, were missionaries in every sense of the word, even though the statistics may not be too flattering. With no Mission Board to aid them, with no treasury to support them, they still made long journeys to the North,

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



West, and South, in nine different states. They made these journeys on horseback through wild, rough, thinly settled districts, exposed to serious dangers, and suffering great privations. Nevertheless they taught, preached, baptized, organized congregations, and administered the Lord's Supper, trusting the communities which they visited for their expenses. Some of the ministers devoted half of their time to this missionary work. As the visible result of her missionary work, the Tennessee Synod could point to the organization of the Indiana Synod in 1835, the English Conference of Missouri in 1872, which later became a District of the Missouri Synod, and the Holston Synod which was organized in 1860 by the ministers and congregations in the State of Tennessee.<sup>27</sup>

#### Various Attitudes

The Tennessee Synod's concept of its task and work, namely, that it was their responsibility to restore pure Lutheranism and pure Lutheran doctrines to the Lutheran Church in America, also influenced their attitudes and the way in which they viewed certain aspects of the work of the church. We consider, for example, their attitude toward the English language. At first the German language alone was used in the transactions of the Tennessee Synod, because nearly all of the ministers, as well as a large portion of the lay-members at that time used the German language. Thus the first point in the Basis and Regulations of the Tennessee Synod in 1820 stated:

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<sup>27</sup>Edmund J. Wolf, The Lutherans in America (New York: J. A. Hill & Company, 1889), pp. 378-79.



It is deemed proper and useful, that all the business and work, which may come before this Conference or Synod, shall be transacted in the German language; and all the written proceedings in regard to its transactions, which pertain to the general interest, shall be published in the German language.<sup>28</sup>

The footnote to this statement quoted above explains the reason for this action.

The reason why we desire an entirely German Conference, is because we have learned from experience, that a conference, in which both languages, the German and the English, are used, the one or the other side will be dissatisfied. If the German is used, the English will understand little, and often nothing in regard to the matter; and if the English is employed, many of the Germans will not understand more than the half of what is said, and hence not know how to act relative to the most weighty matters. Besides, at the present time, we find very few entirely English preachers who accept the doctrines of our Church, or desire to preach them.<sup>29</sup>

Thus for the reasons just stated and for the sake of preserving a language which contained the treasures of Lutheran literature, the German language was at first made obligatory in the discussions of the Tennessee Synod. It is also clear, however, that the interest of the Tennessee Synod in maintaining the German language was not due to any unreasonable prejudice or hatred toward the English language as such. This appears from the fact that since 1821 the minutes of Synod were printed both in the English and German languages. However, there was some anxiety from the very beginning about this language question. Attempts were made to solve this problem already as early as 1821 when it was suggested that another Synod be held to be conducted in the English language. The problem was finally solved in the revised

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<sup>28</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1820, op. cit., p. 4. Translation by Henkel, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>29</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1820, op. cit., p. 4. Translation by Henkel, op. cit., p. 25.



constitution of 1827 which disposed of the question in this way:

Every discussion on a proposition or subject, shall first take place in the German language; whereupon the same shall be resumed in the English,--provided there shall be both German and English members present; and after the discussions have been thus regularly ended, the decision shall be made.<sup>30</sup>

In the years following, the English language rapidly gained the ascendancy, until finally the German disappeared entirely. This took place in less than twenty years after the beginning of the Tennessee Synod, without any abatement whatsoever in the devotion to Lutheran doctrine. Because of this rapid transition over to the English language, Rev. Theodore Brohm, of the Missouri Synod, after visiting the Tennessee Synod, could write in the Lutheraner of January 2, 1855: "Though of German origin, the Tennessee Synod in the course of time has lost its German element, and has become a purely English synod."<sup>31</sup>

Because of its confessional position the Tennessee Synod took a decided stand against the indifferentism, the unionism, the fellow-feeling with the Reformed, and the Methodism of their day. This indifferentism, unionism, and Reformedism has been described in some detail in the opening chapter. It will be referred to here only as it has direct reference to the relations between the Tennessee Synod and other synods.

Methodism may be defined as a diseased condition of Christianity, causing Christians to base their assurance of salvation not on the gracious promises of God in the objective means of grace, the Word and Sacraments, but on feelings and experiences produced by their own efforts and according to their own methods.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1853, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>31</sup>Bente, op. cit., I, 152.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 207.



Thus all four of these terms referred to above could be pretty well included in the unionism and fellow-feeling that was to be found in the Lutheran Synods of that period. This Methodistic poison of subjectivism and enthusiasm became increasingly more prevalent in the Lutheran Churches as the years rolled on. Thus the Methodistic doctrine of conversion became one of the points of dispute between the Tennessee and North Carolina Synods. Because of its rigid confessional position the Tennessee Synod was not only opposed to any kind of union with non-Lutheran churches, but it also tried to separate the true Lutherans from the false Lutherans, and to unite these true Lutherans in order to present a solid defense against the indifferentism, unionism, Methodistic subjectivism and enthusiasm, and other corruptions which had crept into the Lutheran Church. "Unity in the spirit, unity in doctrine, unity in faith and confession, was viewed by Tennessee as the sine qua non, the absolutely necessary condition, of all church-fellowship, church union, and cooperation."<sup>33</sup> Because of this attitude, the Tennessee Synod was also against the various societies, such as the American Bible Society, the American Tract Society, and the American Sunday School Union, that sprang up in the years between 1790 and 1830, saying that they promoted too much cooperation with non-Lutherans. This attitude of the Tennessee Synod, however, found particular expression against the apostasy of the Lutheran Synods of its day. Needless to say, this uncompromising attitude of the Tennessee Synod found no sympathy from the other Lutheran Synods. The Tennessee Synod was "avoided, ignored, despised,

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 214.



hated, maligned, and ostracized by their opponents. Tennessee was decried and stigmatized as the 'Quarreling Conference.'<sup>34</sup> Many of the attempts of the Tennessee Synod to bring about an understanding and unification in the truth were spurned by the other Lutheran Synods who sometimes even refused to answer them. Some even refused to recognize them as a Lutheran Synod. The General Synod was one of these. Thus, in the Address of the General Synod in 1823 it was stated:

Our Church, which was originally embraced in two independent synods (Ministeriums of Pennsylvania and New York), has spread over so extensive a portion of the United States that at present we have five synods (North Carolina, Ohio, Maryland and Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York Synods), and shall shortly have several more.<sup>35</sup>

No mention is thus made of the Tennessee Synod, at least giving the inference, therefore, that it was not to be included in a list of Lutheran Synods. And in a letter of H. M. Muhlenberg to Solomon Henkel, dated January 23, 1826, it was stated that the Tennessee Synod "had not as yet been recognized as a Synod by the other Lutheran Synods."<sup>36</sup> Thus contempt and ostracization was the reward which the Tennessee Synod received for trying to bring the Lutheran Church in America back to the true teachings of Lutheranism.

What were some of these attempts on the part of the Tennessee Synod to restore true Lutheranism to the Lutheran Church in America? First of all, there were the strenuous objections that the Tennessee Synod had against the formation of the General Synod. Already in the Minutes of

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 157.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.



the first session of the Tennessee Synod these objections against the Proposed Plan or "Planentwurf" were recorded. Among the objections enumerated were the following:

1. Whosoever desired to be recognized as a pastor would be compelled to pursue his studies at the proposed seminary of the General Synod.
2. Of those entitled to cast a vote there were two pastors to every lay delegate.
3. The General Synod arrogated to itself the exclusive right to introduce new books for public worship.
4. Luther's Catechism was to remain only until the Synod would introduce other books.
5. According to the "Planentwurf," the General Synod could reject all articles of faith or omit them entirely.
6. Neither the Augsburg Confession nor the Bible was designated as the foundation of the General Synod, nor even so much as mentioned in the "Planentwurf."
7. The General Synod was striving to establish a dominion over all Ministeriums, as appeared from the statement: "Until the permission or approval of the General Synod shall have been formally obtained, no newly established body shall be regarded as a Ministerium, nor shall an ordination conferred by them be considered valid."
8. The General Synod claimed the right to specify the ranks universally valid for the ministry.
9. Pastors were granted the right to appeal from the decision of their Synod to the General Synod.
10. "One cannot be sure that a spirit desiring as much power as appears to be granted by this Planentwurf will be able to rest and not seek further power."
11. No one was able to guarantee that this Lutheran General Synod would not later on unite with the General Synods of the sects to form a National Synod, in which the majority would then determine all articles of faith and all church-customs.
12. Such a National Synod would be able also to change the Constitution of the United States and compel every one to unite with this National Synod, impose taxes, etc.<sup>37</sup>

The reason why some of the pastors in Ohio opposed the General Synod were also appended to the Minutes of the Tennessee Synod of 1820. The objections thus enumerated show that the Tennessee Synod was opposed to

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<sup>37</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1820, op. cit., pp. 50-58. Translation and arrangement by Bente, op. cit., I, 158-59.



the formation of the General Synod because of its proposed hierarchical position and its un-Lutheran doctrinal position. These criticisms of the Proposed Plan of the General Synod did accomplish some things, particularly with regard to the objections against the hierarchical features. For these objectionable features were toned down considerably in the constitution that was finally adopted at Hagerstown, Maryland, in 1820. For example, "the odious passage regarding the establishment of new ministeriums and the validity of their ordinations was omitted."<sup>38</sup> The Tennessee Synod was not satisfied at all, however, with the constitution that was adopted. Therefore, by resolution of Synod, the remaining objections were to be drawn up and appended to the Minutes of the Tennessee Synod of 1821. This was then done. The first objection was against the words of the Preamble:

Whereas Jesus Christ, the great head of his church, hath not given her any particular prescriptions how church government should be regulated, she therefore enjoys the privilege in all her departments, to make such regulations, as appears best, agreeable to situation and circumstances.<sup>39</sup>

The objection itself begins:

Can it possibly be true, that Christ has given his church no particular prescriptions how church government should be regulated? Has he left it to a majority of votes, to do as they please in this respect?<sup>40</sup>

The objection then goes on to point out the rules which Christ Himself has laid down in the Scriptures on regulating the church in her various departments. It is stated that in Matthew 18:15, Christ tells us how to

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<sup>38</sup>Bente, op. cit., I, 160.

<sup>39</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1821, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 14.



deal with an offending brother; in Matthew 6, Christ tells us how the church should be governed in giving of alms, fasting, and praying; in I Corinthians 11:4-15, Christ gives us rules with respect to public worship; and thus it continues with examples from Scripture.

Another objection is to the name "The Evangelical Lutheran General Synod of the United States of America." The objection reads in part as follows:

This body indeed, may call itself Evang. Lutheran, and yet not be such. The constitution does nowhere say, that the Augsburg confession of faith or Luther's catechism or the Bible, shall be the foundation of doctrine and discipline of the General Synod. It is well known, that they always have been the standard of the Lutheran church. Why does the constitution not once name them?<sup>41</sup>

A few lines farther on, the objection continues:

Had the framers of this constitution, been zealous advocates for the Lutheran doctrine, they would have been careful to insert a clause, to compel the General Synod, always to act according to our standard books. It is an easy thing to prove that some of the founders of this General Synod have openly denied some of the important doctrines of the Augsburg confession of faith and Luther's catechism.<sup>42</sup>

Other objections against the constitution were also given in which the un-Lutheran features were brought out into the open so that all could see how far the General Synod was removed from the pure Lutheran teachings and confessions.

That the Tennessee Synod felt that it was performing its duty in pointing out these discrepancies, and that nothing malicious was meant, but that it was simply trying to follow its objective of restoring pure Lutheranism to the Lutheran Church in America, is brought out in the

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-21.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 21.



concluding remarks.

We conclude, hoping that the friends of the General Synod will not view us as enemies; because we freely spend our opinion with respect to their designs. We would freely join in with them, if we could do it with a good conscience. . . . It would moreover, render us more popular; because the General Synod system, as it borders upon temporal grandure, finds many patrons who are wealthy, and it is much easier to swim with, than against the current. But this does not appear justifiable in our view. . . . We do not expect finally to prevent the establishment of this General Synod, by publishing our objections; . . . Notwithstanding, we consider it our duty, to make the people attentive to those things, and to instruct such as are not wilfully blind. But should we be deceived in our opinion, and clearly be convinced of it, we shall not be ashamed to recant.<sup>43</sup>

In refusing to unite with the General Synod and in defending its position with clear proof of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, the Tennessee Synod was practicing exactly the same thing as had been stated in her doctrinal position. This opposition against the General Synod continued throughout the history of the Tennessee Synod. Thus, in 1839, the General Synod publicly denounced the Tennessee Synod, charging it with un-Lutheran as well as unchristian doctrine and conduct. The Tennessee Synod took note of this accusation in their meeting in 1841. There the following resolution was passed:

Whereas the General Synod has frequently denounced the Tennessee Synod as an anti-Lutheran and an anti-Christian body, both in its doctrines and practices, . . . be it therefore

- 1.. Resolved, That with us it is a matter of but little importance whether that body recognizes our Synod as an Evangelical Lutheran Synod or not, inasmuch as our orthodoxy and existence as a Lutheran body, in no wise, depend on its decisions.
2. Resolved, That we cannot recognize the General Synod as an Evangelical Lutheran body, inasmuch as it has departed from the primitive doctrines and usages of the Lutheran Church.
3. Resolved, That under existing circumstances we feel no disposition to unite with the General Synod, and can never

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 34-35.



unite with it, unless it return to the primitive doctrines and usages of the Lutheran Church. . . .<sup>44</sup>

The position of the Tennessee Synod also remained the same when in 1853 the Pennsylvania Synod called upon all Lutheran Synods to follow their example and to unite with the General Synod. The Tennessee Synod resolved not to unite with the General Synod. The reasons for this action were much the same as those just quoted above.<sup>45</sup>

In its relations with the North Carolina Synod, the practice of the Tennessee Synod was also in full accord with its doctrinal position. At its organization in 1820, the Tennessee Synod had declared:

No teacher of our Conference may take seat and vote in the present Synod of the State of North Carolina, since we cannot look upon them as a truly Evangelical Lutheran Synod.<sup>46</sup>

The firm doctrinal position of the Tennessee Synod did not, however, hinder their efforts at unity with other Lutheran Synods, such as the North Carolina Synod. This was one of their objectives, namely, to restore pure Lutheranism to the Lutheran Synods of America. Accordingly, when in 1824 petitions were received asking that the differences in doctrine between the Tennessee and the North Carolina Synods be publicly stated, the Tennessee Synod appointed a committee whose duty it was to collect the conflicting doctrines of each party as recorded in their writings, and to place them in adjoining columns so that all might see the difference. It was also decided that "if those who have deviated

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<sup>44</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1841), pp. 11-12.

<sup>45</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1853, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>46</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1820, op. cit., p. 9.



from the teachings of the Augsburg Confession and the Lutheran order shall publicly renounce, in print, such deviations, further steps for a re-union may be instituted."<sup>47</sup>

The Minutes of 1825 record that this effort was unsuccessful. However, since a memorial was presented, signed by nine people, requesting Synod to make another attempt to effect a union with the ministers of the North Carolina Synod, but in such a way that the true Lutheran doctrine would not be suppressed it was

Resolved, That whereas, the ministers of said connexion refused to answer the committee, that was appointed last year, to negotiate with them, the reasons of their refusal shall here be inserted: Said ministers assign the following reasons, which we learn from Mr. J. Sherer's letter and their minutes:

1. That the committee, did not entitle them as a genuine Lutheran body; and
2. Because we appointed farmers to constitute the committee. We must here observe, that we cannot consistently grant to the Synod of North Carolina, this title; because we maintain, that they departed from the Lutheran doctrine. . . .

It was resolved that the questions again, should be preferred in a friendly manner; and provided, their answer should prove satisfactory, all the necessary regulations shall be made, to effect peace and harmony. But if in case their answers should not prove satisfactory, that we propose to them, to appoint a certain time and place, and that each party appoint a speaker, for the purpose of exhibiting the disputed doctrines; so that the assembly, which may be present, may discover the difference; and that also all the arguments, on both sides, may afterwards be published.<sup>48</sup>

A footnote to reason number two above stated the reason for farmers constituting the committee as follows:

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<sup>47</sup>Henkel, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>48</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1825), pp. 6-7.



It was believed, lay-men would act more impartially, since the ministers are more immediately concerned in this controversy.<sup>49</sup>

In the Minutes of 1826 it was recorded that these efforts to effect peace and unity with the North Carolina Synod were again unsuccessful, and that it seemed to be useless to make any further propositions. However, the Tennessee Synod felt it their duty to try again, and so it was decided that Revs. Adam Miller, Daniel Moser, and David Henkel, were to announce a public meeting to be held at or near Organ Church, Rowan County, North Carolina, to discuss the points of doctrine about which there were differences, and to invite ministers of the North Carolina Synod to be present to give their opinions and proof, all with a view of adjusting the conflicts and restoring harmony.

In the Minutes of 1827 it was reported that this attempt at a public debate was unsuccessful because none of the North Carolina Synod ministers were present. Another public debate was scheduled and extensive efforts were made to have some of the North Carolina Synod ministers present, but this, too, was unsuccessful, no ministers from the North Carolina Synod attending. All of the material comprised by this committee, including letters and reports of their attempts to get the North Carolina Synod to discuss their differences in doctrine in a peaceful manner, are recorded in the Minutes of the Tennessee Synod of 1827, as well as a paper showing the propriety and Scriptural grounds for such a debate. Certainly, in view of all the evidence, no one could say that the Tennessee Synod did not make repeated and great efforts to restore harmony and peace between the Tennessee and North Carolina Synods

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 7.



on a true Lutheran and Scriptural doctrinal basis.

Similar attempts at restoring true doctrinal purity and Christian unity were made by the Tennessee Synod toward the Pennsylvania Ministerium. These attempts were begun in 1823 when it was learned that the Pennsylvania Ministerium had withdrawn from the General Synod. Certain questions on doctrine and practice were asked the Pennsylvania Ministerium to determine its doctrinal position in the hope of future unity. The Pennsylvania Ministerium didn't even bother to reply to these questions, partly, no doubt, due to the fact that the Pennsylvania Ministerium had broken away from the General Synod in hopes of establishing an organic union with the German Reformed. In 1825, no answer as yet having been received from the Pennsylvania Ministerium, the questions were repeated once again. Then, in 1827, since there still had been no reply to these questions or to a letter addressed to the Rev. Muhlenberg, further action was taken. The Rev. David Henkel was to prepare and deliver a pastoral address to show the true Lutheran doctrines in these matters that were under dispute. This pastoral address was to be published and sent to several Lutheran Synods as well as individual pastors for study and comment, with a request that they make known their approval or disapproval of this position. Certainly, also in the case of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, the Tennessee Synod made repeated and patient attempts to restore pure Lutheran doctrines and, if possible, to effect a union.

Similar questions on doctrine and practice as had been sent to the Pennsylvania Ministerium were also sent to the Joint Synod of Ohio. No answer was received from that Synod either.



The Tennessee Synod was interested only in presenting the doctrines of pure Lutheranism. This is seen also in their dealings with the Synods of South Carolina, Virginia, and Western Virginia. For example, when a request was received from the Western Virginia Synod for "the establishment of a friendly correspondence between" the Tennessee and Western Virginia Synods, "by a reciprocal interchange of delegates between the two Synods," the following resolution was passed:

Resolved, That, although it would afford us the highest gratification, and we most sincerely desire to see those who are one with us in name, also united in doctrine and practice; and in that case, would most cheerfully unite and cooperate with them in such measures as are calculated to advance and promote the cause of truth; yet, we wish it to be distinctly understood, that however much a union is desired, it can only be effected upon the assurance of a strict adherence to the doctrines and usages of our Church, as set forth in its symbols; and until we can have this assurance, we, on our part, can consent to no such union.<sup>50</sup>

Although the Tennessee Synod was interested in effecting a union with other Lutheran Synods on the basis of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, they definitely were not interested in a general union of all denominations, irrespective of their doctrinal differences. This was made quite clear in the statements made by the Tennessee Synod concerning the proposed General Synod in 1820. The Tennessee Synod still occupied the same position twenty years later. In the Minutes of 1841 a petition was recorded which asked the Tennessee Synod to express its sentiments in reference to "New Measures--the Union of all the different denominations into one great body as recommended in the 'Fraternal Appeal to the American Churches.'" With regard to this "general union

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<sup>50</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1848), p. 8.



of all the different denominations into one great body," 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 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 the 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 liberty of our happy country.<sup>51</sup>

The position which the Tennessee Synod took and maintained with regard to church government was quite different than that of the other American Lutheran Synods. Colonial Lutheran congregations here in America had inclined toward an hierarchical government.<sup>52</sup> The congregations were subordinate to their pastors, and both the congregations and their pastors were subordinate to the Synod. The Tennessee Synod was the first American Lutheran Synod to recognize, confess, and defend the inalienable rights of all Christians and Christian congregations. The Tennessee Synod was convinced that the church should be governed only and alone by the Word of God, and not by any pastor, synod, or majority. In the account of the so-called "Synod of Strife" which resulted in the Tennessee Synod breaking away from the North Carolina Synod, it is evident that these men were opposed to majorities. In that situation they had declared:

We thought the doctrine of the Augsburg Confession, of which we were assured that it can be proved by the doctrine of the Bible, ought to be of greater authority to us than the voice of a

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<sup>51</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1841, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

<sup>52</sup>Bente, op. cit., I, 198.



majority of men who are opposed to the doctrine and order of our Church.<sup>53</sup>

From the very beginning of their existence, therefore, the Tennessee Synod took this stand on church government. In the Basis and Regulations adopted in 1820, it was stated:

The Conference shall be composed of preachers and lay-delegates elected by their congregations, . . . but there shall not be more votes cast by the lay-delegates, than the number of preachers present is.<sup>54</sup>

This position was brought out even more clearly in the revised constitution which was adopted in 1828. There, in Article III, it was stated that

Ministers and lay-delegates from congregations, shall be allowed to compose this body, and every lay-delegate shall have a seat and vote, as well as every minister.

It shall not be allowed, either for the Ministers to transact any business exclusively of the lay-delegates, or for the lay-delegates exclusively of the ministers: provided there shall be both ministers and lay-delegates present.<sup>55</sup>

Then, in the appended Remarks, this decision was elaborated and explained as follows:

It is not the privilege and duty of the clergy alone, to impart their counsel in ecclesiastical matters, and to employ means for the promulgation of the gospel, but also of other Christians. The first Christian council was convened in Jerusalem, and consisted of the apostles, the elders, and the other brethren. They decided the question whether it was necessary to be circumcised? See Acts 15:1-31. The apostles were inspired, hence could have made the decision, without the assistance of their lay-brethren; but it appears they desired no prerogative. This precedent justifies

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<sup>53</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1820, op. cit., p. 23. Translation by Bente, op. cit., p. 199.

<sup>54</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1820, op. cit., p. 8. Translation by Henkel, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>55</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1853, op. cit., p. 23.



the laity in being in council with the clergy, for the purpose of deliberating on the most important ecclesiastical matters. . . .

That laymen should exercise equal rights with clergymen in church government, is not only scriptural, but also conducive to the preservation both of civil and ecclesiastical liberty. . . . From the history of the church it appears, that whenever the clergy governed without the laity, they enslaved the people, grasped civil authority, and persecuted those who detected, or opposed their aspiring views.<sup>56</sup>

Article IV of this constitution goes on to declare:

The business of this body, shall be to impart their useful advice, to employ the proper means for the purpose of promulgating the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to detect and expose erroneous doctrines, and false teachers; and upon application, to examine candidates for the ministry. When upon examination, any candidate shall be deemed qualified for the ministry, this body shall nominate one or more pastors, who shall consecrate such candidate to the office of the ministry by the laying on of hands, and with prayer.

But this Synod shall have no power to receive appeals from the decisions of, nor to make rules, nor regulations for congregations.<sup>57</sup>

The appended Remarks then go on to explain in more detail:

When ministers and lay-delegates are assembled, they may have a more accurate knowledge of the exigencies of the whole connection they represent; hence are the better able to impart their counsel . . . this end may be obtained with more facility by the meeting of a Synod.

It shall be the duty of this body to detect erroneous doctrines and false teachers . . . this body does not claim it as their prerogative. But it is believed that this duty may be performed more advantageously by a Synod.

Neither does this body claim the exclusive right of examining and ordaining candidates for the ministry. . . . But when any congregation shall request this body to examine and ordain the person of their choice, it then devolves on this body to perform this duty.

As the aforementioned duties devolve on all churches and ministers, they undoubtedly have the privilege to perform them jointly; i.e.

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 23-24.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-25.



they may constitute a Synod. But no Christian Synod can have legislative powers, consequently have no right to make rules for churches. . . .

That there ought to be no appeals from the decisions of congregations, is evident from Matthew 18:15-20.<sup>58</sup>

From the above quotations it is quite evident that the Tennessee Synod in its constitution was retaining the rights and privileges of the individual congregation. That the Tennessee Synod also practiced what they stated on paper is evident from the fact that in 1824, three laymen, no pastors, were elected as members of a committee which was to confer with the North Carolina Synod on various doctrinal differences that existed between them. This is again evident from the way in which the Synod scrupulously avoided setting up any rules for the congregations, as they acted, for example, when they were asked to set up some rules for instructing the young. The Minutes of 1832, when this matter came up, deal with it in this way:

We the committee appointed by the Synod to report with regard to the petitions, praying for the recommendation of a plan for the instruction of their youth, etc. present the following:

This body claims no power of forming rules and regulations for congregations, as such would be contrary to individual rights and liberties, and a violation of the 4th Article of our Constitution: therefore we would recommend, that the Elders of the different congregations should form such rules and regulations, as may suit their own conveniences and necessities best.<sup>59</sup>

In its desire to maintain congregational autonomy, the Tennessee Synod also went beyond the clear teachings of the 28th Article of the Augsburg Confession which deals with church government, and where it is stated

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-26.

<sup>59</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1832, op. cit., p. 9.



that "the two governments, the civil and the ecclesiastical, ought not to be mingled and confounded, but kept distinct from each other."<sup>60</sup> A very cautious course was followed, partly due, perhaps, to the way in which the other Synods of that day were ignoring the separation of church and state. Sometimes, no doubt, the Tennessee Synod followed too cautious a course, as can be seen from the instance quoted above when they refused even to make recommendations for congregations to follow in instructing their youth.

Because of their fear of mixing church and state, the Tennessee Synod went so far to the other extreme as to go on record as forbidding the incorporation of synods by civil government. Thus the Fifth Article of their revised constitution which was adopted in 1828 says: "This Synod shall never be incorporated by civil government. . . ."<sup>61</sup> In the Remarks appended to this Article, the reason behind this statement is explained as follows:

This Article prohibits this body even from being incorporated by civil government. That the government of the church ought not to be blended with the state, is a tenet of the Augustan confession, amply supported by the Scriptures. See 28th art. Our Lord declared, that his kingdom was not of this world. John 18:36.

That the church ought not to be blended with the state, is also according to the constitution of the United States, whose spirit and spiritual matters. . . .

But when the church is identified with the state, it is also fettered by human traditions, aspiring priests obtain the power to tyrannize over men's consciences. . . .

But when a church is incorporated, it approximates to a state coalition. The church by an act of incorporation . . . would have

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<sup>60</sup>Henkel, op. cit., p. 262.

<sup>61</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1853, op. cit., p. 26.



power to enact laws and regulations binding upon all their members, and could recover by a civil suit at law any property, or its value, bequeathed to them. Thus empowered, could they not also borrow money upon the credit of their whole community, for the establishment of any institution? An incorporated church may not only preserve their funds, but they may also lend out their money on usury, and obtain a vast increase. . . . If the church should ever acquire great wealth, aspiring priests will grasp great power.

Whereas this body know these things, and wish to preserve both spiritual and civil liberty, and to prevent their successors from attempting to blend the church with the state, they have by this article prohibited an incorporation of this body. . . .<sup>62</sup>

This same article of the constitution forbid the Synod from having an incorporated Theological Seminary under its care or a treasury for supporting such a Seminary. The complete 5th Article reads as follows:

This Synod shall never be incorporated by civil government, nor have any incorporated Theological Seminary under their care. . . Neither shall they have any particular treasury for the purpose of supporting missionaries and Theological Seminaries.<sup>63</sup>

Even though the Tennessee Synod opposed the idea of having an incorporated Theological Seminary under its care, since it was felt that the languages could be studied in one of the secular schools in the land, and the course of theology could be studied under some able minister, it nevertheless expected its ministers to be well trained and educated. These facts are brought out in the Remarks appended to the 5th Article quoted above.

Although this body shall have no incorporated Theological Seminary under their care, nor any particular treasury for its support; nevertheless, they consider it highly beneficial to the church for every minister to understand the original tongues of the Scriptures, and to be well skilled in Theology. But such qualifications may be acquired without an incorporated Theological Seminary. There are already a goodly number of academies dispersed throughout our

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp. 27-29.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 26.



country, which are not under the care of any particular denomination, in which the student may acquire a classical education. He in like manner may have the opportunity of studying theology with some able divine. There are but few, if any young men in our country, who are not able to defray the expenses of their education, either by means of their property or industry. Yet if there be such, whose indolence is the cause why they are not able to defray the expenses of their education, they should be no means embark in the ministry; as the faithful discharge of ministerial duties requires men of great industry.<sup>64</sup>

These same Remarks state the reasons why the Tennessee Synod was determined not to have a treasury for supporting missionaries.

Again, although this article prohibits this body from having any particular treasury for the purpose of supporting missionaries; yet some of the ministers of this body annually perform missionary labors. Now if it be asked, how they are supported? It may again be asked, how were the apostles of Christ supported when they went into all the world to preach the gospel? . . . they had the promise of being supported, whilst they labored in the Lord's vineyard. Every faithful minister may rely upon these promises. If he be industrious in preaching the gospel and instructing the ignorant, he will turn many unto righteousness, who will consider it their duty and privilege to manifest their gratitude in contributing towards his support.<sup>65</sup>

The position of the Tennessee Synod on a synodical treasury was also brought out in the comments which they made to the Seventh Article of the constitution of the General Synod which permitted the General Synod to form a treasury.

We cannot conceive the propriety of paying missionaries out of a general fund. How many pious ministers heretofore have preached the gospel in remote parts, without such a provision . . . for their support they depend on the faithful promise of our Lord who said: "all these things shall be added unto you." Men who are sent of God, shall profit the people: the Lord therefore, . . . stirreth up the hearts of the people, and fills them with gratitude, so that they freely honour him with their substance in supporting his ministers: thus the promise of Christ shall evermore be verified. But hirelings and wolves do not believe this

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 27.



promise. They are either entangled with some temporal employment, to secure their support, or else must know what they are to have from a general fund, before they go forth to labour in the Lord's vineyard. When men know, what they shall get from a general fund, before they preach: they have no need to exercise faith in the promise of Christ; for their trust is in the general fund! . . . Genuine ministers, have no need of a general fund to support them; their mission is profitable to the people, whose hearts being moved by the Lord, will support their teachers. . . .<sup>66</sup>

The Tennessee Synod was also opposed to having a general fund for widows and orphans of pastors. It encouraged its members to be liberal, and to establish a congregational treasury to take care of their own needs. But it denounced general treasuries as leading to synodical tyranny and worldly-mindedness. This idea was also applied to its objections for a fund for pastors' widows and orphans. These objections are stated in the objections to a general treasury for the General Synod in the Minutes of 1821.

Why are minister's widows and orphans, and poor ministers only, to be supported by a general fund, and not also other poor members of the church? Are the families of ministers a nobler race, than other people, so that extraordinary provisions must be made for them, in preference to others? Would it not be better, if every congregation had a fund of its own to support their needy at home? Each congregation are best acquainted with their own poor, and know who deserves help. Is it necessary, that the congregations should send their money several hundred miles from home, into the general fund, and that the poor should receive it from thence-- Pious ministers accustom their families to honest labor, so that they may know how to support themselves when they need it. Who supports the people's widows and orphans? . . . What a constant tax is hereby imposed upon the congregations! How frequently the ministers or church-council must admonish the people, to cast their mites into the general fund, lest it should be exhausted. There would be no end to begging and expostulating with the people for money. . . . Such widows and orphans, who by some misfortune are rendered unable to support themselves generally find benefactors, in addition to those means, civil government hath already provided.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1821, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., pp. 32-34.



The Tennessee Synod laid great emphasis on education as has been mentioned in connection with the requirements necessary for a man to be ordained to the ministry. There was also a strong emphasis placed on the education of the lay people, particularly through the study of the Catechism. E. Wolf has this to say about this education through catechization:

Catechisation was from the beginning the main reliance for building up congregations. For many years no one except in very special cases was confirmed without a previous course of instruction. The pastors were wont to teach continuously from ten to fifteen days of six hours each. They used the Catechism as a basis. With this they propounded questions to awaken thought, and after stating clearly a specific truth required each catechumen to find and mark the proof-text in his own bible. They dismissed no subject until they were sure that conviction had been wrought. Patient, faithful and devoted in this work, they made their catechumens intelligent Lutherans, enlightened Christians, and it was only in rare cases that a member of their congregations, no matter what his location or situation, left the Lutheran Church.<sup>68</sup>

Finally, what was the attitude of the Tennessee Synod towards the negro and slavery? The Tennessee Synod provided for the spiritual welfare of the slaves. In some churches, such as the three oldest Lutheran churches in Catawba County, North Carolina, there were "slave galleries" where the slaves sat and worshipped with the white congregation.<sup>69</sup> Slaves were also baptized and confirmed. This is shown in the earliest reports that were given to the Tennessee Synod by its ministers, and which were placed into the minutes. Thus, for example, in the Minutes of 1822, the parochial report that is given shows that

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<sup>68</sup>Wolf, op. cit., pp. 377-78.

<sup>69</sup>C. O. Smith, "The Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod's Attitude Toward the Negro both as Slave and as Freedman," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXI (January, 1949), p. 146.



Rev. David Henkel baptized 32 slaves, and that Rev. Philip Henkel baptized one slave.<sup>70</sup> Some of these slaves were no doubt also included in the number of confirmed, but this figure is not listed separately as are the baptisms. In this same session of Synod in 1822, a Mr. Conrad Keicher asked the question: "Is slavery to be considered as an evil?" In replying to this question the Synod resolved:

that it is to be regarded as a great evil in our land, and it desires the government, if it be possible, to devise some way by which this evil can be removed. Synod also advised every minister to admonish every master to treat his slaves properly, and to exercise his Christian duties towards them.<sup>71</sup>

This was probably the first move in that direction in the South.<sup>72</sup>

It is interesting to note that in the Minutes of 1863 it is reported that 14 "slaves" were baptized, and in the following Minutes of 1864 it is reported that 26 "colored" were baptized. This action was no doubt suggested by the Emancipation Proclamation of President Abraham Lincoln. With respect to these freed slaves, the following action was taken in 1866:

Whereas, The colored people among us no longer sustain the same relation to the white man they did formerly, and that change has transferred the individual obligations and responsibility of owners to the whole Church; and

Whereas, Some of them were formerly members of our congregations and still claim membership in them, but owing to the plainly marked distinctions which God has made between us and them, giving different colors, etc., it is felt by us, and them also, that there ought to be separate places of worship, and also, separate ecclesiastical organizations, so that every one could worship God with the least possible embarrassment; and

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<sup>70</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1822, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 13. Translation by Henkel, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>72</sup>Henkel, op. cit., p. 52.



Whereas, These colored people are considered firm adherents to our Church, and we feel it our imperative duty to assist them in adopting such measures as will meet best the necessities of their present condition; be it, therefore,

Resolved 1. That whenever any of our colored brethren desire to preach, they may make application to some one of the ministers of our Synod, who shall inform the President, when it shall be the President's duty to appoint two ordained ministers who, in connection with two laymen whom they may choose, shall constitute a committee to examine the candidate upon his motives and mental and moral qualification, and, if they are satisfied, to license him to preach, catechize, baptize, and celebrate the rites of matrimony among those of his own race, according to the usages of our Church, until the next regular session of Synod thereafter, when said committee shall report. This license, however, does not authorize them to preach in our churches, or take part in our ecclesiastical meetings; nevertheless they are permitted to worship with us as heretofore, yet we advise them to erect houses for themselves in which they may worship.

Resolved 2. That we will use every reasonable means to aid them in organizing and building up congregations.<sup>73</sup>

In this same session of Synod it is also reported that

Thomas Fry, a freedman, having frequently expressed a desire to preach, the President, in compliance with the resolution given above, appointed Rev. P. C. Henkel and Rev. J. M. Smith as the clerical half of a committee to examine and, if found qualified, to license him.<sup>74</sup>

It is not known whether any other negro was licensed under this resolution or not.

The Rev. C. O. Smith reports that during his boyhood at St. John's Church, a few faithful ex-slave negroes attended church and worshipped in a separate section, but on the same floor with the white people. At communion services, the white were served first, and then these negroes

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 169. The Tennessee Synod Reports of 1866 were unavailable to the author.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., pp. 169-70. This author was unable to find any evidence to show whether Thomas Fry was licensed or not.



were communed at the same table and by the same pastor who had just communed the white members.<sup>75</sup>

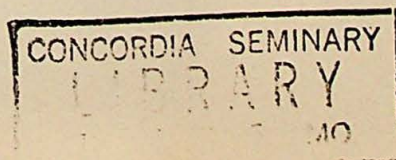
Thus, it is evident that the Tennessee Synod did not neglect the spiritual welfare of the slaves. They were baptized, confirmed, and communed. They worshipped in the same church as their masters. The members of the Tennessee Synod "were firmly convinced of the propriety of the strict separation of the races as far as the social side of the worship was concerned."<sup>76</sup> In the older churches, the slaves sat in so-called "slave galleries." Later, the slaves and then the freed slaves sat in separate sections, but in the same auditorium with the whites. After the slaves had become free men, the Tennessee Synod advised them to build their own churches, and offered them help in such undertakings. They even provided ways in which negro pastors could serve negro congregations. However, after the Civil War very little was done among the negroes. At this time there was a great shortage of pastors even for the white congregations, who were badly neglected. It is not difficult, therefore, to see how the negroes did not get the necessary spiritual care after the Civil War, considering the fact that the white people also were badly neglected.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Smith, op. cit., p. 148.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., pp. 148-49.





## CHAPTER IV

### PAUL HENKEL AND THE PUBLICATIONS OF THE TENNESSEE SYNOD

#### Paul Henkel

When one begins to write about the publication interests of the Tennessee Synod, it is almost imperative to write a few words about the Rev. Paul Henkel, who played such a prominent part both in the founding of the Tennessee Synod and in the establishment of the first Lutheran Printing Press at New Market, Virginia, in 1806.

Paul Henkel was the son of Jacob Henkel and the grandson of Justus Henkel. Justus Henkel had come to America in 1717 from Germany with his father, the Rev. Anthony Jacob Henkel.<sup>1</sup> Rev. Anthony Jacob Henkel settled in America at Germantown, Pennsylvania. In 1750, Justus Henkel moved from Pennsylvania to North Carolina.

Paul Henkel was born in a log cabin on the Yadkin River, Rowan County, North Carolina, on December 15, 1754.<sup>2</sup> When he was still a young boy, his parents moved to Western Virginia. The few opportunities

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<sup>1</sup>C. W. Cassell and Others, History of the Lutheran Church in Virginia and East Tennessee (Strasburg, Va.: Shenandoah Publishing House, Inc., 1930), p. 37. Socrates Henkel, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod (New Market, Va.: Henkel & Co., Printers and Publishers, 1890), p. 67. He says the name is Gerhard Henkel. Theodore Graebner, "Paul Henkel, An American Lutheran Pioneer in Missions, Organization, and Publicity," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, V (July, 1932), 58. He uses both names as though they apply to the same man. This article will be cited hereafter as Graebner, "Paul Henkel," CHIQ, V (July, 1932).

<sup>2</sup>Graebner, "Paul Henkel," CHIQ, V (July, 1932), 58. Henkel, op. cit., p. 67.



for education that existed at the time were used to the best advantage. He attended the available schools and diligently studied the books in his father's small library. Paul Henkel was confirmed by the Rev. Johannes Schwarbach in the year 1768, when he was fourteen years old.<sup>3</sup> Paul Henkel was deeply impressed by this fine, consecrated pastor, and this no doubt played a part in his decision later on to prepare himself for the ministry. This decision was made about the year 1776, and he began to receive some instruction from the Rev. John A. Krug at Fredericktown, Maryland. What Paul Henkel always considered as his first sermon was preached sometime in 1871, when he preached in German on the text Phil. 2:5, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." This was immediately followed by an English sermon on Eccl. 12:13, "Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."<sup>4</sup> On June 16, 1783, the Pennsylvania Ministerium licensed him to preach, catechize, and baptize for one year. At first, this was to be under the supervision of Pastor J. Krug.<sup>5</sup> His license was to be renewed every year until he was officially ordained. He at once began

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<sup>3</sup>W. J. Finck, "Paul Henkel, the Lutheran Pioneer," The Lutheran Quarterly, LVI (July, 1926), 309. Hereafter cited as Finck, "Paul Henkel," Luth. Quart., LVI (July, 1926). B. H. Pershing, "Paul Henkel; Frontier Missionary, Organizer, and Author," The Lutheran Church Quarterly, VII (April, 1934), p. 128. This same article is reprinted in the Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, VII (January, 1935), 97-120. Hereafter cited as Pershing, "Paul Henkel," Luth. Ch. Quart., VII (April, 1934).

<sup>4</sup>Finck, "Paul Henkel," Luth. Quart., LVI (July, 1926), 310-11. Cassell, op. cit., p. 49. He says the first sermon was preached on December 2, 1782. This was his first regular sermon, in a Lutheran gown, but he had preached earlier.

<sup>5</sup>Finck, "Paul Henkel," Luth. Quart., LVI (July, 1926), 314.



his work in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia as the pastor of four congregations which had called him. His license was renewed each year, until, on June 6, 1792, the Pennsylvania Ministerium ordained him to the office of pastor.<sup>6</sup> He was a very active minister and one imbued with missionary zeal. He moved around in several different places in Virginia and North Carolina.

As early as 1785 Paul Henkel began to make annual missionary tours to North Carolina. A diary of his, kept during one of these missionary journeys made in April and May, 1801, shows the primitive conditions existing in North Carolina and Virginia at that time, and brings out the missionary zeal and faith of this man of God.<sup>7</sup> The members of his four congregations were reluctant to permit him to make these journeys, but he convinced them that it was their Christian duty to permit him to go and bring the Gospel to these people who were without it. In 1805, due to poor health and a desire to assist in setting up a printing establishment, Paul Henkel returned to New Market, Virginia, where he had lived after accepting his first call.<sup>8</sup> He now became an independent missionary. In 1806, the Pennsylvania Ministerium appointed him as a traveling missionary at a salary of \$40.00 a month while he was actually engaged as a traveling missionary.<sup>9</sup> He also had to depend on

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<sup>6</sup>Henkel, op: cit., p. 68.

<sup>7</sup>Theodore Graebner, "Diary of Paul Henkel," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, I (April, 1928), 16-20; ibid., I (July, 1928), 43-47.

<sup>8</sup>Pershing, "Paul Henkel," Luth. Ch. Quart., VII (April, 1934), 133.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 127. Graebner, "Paul Henkel," CHIQ, V (July, 1932), 59.



contributions from the people whom he served. During his lifetime, he made journeys into Virginia, Western Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio. On these journeys, he gathered the people often helping to organize new congregations. He administered the Word and Sacraments' to these people, and instructed and confirmed their youth.<sup>10</sup>

The Rev. Paul Henkel also participated in forming several conferences and synods. In 1793, he was one of four ministers who organized the Conference of Virginia, which became the Synod of Maryland and Virginia in 1820.<sup>11</sup> In 1803, while he was living in North Carolina, he, together with several other ministers, formed the North Carolina Synod.<sup>12</sup> He also participated in the forming of the Ohio Synod in 1818. In fact, he cast the deciding vote which changed the Conference into a Synod.<sup>13</sup> He also participated in the organization of the Tennessee Synod in 1820. Thus, during his lifetime, he was a member of four different Synods. He does not seem to have been dismissed from any of these Synods, but by some principle which we do not understand now, he remained a member of each one until his death.<sup>14</sup>

Having again returned to New Market, Virginia, in 1816, the Rev. Paul Henkel concentrated on writing and publishing, while at the same

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<sup>10</sup>Henkel, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>11</sup>Finck, "Paul Henkel," Luth. Quart., LVI (July, 1926), 319-20.

<sup>12</sup>Henkel, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>13</sup>Finck, "Paul Henkel," Luth. Quart., LVI (July, 1926), 322.

<sup>14</sup>Cassell, op. cit., p. 122.



time he kept up his strenuous missionary activity. He wrote prose and poetry in both German and English, homilies, and other works, but he was best known for his catechisms and hymnbooks.<sup>15</sup> He instructed those who desired to become ministers in his home. He also trained his own brothers and sons for the ministry. His brothers, John, Joseph, Benjamin, and Isaac, were Lutheran pastors. His sons, Andrew and Charles, were pastors in the Joint Synod of Ohio, and Philip, David, and Ambrose were pastors in the Tennessee Synod.<sup>16</sup>

The Rev. Paul Henkel was a big man, well proportioned, about six feet tall, and although somewhat inclined towards corpulency, was quite athletic and quick in his movements. He had a keen mind and many talents. He lived very frugally and did not like anything that savored of ostentation. The one extravagance that he permitted himself was a rich, black silk gown which he always wore while conducting services.<sup>17</sup>

The Rev. Paul Henkel is further described in this way:

As a citizen, he was kind, affectionate, and forbearing. As a neighbor, he was universally esteemed and beloved. As a preacher, he had few superiors in his day. He was animated and often eloquent. His soul was in his Master's cause. Few ministers performed more arduous, faithful, efficient labor than he did. In all the relations of life, he was true, faithful, pious, reliable, and upright.<sup>18</sup>

He married Miss Elizabeth Negley on November 20, 1776. They had

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<sup>15</sup>Pershing, "Paul Henkel," Luth. Ch. Quart., VII (April, 1934), 141. Here from pages 141-48 he has a fine description of these catechisms and hymnbooks.

<sup>16</sup>Cassell, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>17</sup>Graebner, "Paul Henkel," CHIQ, V (July, 1932), 63.

<sup>18</sup>Henkel, op. cit., p. 69.



nine children, six sons and three daughters.<sup>19</sup>

On a journey to Kentucky to meet an appointment in the spring of 1823, the Rev. Paul Henkel suffered a stroke about 120 miles from home. He was fortunate that his wife was traveling with him at the time, as she often did. His left side was completely paralyzed, and he almost completely lost the power of speech. He was forced to return to his home in New Market, where he gradually improved in his ability to walk and talk. His last sermon was preached in New Market, Virginia, on October 9, 1825, on the text, Luke 2:34. He died of paralysis on November 27, 1825, at the age of 70 years, and was buried in New Market, Virginia.<sup>20</sup>

His name and his work will never be forgotten in the history of the Church he loved so deeply and served so faithfully. True is the testimony engraved on the tablet of his tomb in Emmanuel cemetery in New Market: "His Zeal for the promulgation of the Gospel of Christ Jesus was exemplary, and his labors were many and difficult. He is now with Christ and no evil can befall him."<sup>21</sup>

#### Henkel Publishing House at New Market, Virginia

The Rev. Paul Henkel was closely associated with the printing press at New Market, Virginia, which he and his sons established in 1806. The following account of the Henkel Publication House in New Market, Virginia, is taken largely from the account as found in the History of the Lutheran Church in Virginia and East Tennessee by C. Cassell,

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<sup>19</sup>Finck, "Paul Henkel," Luth. Quart., LVI (July, 1926), 327-28. Here he names his family and briefly tells what happened to them.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 329-30. Henkel, op. cit., p. 69. He says the day of death was November 17, 1825, but he is apparently wrong.

<sup>21</sup>Cassell, op. cit., p. 55.



W. Finck, and E. Henkel.

The Henkel Publication House in New Market, Virginia, was privately owned, but the material printed was of such a predominantly educational and religious nature that it played an extremely important role in preserving, promoting, and advancing the Lutheran Church not only in Virginia, but throughout America.

The printery in New Market was established in 1806. The idea of such a printery went back a few years farther than that. Solomon Henkel opened a drug store in New Market in 1793, and became a practical pharmacist. In addition to his medical supplies he sold writing materials and books. He then became the agent for John Gruber, a printer in Hagerstown, Maryland, securing subscribers for John Gruber's publications. Because he was involved in the buying and selling of books, Solomon Henkel also acquired the desire to produce the books himself. Paul Henkel had also realized the need for a press as early as 1805, if not earlier.<sup>22</sup> Solomon wrote a letter to his father in 1805 in which he revealed his plans for starting a printery in New Market.<sup>23</sup> Paul Henkel was in North Carolina at the time, and a printing outfit had been offered for sale nearby, but before Solomon and his father could make up their minds to buy it, it was sold.

When the Rev. Paul Henkel returned to New Market to live in the summer of 1805, he had with him an order for some printing from the Synod of North Carolina. At the meeting of the North Carolina Synod in

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<sup>22</sup>Finck, "Paul Henkel," Luth. Quart., LVI (July, 1926), 324.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 324-25. Extracts from this correspondence are reprinted here.



October, 1804, it had been decided to publish the minutes of that meeting and to reproduce the doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession.<sup>24</sup> Although this printing job had to be given to John Gruber in Hagerstown, both Paul Henkel and his son Solomon felt that it should be the last printing work done away from New Market. Mr. John Gruber himself helped them to acquire their wish by selling them some old type and other necessary equipment. He also took Ambrose Henkel as an apprentice that he might learn the work of setting up type and other business of the printing trade. Thus the long desired printery was established in New Market in 1806.<sup>25</sup> Rev. Paul Henkel provided a room in his home for the printery, and the business was begun under the name of Ambrose Henkel. The minutes of the Special Conference held in Rader's Church on October 5th and 6th, 1806, was the first extended publication to come from this press.<sup>26</sup> The hymns that had been printed for the dedication of this church were also included in this publication. This work was all done in German. On the last page of this publication, apologies are made for the author, Paul Henkel, and the compositor, Ambrose Henkel, in these words:

The author was compelled to prepare these pages under the stress of many other duties. The young printer, whose first work now appears in these pages, lacked much needful equipment as well as experience. They hope to do better in the future.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Cassell, op. cit., p. 309.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 310. Graebner, "Paul Henkel," CHIQ, V (July, 1932), 60-61. Here is a complete description of that first press.

<sup>26</sup>Cassell, op. cit., p. 310. Finck, "Paul Henkel," Luth. Quart., LVI (July, 1926), 325.

<sup>27</sup>Cassell, op. cit., p. 310.



And so the Henkel printery in New Market was begun. Development was rapid and good. In order that he might learn all of the different branches and tasks of the printing business, such as the making of cuts, and the binding of books, Ambrose Henkel worked as an apprentice at various places like Hagerstown, Frederick, Hanover, and Reading. In the fall of 1807 Solomon called his brother home to begin work on a German weekly. Ambrose wanted to postpone the beginning of this new enterprise until January 1, 1808, but Solomon wanted the project to begin at once. Thus Ambrose Henkel, as editor and publisher, published the first German weekly in Virginia and the South on Wednesday, October 7, 1807, under the title, "Der Virginische Volksberichter und Neumarketer Wochenschrift." (The Virginia Popular Reporter and New Market Weekly Record.) Seventy-seven issues followed, continuing until June, 1809, when it was discontinued because of insufficient subscribers and advertisers. It consisted of four pages, about 10 x 15 inches in size. The paper was well edited and carried news from many American cities and some foreign countries. It contained advertisements, notices, and announcements. One of the notices in English stated, "Rags wanted at this office."<sup>28</sup> One wonders, therefore, if the Henkels made their own paper, which is quite probable. Notices of religious and other books for sale were included, as well as lists of un-called for letters, since Solomon Henkel was the postmaster. These official lists and a few other items were the only parts of the paper which were

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<sup>28</sup>Graebner, "Paul Henkel," CHIQ, V (July, 1932), 62.



printed in English.<sup>29</sup>

After the weekly newspaper was discontinued, Ambrose Henkel again left New Market to learn more about the printing business, working first for John Gruber, and then toward the end of 1809 he went to Baltimore and worked almost a whole year in that city. The printery in New Market was still producing, two other brothers, Andrew and David, carrying on the work. When it was necessary, journeymen printers were hired to help. One of these journeymen printers, John Wartmann, became a partner in the business from 1810 to 1814.<sup>30</sup>

Before he returned home late in the year, 1810, Ambrose Henkel bought a new press in Philadelphia for \$135. This was to enable the firm to publish a German hymnbook which the Rev. Paul Henkel had prepared, and which contained two hundred and forty-six hymns.<sup>31</sup> This was the largest work that had been published by the firm up to that time, and the new press played a prominent part in making it possible. Primers, readers, minutes, and catechisms, mostly in German, were all that had been published previously. With this new press larger tasks were undertaken. The needs of the people in both German and English were met. Books, pamphlets, readers, and catechisms were printed in both languages. The Rev. Paul Henkel published a German paper on Christian Baptism and the Lord's Supper in 1809. This paper was later

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<sup>29</sup>Cassell, op. cit., pp. 310-11. Graebner, "Paul Henkel," CHIQ, V (July, 1932), 61-62.

<sup>30</sup>Cassell, op. cit., p. 311.

<sup>31</sup>Pershing, "Paul Henkel," Luth. Ch. Quart., VII (April, 1934), 145-46. The preface to this German edition of 1810 is here quoted stating the objective of the author.



translated into English. In 1811, he published both an English and a German edition of the catechism.<sup>32</sup> Later editions of these catechisms in 1814 also contained an explanation of all the Fast and Festival Days observed in the Church. A little later, Paul Henkel published a little satirical rebuke to fanaticism, superstition, vice, and folly, written in rhyme, and entitled Zeitvertreib (Pastime). In 1816, the first English hymnbook, also edited by the Rev. Paul Henkel, was published. This hymnbook, which was afterwards enlarged and improved, contained four hundred and seventy-six hymns, some of which were adapted to the Gospels and Epistles of the Church Year. Many of the hymns in both these German and English hymnbooks were composed by the Rev. Paul Henkel.<sup>33</sup> Two of the text-books published were: Das Kleine A B C Buch, in 1819, and Das Grosse A B C Buch, in 1820.<sup>34</sup>

After the Tennessee Synod was organized in 1820, the Henkels did all of the synodical printing that was required by that Synod. The works of the Rev. David Henkel, a very prolific writer, were published between the years of 1820 and 1831. This was a great help to all the Lutheran ministers in the area and elsewhere. When the Rev. David Henkel was only twenty-two years old, his first work was published, entitled, The Essence of the Christian Religion and Reflections on Futurity. Then in the following years he wrote The Carolinian Herald

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<sup>32</sup>Pershing, "Paul Henkel," Luth. Ch. Quart., VII (April, 1934), 141-45.

<sup>33</sup>Cassell, op. cit., p. 316. Pershing, "Paul Henkel," Luth. Ch. Quart., VII (April, 1934), 145-48. Here is a description of one of these hymnbooks.

<sup>34</sup>Graebner, "Paul Henkel," CHIQ, V (July, 1932), 61.



of Liberty and Objections to the Constitution of the General Synod, both in 1821; The Heavenly Flood of Regeneration in 1822; Answer to Joseph Moore the Methodist in 1825; A Treatise on Prayer in 1828; a translation of Luther's Catechism with notes in 1829; An Essay on Regeneration in 1830; and The Person and Incarnation of Jesus Christ in 1831.<sup>35</sup> All of these works were published by the printery in New Market. In 1834, the printery put out a translation of the Augsburg Confession with a preface by Karl Henkel.

Dr. Solomon Henkel had taken over the printing business in his own name about the year 1814. He had long had the desire to publish the Book of Concord in the English language. After he died in 1847, his four sons kept their father's estate undivided so that, together with the money which they would contribute, they might be enabled to carry out their father's desire. The unanimous approval of the Tennessee Synod had been secured in 1845, but Dr. Solomon Henkel had passed away without seeing the fulfillment of his plan. The four sons now united under the name of Solomon D. Henkel and Company, and continued with the work. After seven years of hard work, the translated Book of Concord appeared in 1851, followed in 1854 by a second edition with all translations revised. In 1848, the Tennessee Synod was asked to approve a plan on publishing Luther on the Sacraments. The approval was given, and Luther on the Sacraments, or The Distinctive Doctrines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Respecting Baptism and the Lord's Supper, appeared in 1853. In 1851, the Tennessee Synod was asked to

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<sup>35</sup>J. T. Mueller, The Work of the Pioneers of the Tennessee Synod (An address by B. D. Wessinger in 1920, n.p., n.d.), p. 7.



approve a publication of both Luther's Small and Large Catechisms in one convenient volume in the English language. The approval having been received, Luther's Small and Large Catechisms, together with an historical introduction, to which were added hymns and prayers adapted to catechetical instruction and to family devotion, appeared in 1852. This was a translation from the German. In 1855, the Tennessee Synod was asked for its approval to publish a translation of Luther's Church Postil, a series of sermons on the Epistles of the Church Year. The approval was again given, and Luther's Church Postil, Sermons on the Epistles for the Different Sundays and Festivals in the Year, a translation from the German, appeared in 1869. In all of these proposals the Tennessee Synod not only gave its hearty and unanimous approval, but it also promised to help distribute these volumes when they were published.<sup>36</sup>

Cassell says of these important publications:

These books were all doctrinal in their character and served to inform and fortify the growing membership of the Lutheran Church in the principles of their religion. They were issued at a time when the people were using the English language, and the Confessions of the Church were available only in the languages of the Lutheran countries of Europe. The translation and publication of these standard writings came therefore at an opportune time and helped to conserve the membership of the Church and to bring many from the unchurched in the various communities into a living knowledge of the true faith and into union with the Lutheran Church.<sup>37</sup>

There were, of course, many more doctrinal, devotional, and other types of material that came from this press that are not mentioned here.

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<sup>36</sup>Cassell, op. cit., pp. 312-13.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 313.



There is no doubt, however, that the greatest and most important work of all was The Book of Concord, or Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. In describing this monumental work Cassell says:

It was an undertaking of prodigious magnitude, involving not only the ordinary work of the printer and bookbinder, but also the duty of selecting the original works in German and Latin, and of finding the men who were able to make a correct translation, expressed in pure and idiomatic English. When completed it proved to be a monumental achievement. A volume well bound, clearly printed, consisting of 775 octavo pages, was put into the hands of the Lutheran public. It found a ready acceptance in all parts of the country. The South eagerly welcomed it, and Pennsylvania and Ohio absorbed many copies. It attracted the attention of the professors in Gettysburg Seminary, and the Lutheran educators of the North and East. In the preparation of the second edition Lutheran scholars like Charles Philip Krauth, of Gettysburg; W. F. Lehman, of Columbus, Ohio; J. G. Morris, of Baltimore; and C. F. Schaeffer, of Easton, Pennsylvania, gave their valued assistance.<sup>38</sup>

This was the first time that the Book of Concord had appeared in the English language, and the printery at New Market, Virginia, had the honor of being the first to publish it.

Around the year 1870, the Lutherans of North Carolina expressed their desire for a conservative periodical. The result of negotiations with the Henkels was the beginning of Our Church Paper on January 3, 1783. This paper continued until 1904. Then it was merged with the Lutheran Visitor and became the Lutheran Church Visitor. This paper then became the official organ of the United Synod in the South. Dr. Socrates Henkel was the first editor-in-chief. The paper had a large circulation and exerted a powerful influence for Lutheranism in the South. It helped immensely in preparing the way for establishing

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid.



the United Synod of the South on a conservative basis of union.<sup>39</sup>

The importance and contribution of the Henkel Publication House at New Market to the Lutheran Church in America was simply tremendous. The entire Lutheran Church in the South as well as in the other parts of the country felt its influence. Other publishing houses were prompted to follow its example. Being more or less under the influence and backing of the Tennessee Synod as it was, the works that flowed from its press were of a sound theological and Lutheran character, and did more perhaps in restoring pure Lutheranism to America than any of the other efforts of the Tennessee Synod. Certainly the effects of the printing press were more far reaching. The tremendous value of this publishing house for Lutheranism in America can hardly be expressed in mere words.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 314.



## CHAPTER V

### TENNESSEE-MISSOURI RELATIONSHIP

#### Mutual Attractions and Friendly Relations

Because both the Tennessee Synod and the Missouri Synod are conservative, orthodox Lutheran bodies, the question quite naturally arises as to the reason why these two bodies never united. Friendly relations certainly did exist between them, at least for a time. This chapter will explain some of these friendly relations, particularly from the Tennessee Synod point of view, and then show why the Conover College situation strained the relations between these two Lutheran Synods.

The Tennessee Synod was conservative both in doctrine and practice. Because of its very conservative Lutheran position, doctrinally and confessionally, it was only natural that when the Tennessee Synod learned of the existence of the Missouri Synod and the very similar doctrinal and confessional stand which it took, that there would be some interest and mutual attraction. Certainly this was also in accord with the position of the Tennessee Synod, which desired to unite with true Lutheran Synods. This desire of the Tennessee Synod was brought out in some detail in Chapter III with regard to their attitude toward other Lutheran Synods. Even though by the time the Missouri Synod was organized in 1847, the Tennessee Synod had almost entirely gone over to the English language in their work, while the Missouri Synod was thoroughly German, there still was this mutual attraction and respect.



The Missouri Synod became interested in the Tennessee Synod right after they had made contact. Both Synods were very happy to find another Lutheran Synod in America that was equally as confessional and orthodox. Thus, in the Missouri Synod papers, the antiunionistic position which the Tennessee Synod held over against those Lutheran Synods that had fallen away from true Lutheranism, received hearty approval. In Loehe's Kirchliche Mitteilungen of 1847 we find the following:

Several Virginians came to St. Louis to the Lutheran Pastor Buenger, and asked him whether he still adhered to the old Lutheran faith, which he affirmed to their joy. Thereupon they told of Henkel. . . . They had protested against an edition of Luther's Small Catechism in which, with reference to Baptism, the words "who believe it" (die es glauben) had been made to read "who believe" (die da glauben).<sup>1</sup>

F. Bente also informs us that:

The Lutheraner of February 22, 1848, published the Tennessee resolution, stating that they could unite with the Synod of North Carolina "only on the ground of pure and unadulterated Evangelical Lutheranism," and added the comment: "We confess that a closer acquaintance has filled us with the best prepossessions for this Synod. As far as we can see from the Report, they are earnestly striving to preserve the treasure of pure Lutheran teaching."<sup>2</sup>

This friendly spirit was reciprocated on the part of the Tennessee Synod. When, in their regular Synodical meeting in 1848, the Tennessee Synod learned of the organization of the Missouri Synod, this was the resolution that was unanimously adopted by that convention:

Resolved, That we rejoice to learn that some of our German Lutheran brethren in the West, have formed themselves into a Synod, called "The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States," and that they are publishing a German

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<sup>1</sup>F. Bente, American Lutheranism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919), I, 217.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 217-18.



paper, styled "Der Lutheraner," which is devoted to the promulgation and defence of the primitive doctrines and usages of the Lutheran Church; to which paper we would call the attention of our German brethren.<sup>3</sup>

"At the convention of the Missouri Synod at Fort Wayne, in 1849, Dr. Sihler was elected a delegate to the Tennessee Synod."<sup>4</sup> No record of Dr. Sihler being present is found in the Minutes of the Tennessee Synod of 1849, but Dr. Sihler wrote to Loehe that

according to its Reports and confessions, this Synod maintains an upright churchly position. It would be a great joy if we could enter into definite church-fellowship with them, especially as we, above all others, have been stigmatized as the "exclusive Lutherans."<sup>5</sup>

After having reviewed the Tennessee Report of 1848, Walther remarked in Der Lutheraner of January 23, 1849:

Like its predecessor, this Report proves that this Synod belongs to the small number of those who are determined not only to be called Lutherans, but also to be and to remain Lutherans.<sup>6</sup>

Walther goes on to report the chief resolutions made by the Tennessee Synod in 1848, including, of course, the resolution which expressed the delight of the Tennessee Synod over hearing of the organization of the Missouri Synod, and recommending Der Lutheraner to their German-speaking members. Then he continues:

We close this extract with the sincere wish that the Lord would continue to bless this Synod, which for almost thirty years, in

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<sup>3</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1848), p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Bente, op. cit., I, 218.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 218. Bente quoted from Kirchliche Mitteilungen, 1849, p. 92.

<sup>6</sup>Bente, op. cit., I, 218.



spite of much shame and persecution, has faithfully testified and fought against the apostasy of the so-called American Lutheran Church, especially against the General Synod, and which, as far as we know, of all the older Lutheran Synods, alone has preserved in this last evil time the treasures of our Lutheran Church; and we also wish that the Lord would make this Synod a salt of the earth to stay the growing spiritual corruption in other synods.<sup>7</sup>

The first mention of a delegate from Missouri is found in the Tennessee Report of 1853. Rev. A. Biewend was the delegate from Missouri, but was unable to attend, and so he sent a letter excusing himself. The following action was taken by the Tennessee Synod:

No. 10, Is a letter from Rev. A. Biewend, a member of the Missouri Synod, in which he informs us that he was appointed a delegate to this body, but that owing to intervening circumstances, he was prevented attending. He also expresses the hope and desire that a more intimate acquaintance may be formed between their and our Synods.

Your committee would recommend the following for adoption:

1. Resolved, That we duly appreciate the kind regard of the Missouri Synod, and that we also desire a more intimate acquaintance with them, and that we appoint Rev. J. R. Moser a delegate to the next session of that Synod.<sup>8</sup>

This report was adopted by the Tennessee Synod. In this same report of the Tennessee Synod, we find that the Secretary, A. J. Brown, makes note of the communications that he had received since the last session. He mentions that he had received a copy of the Minutes of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States, for 1853. He also mentions a letter received from Pastors T. Brohm and A. Hoyer of the Missouri Synod, who had been appointed as delegates to

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 218. Bente quoted from Der Lutheraner, January 23, 1849, pp. 5 and 84.

<sup>8</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1853), pp. 12-13.



attend this meeting of the Tennessee Synod, but who were unable to attend. This letter is reprinted in full in the Minutes. His report is as follows:

2. A letter from Rev. Messrs. Theo. Brohm and A. Hoyer, who had been appointed Delegates from "The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States," to the recent session of our Synod. As the letter is both interesting and encouraging, I give it in full.

New York and Philadelphia, Oct. 6th, 1853.

Reverend and Dear Brethren:-

Animated by an ardent desire to cherish the unity in spirit with all true Lutherans wherever, the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod Of Missouri, Ohio, and other States, at her last Annual meeting at Cleveland, Ohio, had appointed the undersigned as Delegates to attend your Synodical meeting and to deliver her fraternal greetings. But after having learned the place where your Synod is to meet this year, we regret to be precluded, by the great distance and other local difficulties, from the great pleasure of carrying out our commission both honorable and agreeable to us, as a greater sacrifice of time would be required than we can properly answer for to our respective congregations.

In order to compensate this want of personal attendance, we take the liberty, with consent of our President, to address your reverend body by these few lines, assuring you of our fraternal love and sympathy, founded upon the conviction, that it is one and the same faith which dwells in you and in us. We are highly rejoiced in this vast desert and wilderness, to meet a whole Lutheran Synod steadfastly holding to the precious Confessions of our beloved church, and zealously engaged in divulging the unaltered doctrines and principles of the Reformation among the English portion of Lutherans, by translating the standard writings of our Fathers, at the same time firmly resisting the allurements of those who say they are Lutherans, and are not.

Our Synod extends, through our instrumentality, the hand of fraternity to you, not fearing to be refused, and ardently desires, however separated from you by different language and local interests, to co-operate with you, hand in hand, in rebuilding the walls of our dilapidated Zion.

We are authorized to beseech your venerable Synod, to delegate as many of your members as you may deem proper, to our Synodical meeting to be held next year at St. Louis, promising hereby a friendly and hospitable reception. Should your Synod next year



assemble at a place easier accessible, and more convenient to us, we, or they whom our Synod may appoint, shall not fail to attend.

Praying that the Lord may vouchsafe to replenish your reverend body with the spirit of truth, wisdom, zeal, love, and peace, and bless your deliberations for the glorification of His holy name, we remain, dear brethren, with sincere respect and love, your co-laborers in the vineyard of the Lord.

Theo. Brohm  
A. Hoyer, of Philadelphia<sup>9</sup>

This letter gives us some clues as to the reasons why there never was a union or apparently not even an attempt at union between the Tennessee and Missouri Synods. The Revs. Brohm and Hoyer rejoice in the work that the Tennessee Synod is doing "among the English portion of Lutherans," inferring, in a way, that the Missouri Synod is doing the same kind of work among the German Lutherans. Then, in the next paragraph, they mention that the Missouri and Tennessee Synods are prevented from working together "hand in hand" because they are "separated . . . by different language and local interests." There seems to be little doubt that the difference in language played a great part in preventing a union between these two Synods. The Missouri Synod was definitely German as far as language was concerned, and the Tennessee Synod, which also had started out as a German speaking Synod, had by this time become an almost entirely English speaking body. Then the "local interests," perhaps slight differences in church polity and practice, also played a part in keeping these two Synods as separate bodies.

These "local interests" mentioned by Pastors Brohm and Hoyer in their letter to the Tennessee Synod may refer to the various peculiarities

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-18.



of the Tennessee Synod as to its church polity. These peculiarities were considered in some detail in the attitudes of the Tennessee Synod in Chapter III. There, for example, it was brought out how the Tennessee Synod was opposed to incorporation and to the establishment of a general mission treasury. Also opposed was the establishment of seminaries and a pension fund for widows and orphans of pastors. The church polity of the Missouri Synod differed from that of the Tennessee Synod in these respects.

Then there were also a few doctrinal peculiarities held by the Tennessee Synod. The doctrine concerning "The Last Things" was apparently not clear to the members of the Tennessee Synod, at least at its organization in 1820, for these members believed that the organization of the General Synod was preparing the way for the Antichrist. Thus, in the Conclusion of his objections to the constitution of the General Synod, David Henkel said:

We do not expect finally to prevent the establishment of this General Synod, by publishing our objections; because we believe, agreeable to the divine predictions, that the great falling away is approaching, so that Antichrist will set himself into the temple of God. II Thess. 2. We also believe that the establishment of General Synods are preparing the way for him.<sup>10</sup>

The Missouri Synod would not accept that erroneous view of the doctrine of "The Last Things."

The Tennessee Synod also believed in two grades of the ministry, pastor and deacon.<sup>11</sup> The Missouri Synod believed in only one, the pastor.

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<sup>10</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1821), p. 35.

<sup>11</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1820), p. 6.



One other difference in church practice could be brought out, and that is with regard to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Tennessee Synod adhered to the custom of breaking the bread at communion while the Missouri Synod used wafers. This difference was discussed in the Synods in 1856 as we see from the Minutes of the Tennessee Synod of that year, which also presents a defense of the custom which prevailed in the Tennessee Synod. A committee, appointed to examine the Minutes of the Missouri Synod, made this report:

From the Minutes of the Western District of Missouri, we learn that our Delegate, Rev. J. R. Moser, attended the last meeting of that Synod, and was cordially received.--Several questions concerning our church usages were proposed to the Synod, by brother Moser, in answer to which, an answer is given; concerning only one of which we think it now necessary to give an expression of our views.

With all due deference to the learning and high character of the Missouri Synod for orthodoxy, we have been unable to see sufficient reason to make any change in our manner of administering the Lord's Supper. We are influenced in our practice, in this respect, by the authority of both the Holy Scriptures and the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church. St. Paul says, (1 Cor. x,16,) "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"

The Book of Concord, (2nd Newmarket Edition) says:--(page 671) "From these words, we perceive clearly, that not only the cup which Christ blessed in the first supper, and not only the bread which Christ broke and distributed, but that bread also, which we break, and that cup which we bless, are the communion of the body and of the blood of Christ; and page 672--Luther and other pure teachers of the Augsburg Confession, explain this declaration of Paul, with such words that it accords most fully with the words of Christ, when they thus write: "The bread which we break, is the distributed body of Christ, or the common body of Christ, distributed to those who receive the broken bread." And page 677: "But the command of Christ, this do, must be observed entire and inviolate, which comprises the whole action or administration of this sacrament, namely, in a christian assembly, to take bread and wine, to bless, to administer, and to receive them, that is to eat and to drink, and at the same time, to show the death of the Lord, as also St. Paul presents before our eyes the whole action of breaking bread, or of distributing it and receiving it--1 Cor. x,16-17.



For the present, therefore, we feel fully justified in our present practice.<sup>12</sup>

This committee report was received and adopted by the Tennessee Synod. From the above quotation, it is evident that the Tennessee Synod had no intention of changing its position.

In spite of these differences of language and "local interests" which existed between the two Synods, there was nevertheless a friendly and cordial relationship. This is evident from the fact that delegates were exchanged between the two Synods at least until the Civil War. Thus, at the meeting of the Tennessee Synod in 1854, a delegate from the Missouri Synod was present and the following action was taken:

Rev. Theodore Brohm, of the Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States, was introduced to Synod, and received as a corresponding member by this body.

The Rev. Theodore Brohm, of the Missouri Synod, being present, the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, the Rev. Theodore Brohm, of the city of New York, delegate of the Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States, has appeared amongst us, and we are assured from personal interviews with him, as well as from other sources of information, that the Synod which he represents adheres strictly to the doctrines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, as exhibited in her confessional standards, and are zealously and actively engaged in promoting the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom; be it, therefore,

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<sup>12</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1856), pp. 23-24. Verhandlungen Der Zweiten Sitzungen Des Westlichen Distrikts Der Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode Von Missouri, Ohio Und Anderen Staaten, Im Jahre 1856 (St. Louis: Druckerei der Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. St., n.d. [1856]), pp. 33-36. On these pages is an account of the questions asked by Rev. Moser and the answers given. The questions asked were whether the bread in Holy Communion should be broken, cut, or whether wafers should be used, whether the sign of the cross should be used, whether the Old Testament blessing should be used, and concerning the office of evangelist. There was agreement on all but using wafers instead of breaking bread at the Lord's Supper.



Resolved 1. That we are highly gratified to see brother Brohm in our midst.

Resolved 2. That we fully and cheerfully reciprocate the kind and fraternal feelings expressed and manifested towards us by the Missouri Synod.

Resolved 3. That we will endeavor to cultivate a more intimate acquaintance and a closer union with the Missouri Synod.

Resolved 4. That, for this purpose, Rev. Socrates Henkel be appointed a delegate from this body to the Eastern division of the Missouri Synod, to be held in Baltimore; and that Rev. J. R. Moser be appointed our delegate to the Western division of said Synod, at its next session.<sup>13</sup>

Also in this meeting of the Tennessee Synod in 1854, Rev. T. Brohm preached from Rev. 14:6,7, during the recess on Wednesday morning.<sup>14</sup> This example of hospitality on the part of the Tennessee Synod also brings out the friendly relations which existed between the two Synods.

From the Minutes of 1855, we see that Rev. S. Henkel gave his reason for not attending the last convention of the Eastern District of the Missouri Synod. Rev. J. R. Moser, the delegate appointed to attend the meeting of the Western District of the Missouri Synod was not present at this meeting of the Tennessee Synod.

It is recorded in the Minutes of the Tennessee Synod of 1856 that a committee was appointed to examine the Minutes of both the Eastern and Western Districts of the Missouri Synod which had been received. This matter was duly carried out, and the committee's report was accepted. It was also reported at this same meeting that both the Ohio and Missouri Synods had appointed delegates to attend the meeting of the

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<sup>13</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1854), pp. 5, 11-12.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 11.



Tennessee Synod, but none of the delegates had been able to attend.<sup>15</sup> Also at this session of Synod, Rev. J. R. Moser was appointed delegate to the Western District of the Missouri Synod and Rev. H. Wetzel delegate to the Eastern District of the Missouri Synod.

In the sessions of the Tennessee Synod in 1857 and 1858, there is also a record of delegates having been appointed to attend the meetings of the Missouri Synod.

The Minutes of 1862 are the last to mention a delegate from the Missouri Synod, and that is to excuse the delegate.

In consequence of the political troubles and conflicts and the War between the States, the convention called to meet in Salisbury, North Carolina, failed to convene; and for the same reasons, the members of Virginia, Tennessee, and Missouri, whose presence, under these circumstances, was not expected, were excused for their non-attendance.<sup>16</sup>

Favorable tributes from Dr. Walther of the Missouri Synod were given to the Tennessee Synod through the pages of Der Lutheraner after the Tennessee Synod had published the book Luther on the Sacraments in 1852, and after the Tennessee Synod had published the second edition of the Book of Concord in 1854.<sup>17</sup>

#### Organization of the English Conference of Missouri

The friendly relations existing between the Tennessee and Missouri Synods is also seen in the matter of organizing the English Conference

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<sup>15</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1856, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>16</sup>Socrates Henkel, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod (New Market, Va.: Henkel & Co., Printers And Publishers, 1890), p. 159. The Minutes of 1862 were unavailable to the author.

<sup>17</sup>Bente, op. cit., I, 220-21.



of Missouri. The English Lutherans who were living in Southeastern Missouri in the 1860's and 1870's were formerly members of the Tennessee Synod. Two pastors of the Tennessee Synod, Polycarp Henkel and Jonathan Moser, were serving them. In 1872, contact was established between these English Lutherans and the German Missouri Synod. This contact resulted in a "Free Conference" which was held at Gravelton, Missouri, from August 16 to 20, 1872. Attending this conference were members from the Tennessee, Holston, Missouri, and Norwegian Synods. Dr. Walther of the Missouri Synod was the leading and guiding spirit. He submitted some theses for discussion. These theses were unanimously adopted and served to establish the doctrinal unity of those English Lutherans with the German Missouri Synod. It was also at this time and place, following the advice of those members from the Missouri Synod who were present, that "The English Lutheran Conference of Missouri" was organized by Pastors Henkel, Moser, and Rada, and the lay delegates from their congregations. Pastors Henkel and Moser then immediately notified the Tennessee Synod of the organization of this new body, and requested an honorable dismissal.<sup>18</sup>

This is the action taken by the Tennessee Synod as recorded in their Minutes of 1872:

We, the committee appointed to reply to the communications of Revs. P. C. Henkel and J. R. Moser, of Missouri, to this Synod, beg leave to submit the following:

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<sup>18</sup>H. P. Eckhardt, The English District (Published by the English District of the Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, 1946), pp. 10-13. Roy Arthur Suelflow, "The History of the Missouri Synod During the Second Twenty-Five Years of its Existence 1872-1897." Unpublished Doctor of Theology Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1946, pp. 352-54.



Whereas, We learn from the communications of these brethren that the prospects for building up the Church in the West are favorable, and that these brethren in connection with others have taken preliminary steps for the organization of an Ev. Luth. Synod in the State of Missouri; be it, therefore,

Resolved, 1. That we hail with pleasure this information.

Resolved, 2. That their efforts put forth for the organization of a Synod meet our approbation.

Resolved, 3. That, in order to aid them in publishing the proceedings of their conference, and their proposed Constitution in connection with their discussion of "Doctrinal thesis selected from the Symbols of the Ev. Luth. Church, showing the principle distinction between the Luth. Church and other ecclesiastical Communions," we request our ministers at once to bring the matter before their respective congregations and secure subscriptions to said work, which your committee presumes will cost fifteen cents per copy, and send the amount to Rev. P. C. Henkel or Rev. J. R. Moser.<sup>19</sup>

The Missouri Synod also heartily approved of the formation of this new Synod as we see from Dr. Walther's report in Der Lutheraner which closes with these significant words:

May it please God to lay His further gracious blessing on this small but blessed beginning of organized care for the scattered children of our Church in the West who speak the English language! May everyone who loves our Zion assist in requesting this from the Father of Mercy, in the name of Jesus! Amen.<sup>20</sup>

The Tennessee Synod, in compliance with the request of Revs. P. Henkel and J. Moser for release from Synod because they had joined the English Lutheran Conference of Missouri, gave them their peaceful release. The Rev. J. M. Smith, President of the Tennessee Synod in 1873, reported in his President's Report to Synod in 1874, under official acts:

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<sup>19</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1872), p. 10.

<sup>20</sup>Eckhardt, op. cit., pp. 13-14.



In the month of December, 1873, I granted letters of honorable dismission to Revds. P. C. Henkel and J. R. Moser, from our Synod to the "Lutheran Conference of Missouri."<sup>21</sup>

### Conover College

Thus there existed the most cordial and friendly relations between the Missouri and Tennessee Synods in the year 1876, which marks the beginning of the school later known as Concordia College, Conover, North Carolina.<sup>22</sup> The two Synods continued to be on the best of terms until the English District of the Missouri Synod assumed control of Concordia College, Conover, in 1892. In quick succession after that, things happened which drove the two Synods far apart.

It seems as though some of the members of the Tennessee Synod were thinking about a synodical institution already as early as 1852, for the following resolution was passed that year:

That Synod will devise some plan for the establishment of a Literary Institution which will not conflict with our present constitution.<sup>23</sup>

However, no immediate action seems to have been taken. If the Tennessee Synod was going to have such a synodical institution, Catawba County, North Carolina, was a natural place for it, for it was centrally located and had the largest concentration of Lutherans in the Synod. Added to

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<sup>21</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1874), p. 5.

<sup>22</sup>Harry R. Voigt, "The History of Concordia College of Conover, North Carolina," unpublished Master of Arts Thesis, Graduate School, Appalachian State Teachers College, Boone, N. C., 1951, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1852), p. 10.



these excellent natural reasons, there was also another factor, and that was a college already located there, founded by the Reformed Church. Many Lutherans attended this college, at which doctrines were taught that were different from the Lutheran teachings. Thus there was some feeling among the Lutherans to start a college of their own.<sup>24</sup>

The beginning of this agitation seems to have been the Smith-May debates of August 7 and 8, 1874. This was a debate between the Lutheran pastor of Conover, J. M. Smith, and the Methodist pastor of Newton, Daniel May, on the question of the real presence in the Lord's Supper. May, of course, took the Methodist stand denying the real presence. When the students of the college told their parents that these same beliefs were taught at the college, that was too much for the Lutherans. They decided that something had to be done.<sup>25</sup>

The Rev. J. M. Smith, unable to attend the meeting of the Tennessee Synod in 1875, wrote a letter to Synod explaining his absence. In this letter,

He also asserts, that the Churches of Catawba Co., have decided to establish a high school of a decidedly Lutheran character.<sup>26</sup>

The following action was recommended by the committee appointed to consider such letters, and was approved by Synod:

Resolved, That it is with great pleasure, that we hear of the proposed establishment of a literary institution of a Lutheran

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<sup>24</sup>Voigt, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>26</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1875), p. 9.



type, by our brethren in Catawba Co., N. C., and we most heartily commend the enterprise to the favor of the Church.<sup>27</sup>

The Rev. P. C. Henkel had wanted to start a school a few years back, but unable to do so, he had accepted a call to serve some Lutherans who had moved to Missouri. The Catawba County Lutherans now wished that they had him back to start their school. They wrote and asked him to come back to start their school, and he accepted, arriving in Conover on April 21, 1877.<sup>28</sup>

Having returned to North Carolina, the Rev. P. C. Henkel attended the meeting of the Tennessee Synod that year and "was unanimously received as a member of Synod."<sup>29</sup> This action on the part of the Tennessee Synod shows that relations between the Missouri and Tennessee Synods were still friendly at this time.

When the Rev. P. C. Henkel arrived in 1877, he found that the school question had almost died out because of bickering factions. When it was decided to start a school, the people were undecided as to whether it should be built at Hickory, Conover, or Newton. The offer of a philanthropist, Colonel Walter W. Lenoir, who wanted to give away some property in Hickory to any protestant church which would erect a college on it, was also discussed at the meetings. Various meetings were held, and finally at a meeting at Newton, it was decided to leave the location up to the place raising the most money. On August 18, 1877,

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>28</sup>Voigt, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>29</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1877), p. 7.



another meeting was held at Conover to make the decision. Hickory had subscribed \$1,200, Newton \$800, and Conover nearly \$2,500. So Conover won and was selected as the site for the college.<sup>30</sup>

Concordia College had been founded and was making fine progress, but it was still not a synodical institution as the founders had intended it should be. The Board of Trustees now had to win the interest and support of the Tennessee Synod. Accordingly, in the President's report to Synod in 1877, the Rev. Socrates Henkel said:

We are informed, that the School, established at Conover, Catawba County, N. C., under Church influence, is in operation. We would commend it to the favorable recognition of Synod.<sup>31</sup>

The committee examining the report brought in the following recommendation, which was accepted:

That we regard no further action on the part of this Synod, in reference to the Concordia High School, at Conover, N. C., as necessary.<sup>32</sup>

This disinterest on the part of the Tennessee Synod continued until 1880, when some action was at least begun. In this meeting of Synod the following resolution was passed:

Whereas, The trustees of Concordia High School, Conover, North Carolina, have made a proposition to Synod to take this Institution under her care and supervision, and

Whereas, It is the desire and wish of this Synod to have an institution of learning in her connection, therefore,

Resolved, That a committee of three, on the part of Synod, be appointed to confer with the trustees of said school, and prepare an agreement which may serve as a basis upon which said school may

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<sup>30</sup>Voigt, op. cit., pp. 6-8.

<sup>31</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports, 1877, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 14.



become the recognized institution of Synod, and that this committee be required to report to the next session of Synod.

Resolved, further, That we hereby recommend Concordia High School to the members of our Church, and to the public generally, as a school of meritorious character.<sup>33</sup>

A committee was then appointed. This committee on the reception of Concordia High School, however, was not ready to report in 1881. This committee finally did make their report in 1883. This is the report that was received, considered, and adopted by the Tennessee Synod in 1883.

We, the committee, appointed by Synod, to confer with the Trustees of Concordia College, and prepare an agreement which may serve as a basis upon which said school may become the recognized institution of Synod, present the following report:

A meeting of the Board of Trustees having been called, the following resolution was adopted:

Whereas, There seems to be a general desire to establish proper relations between Concordia College and the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod, and,

Whereas, It is generally believed that such relations would inure to the interest of this school, as well as to the good of the Synod or Church, at a meeting held in said institution, on Oct. 15th, by the Board of Trustees, the Faculty, and others immediately interested, the following action was taken:

Resolved, That, with a view of establishing proper relations between Concordia College, situated at Conover, N. C., and the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod, we, in meeting assembled, agree,

1. that, whenever a vacancy, or vacancies, occur, either by death, resignation, or removal, in the Board of Trustees or in the Faculty, the said Synod shall have the right as well as the privilege to recommend a suitable person, or persons, to fill such vacancy or vacancies;
2. that the Synod shall have the right to appoint a Board of Visitors, whose duty it shall be annually to visit said school, and make such report of the condition of the school to each session of the Synod, as may be deemed most advantageous;

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<sup>33</sup>Henkel, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-12. The Minutes of 1880 were unavailable to the author.



3. that it shall be the duty of the President of the Faculty to make a report annually to Synod, relative to moral and literary condition of the school, which report shall also be signed by the secretary of the faculty;
4. that the President of the Board of Trustees shall also make an annual report to Synod, in regard to the financial condition of the school, which report shall likewise be signed by the secretary of the Board of Trustees;
5. that this school shall be continued and conducted as a church institution, under such rules and regulations, as may be instituted by the Board of Trustees, in accordance with the charter, and the Confessions of the Church as set forth in the Christian Book of Concord, each teacher, instructor, or professor, taking an obligation not to teach anything in said school that is contrary to said Confessions.

These stipulations or propositions shall be valid and in force, provided the said Synod shall acquiesce, and is disposed to lend said institution its fostering care and encouragement, as well as its influence and moral force; provided, that if the Synod shall fail, after notice, to recommend, in due time, a suitable person or persons to fill such vacancy or vacancies, the proper authorities of said institution, shall proceed to fill such vacancy or vacancies.

We, your committee, offer the following resolution:

Resolved, That we, as a Synod, accept the propositions made to us by the Board of Trustees of Concordia College, and that in consideration of the rights and privileges therein granted, we will lend to said institution our fostering care, influence, and moral support.<sup>34</sup>

At the meeting of the Tennessee Synod in 1884 the reports from the President of the Board of Trustees and the President of the Faculty were given. Certain men were then elected as Trustees of Conover College.

The President of the Tennessee Synod, in his official report in 1885, made this recommendation:

I would recommend, that Synod elect a Theological Professor, to labor conjointly with the Faculty of Concordia College, that our young men, having the ministry in view, may, with their literary

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<sup>34</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1883), pp. 17-18.



course, also receive a theological training at home. Synod will provide a way by a special assessment upon all the churches for the support of said professor.<sup>35</sup>

The committee which examined this report, made this recommendation, which was adopted:

Recognizing the necessity of electing and sustaining a theological professor at Concordia College for the present, we recommend, that

(a) Our congregations be requested to contribute annually not less than 12 cents per capita, which shall constitute a fund out of which the said professor shall be supported; (b) The salary of the professor shall be \$800 per annum; (c) In the event that the fund will warrant it, the Board of Trustees of Concordia College shall employ such professor as early as Jan. 1st, 1886, or at the beginning of the next scholastic year, subject to the subsequent ratification of their action by Synod. (d) Said professor shall be chosen from among the members of the Tennessee Synod, if possible; shall have been a pastor not less than ten years, and shall faithfully discharge his duties in strict conformity with the confessional basis of our Synod. (e) Our pastors shall lay this matter before their people at once, and report to the President of Concordia College without delay.<sup>36</sup>

In this same session of Synod the committee on Church institutions reported:

We have also in our hands the resignation of Rev. P. C. Henkel, D.D., as President of Concordia College. We recommend that this Synod accept the same, and recommend as his successor Rev. Prof. J. C. Moser.<sup>37</sup>

This report was accepted.

In 1888, the Rev. J. C. Moser resigned as President of the College and Dr. R. A. Yoder was elected as the next President.

In 1889, a committee was appointed "to secure \$10,000 for the

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<sup>35</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1885), p. 5.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 16.



purpose of erecting new college buildings for Concordia College, Conover, North Carolina."<sup>38</sup>

In 1890, the Synod encouraged this committee to continue their task of raising the money necessary for a new building.

And so, the prospects for Concordia College, Conover, looked very bright indeed. The Tennessee Synod was giving its encouragement and support, and everything was working out smoothly. The committee appointed to raise funds for new and better buildings had been active for more than a year, and had raised the amount of \$5,500. Then came the trouble. Already back around 1877 when the idea of a school was being discussed, the proposition was brought to the attention of these people that a philanthropist, Colonel Walter W. Lenoir, was trying to give away some property in Hickory, North Carolina, ten miles from Conover, to any church who would build a college on it. It was finally decided, however, to locate the college at Conover. This was not a unanimous decision. Conover College tried to get the Tennessee Synod to back it already in 1877, but it wasn't until 1883 that definite action was taken. Now in 1890, this proposition for a school at Hickory was again brought up. The Tennessee Synod met at Mt. Calvary, Page County, Virginia, in October of 1890.

During that meeting, Rev. Prof. A. L. Crouse, presented to several of the pastors in a private meeting certain papers and a proposition from Mr. J. G. Hall, of Hickory, trustee of the school property of Col. Lenoir. This was the same site which had been offered fifteen years before, with the additional gift of 27 lots, which had not been offered before. The matter of considering the proposition of Mr. Hall presented by Rev. A. L. Crouse, was

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<sup>38</sup>Tennessee Synod Reports (New Market, Va.: S. Henkel's Printery, 1889), pp. 28, 33.



opposed by some of the pastors who were of the opinion that the school matter had better rest, others favored the consideration of the proposition. Rev. Crouse also presented the matter to some members of the Board of Trustees, November 17th, 1890, and the Board refused to entertain the proposition of Mr. Hall. And at a meeting of the North Carolina Conference, of the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod at Friendship church, Alexander County, North Carolina, November 27-30, 1890, it was again presented, and Conference asked the President of Synod to call an extra session of the Tennessee Synod, to meet at St. James' church, Catawba County, North Carolina, December 26, 27, 1890, for the purpose of considering Mr. J. G. Hall's proposition.<sup>39</sup>

At this meeting in St. James' church, the antagonism became bitter and the Tennessee Synod was divided into two factions, the Hickory faction and the Conover faction. The Hickory group submitted a proposal that Mr. Hall's proposition should be accepted and that the school at Conover should be made into an orphanage to be known as the "P. C. Henkel Orphan Home and Academy." To the Conover faction this was like a slap in the face. A substitute motion to keep the school at Conover was presented and passed by two votes. The Hickory group was not satisfied, and the matter did not end there. During 1891 another attempt was made to settle this question in a meeting of the Tennessee Synod held at Newton, North Carolina. This meeting was just like the one preceding it, bitter controversy, and nothing definite decided. Then, in the spring of 1891, two or three weeks before the close of school, the faculty of Concordia College, Conover, closed the school, and announced that they were going to Hickory to establish a school there. This action left the Board of Trustees stranded. At the next meeting of the Tennessee Synod the Synod ordered their beneficiary

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<sup>39</sup>R. A. Yoder, The Situation in North Carolina (Newton, N. C.: Enterprise Job Office, Print., 1894), p. 8.



students to go to Hickory instead of Conover.

We have already noted the friendly relations between the Missouri and the Tennessee Synods and their close doctrinal and confessional stand, also how they encouraged the organizing of the English Lutheran Conference in 1872. It was quite natural, therefore, that the Board of Trustees, looking for help to run their college, should approach the English Missouri Synod as it was known after 1889. In the autumn of 1891 the Board of Trustees wrote to the Rev. F. Kuegele, President of the English Missouri Synod, and asked that body to send some men to take charge of the school. Before they did this, however, the Revs. F. Kuegele and Wm. Dallmann went to investigate the situation. They also went to Hickory and asked the professors at Highland College if they could show any valid reasons why the Missouri Synod should not supply teachers for Concordia College. The professors at Hickory did not present any valid reasons, neither did they warn the Missouri Synod away from Conover.<sup>40</sup> It was only after this careful investigation of the situation that the English Missouri Synod entered into an agreement with the Board of Trustees of Concordia College, Conover. In the summer of 1892, the Rev. W. H. T. Dau came to the college to be its President, and the Rev. G. A. Romoser came as a second Missouri member of the faculty.

When, according to custom and regulation in regard to Concordia College, the president, Prof. W. H. T. Dau, made his regular report to the Tennessee Synod in its session in October, 1892, the Committee on Literary Institutions made the following report:

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<sup>40</sup>W. H. T. Dau, and Others, Review of Prof. R. A. Yoder's "Situation in North Carolina" (n.p., n.d.), p. 11.



We have had placed in our hands the report of the president of the Board of Trustees of Concordia College and the report of the president of the Faculty.

Upon examination of the report of the president of the Board of Trustees we find that no action of the trustees in filling vacancies in the Board and Faculty (as appears from the report of the president of the Faculty) in the interim of the sessions of Synod has been submitted to this Synod for ratification or endorsement; therefore we recommend that Synod can now take no action in regard to the further fostering care of this institution.<sup>41</sup>

This report was adopted by the Tennessee Synod, and thereby it withdrew its fostering care of the institution. But when the Synod did that, it was only putting into formal words what it had begun to do in its former sessions when its "beneficiaries were ordered to pursue their studies at Highland College, Hickory, N. C."<sup>42</sup>

#### Strained Relations

Thus the Tennessee Synod gave up its right to Concordia College, Conover, and withdrew its fostering care from the institution. The English Missouri Synod then took over the control of the college, which was their right and privilege, having been invited to do so by the Board of Trustees of that college. This, however, was the cause of much bitterness between the Missouri and Tennessee Synods where before there had been the friendliest of relations. This bitterness was typified by what Prof. R. A. Yoder had to say in his pamphlet entitled "The Situation in North Carolina."

It is generally known among our Lutheran people of the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod, that there are pastors of the Missouri

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<sup>41</sup>C. O. Smith, History of the Coming of the Missouri Synod into North Carolina (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), p. 8. Smith quoted from the Minutes of 1892, p. 23, which were unavailable to this author.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 8. Smith quoted from the Minutes of 1891, p. 27, which were unavailable to this author.



Synod serving congregations in connection with the Tennessee Synod; and that the school at Conover has by some means passed into the hands of the English Synod of Missouri. It may not be so clear to some of our Tennessee Synod people, why these Missourians are here, or how they came into Tennessee congregations, or by what means they secured control of Concordia College. And furthermore, our people do not know who they are, or what differences of doctrine and practice exist between the English Synod of Missouri and the Evangelical Lutheran Tennessee Synod. To set some of these matters in their true light is the object of this writing. It seems clear to the writer that this writing is necessary, because some of the Tennessee congregations are disturbed and divided by these Missouri pastors--As St. John's in Catawba County and St. Martin's in Iredell County. If these pastors held the same views that the Tennessee Synod holds and would connect themselves with the Synod to which the congregations belong, there would be no occasion for division, and the disturbance would disappear. It would be well for our people prayerfully to consider from what quarter they call their pastors, and whether those they call teach the pure doctrine of the Bible and the Confessions, which the old Tennessee Synod has always held and defended.<sup>43</sup>

What Prof. R. A. Yoder was referring to here was to certain professors at Concordia College, members of the English Missouri Synod, who had received calls from congregations near the school, and were serving these congregations. Prof. R. A. Yoder then goes on to give his version of the school question and how Missourians got into Tennessee Synod congregations and the false doctrinal views these Missourian were supposed to hold. This prejudiced presentation was replied to by another pamphlet prepared by a committee of W. Dau, G. Romoser, J. Smith, L. Buchheimer, C. Coon, and C. Bernheim, entitled Review of Prof. R. A. Yoder's "Situation in North Carolina," which endeavored to set forth the correct views in these matters.

Thus the once friendly relations which existed between the Tennessee and Missouri Synods was strained to the breaking point. It

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<sup>43</sup>Yoder, op. cit., p. 5.



was not too long after this that the Tennessee and the North Carolina Synods merged forming the United Evangelical Lutheran Synod of North Carolina. This merger was completed on March 2, 1921, and thus came to an end the independent existence of the Tennessee Synod.

It is deemed proper and useful, that all the business and work which may come before this Conference or Synod, shall be transacted in the German language, and all the written proceedings in regard to its transactions, which pertain to the general interest, shall be published in the German language.

All writings relative to the faith, and all doctrinal concerning Christian conduct, as well as all books publicly used in the Church in the service of worship of God, shall be arranged and kept, as nearly as it is possible to do, in accordance with the decisions of the Holy Spirit, as in the Augsburg Confession, and especially shall the young, and others who need it, be instructed in Luther's Small Catechism, according to the wishes of our Church, etc. etc. This said Catechism shall always be the chief catechism in our churches, but the Catechism styled the German Catechism, which was published in the German and English language, in New Market, Shenandoah County, Virginia, may also be used in connection with Luther's Catechism.

No one can be a teacher or minister an officer in the Church, who has not been received into the congregation, according to the order of the Church, and does not lead a Christian life. Whoever desires to be a teacher, shall also take a solemn obligation, that he will preach according to the word of God and the Augsburg Confession and the doctrines of our Church. Nor can any teacher in our Conference be allowed to stand in connection with any organization in connection with the so-called Central or General Synod, for reasons which shall hereafter be indicated.

The reason why we desire an entirely German Conference, is because we have learned from experience, that a conference, in which both languages, the German and the English, are used, the one or the other side will be dissatisfied. If the German is used, the English speaking brethren, and of an nothing in regard to the matter; and if the English is employed, many of the Germans will not understand what is said, and hence not know how to act relative to the same, or to any matters. Besides, at the present time, we find very few, namely English preachers who accept the doctrine of our Church, or desire to preach same.



## APPENDIX

### BASIS AND REGULATIONS

1. It is deemed proper and useful, that all the business and work, which may come before this Conference or Synod, shall be transacted in the German language; and all the written proceedings in regard to its transactions, which pertain to the general interest, shall be published in the German language.<sup>1</sup>
2. All teachings relative to the faith, and all doctrines concerning Christian conduct, as well as all books publicly used in the Church in the service or worship of God, shall be arranged and kept, as nearly as it is possible to do, in accordance with the doctrines of the holy Scriptures and the Augsburg Confession. And especially shall the young, and others who need it, be instructed in Luther's Small Catechism, according to the custom of our Church, hitherto. This said Catechism shall always be the chief catechism in our churches. But the Catechism styled the Christian Catechism, which was published in the German and English languages, in New Market, Shenandoah County, Virginia, may also be used in connection, to explain Luther's Catechism.
3. No one can be a teacher or otherwise an officer in the Church, who has not been received into the congregation, according to the order of the Church, and does not lead a Christian life. Whoever desires to be a teacher, shall also take a solemn obligation, that he will teach according to the Word of God and the Augsburg Confession and the doctrines of our Church. Nor can any teacher in our Conference be allowed to stand in connection with any organization in connection with the so-called Central or General Synod, for reasons which shall hereafter be indicated.

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<sup>1</sup>The reason why we desire an entirely German Conference, is because we have learned from experience, that a conference, in which both languages, the German and the English, are used, the one or the other side will be dissatisfied. If the German is used, the English will understand little, and often nothing in regard to the matter; and if the English is employed, many of the Germans will not understand more than half of what is said, and hence not know how to act relative to the most weighty matters. Besides, at the present time, we find very few entirely English preachers who accept the doctrines of our Church, or desire to preach them.



4. None shall be members of our churches, except such as have been baptized according to the command of Christ, and confirmed, by the imposition of hands, according to the order of the Christian Church, and participate in the celebration of the Holy Supper.<sup>2</sup>
5. As to the ranks and grades in the office of teaching, or the ministry, we acknowledge not more than two as necessary for the preservation and perpetuation of the Church; namely, Pastor and Deacon. Pastor is an evangelical teacher, who executes that office fully in all its parts, or performs all the ministerial acts. Such person must be ordained with prayer and the imposition of hands, by one or more pastors, to such office. Besides, he must then also solemnly affirm, that he will faithfully, according to the Word of God and the doctrines of our Church, perform the duties of that office.
6. A Deacon is also indeed a servant in the Word of God; but he is not fully invested with the ministerial office like the Pastor is. But he is to give instructions in the catechism, read sermons, attend to funerals, admonish, and, if desired, in the absence of the Pastor, to baptize children. He must be an orderly member of the Church, and have the evidence of a Christian conduct. He must, at the desire of the church council, be examined as to his fitness for office by the Synod, and if he is found qualified, he must be consecrated and ordained to that office with prayer and the imposition of hands, by one or more pastors, either at Conference or in one of the congregations in which he labors. Besides, he shall also make a solemn affirmation, in the presence of the whole congregation, that he will faithfully serve in that office according to the instructions given him. But if such Deacon prove so industrious or assiduous in his office as to reach the required attainments and qualifications to bear the office of Pastor, and secures a regular call from one or more vacant congregations, he can be consecrated and ordained to the office of Pastor in the same manner as already indicated.

In regard to the offices in the congregations, they shall be as they were heretofore customary in our Church: Elders, Deacons, etc.

7. At each Conference, pastors shall be named or elected who shall conduct the ordinations, and sign with their own hands all ordination certificates and affix their seals, and see that good order is maintained. They shall also sign all other proceedings of the Conference or Synod; and if for any reason it is desired, all the

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<sup>2</sup>If, however, any one, who has been baptized according to the command of Christ, and confirmed to some Christian Church, and can make this appear, desires to commune with us, or to be received into connection with our Church, he shall be permitted to do so, without being re-baptized or re-confirmed.



other pastors and the lay-delegates may also sign them. The preachers and lay-delegates may find it good or useful to appoint or name one of the pastors as chairman, who shall read all that is necessary, make propositions, etc. In the same manner may one be appointed as secretary. But it is not to be understood that these must serve in these positions throughout all the sessions. Changes can be made, and others can serve, as circumstances require.

8. It was resolved, that annually, on the third Sunday of the month, October, a meeting of Conference shall be held, in the State of Tennessee, or in the western part of Virginia, at such place as the majority of the preachers and lay-delegates indicate. But if it should be deemed necessary that the said Conference should meet in an adjoining State, it may be held in such State. But the Conference or Synod shall always retain the name Tennessee Conference or Synod; although it may have ministers and lay-delegates also in other States.
9. The Conference shall be composed of preachers and lay-delegates elected by their congregations, as has been the order heretofore, in similar cases; but there shall not be more votes cast by the lay-delegates, than the number of preachers present is. The surplus delegates may be present, and consult and advise with the others.
10. The necessity for each congregation to have a treasury for itself, in which to deposit all the money that each member or other person may freely give, will manifest itself to all. Such moneys shall be used to defray the cost of printing the minutes of the Conference, to aid traveling ministers, and for other purposes which will best enhance the interests of the churches or congregations. The way and manner, in which these treasuries are to be kept, and the disbursements, are to be made, are to be left to the good judgment of the church councils and the ministers acquiescing. The moneys may be gathered at every meeting, each month, or every three months. At every meeting of Conference, the council of each church shall make a report of the amounts thus collected. A treasury for the Conference, is, at this time, deemed unnecessary.
11. It will be found useful for every minister to keep a record of the number he baptizes, the number of confirmations, and of communicants and funerals, as well as of the German schools in his congregations, so that they may appear in the proceedings of the Conference each year.
12. We also deem it of the highest importance to use all possible diligence to make our children acquainted with all our doctrines in faith, in the German language; so that we may the more easily give them instruction therein; and so that the parents especially may be careful to teach their children in regard to these things.
13. None of the teachers of our Conference can take a seat and vote in the present Synod of the State of North Carolina, because we



cannot regard it as a true Lutheran Synod.

14. The propriety of preserving and maintaining these principles and regulations of Conference, as here set forth, and of acting according to them, must be apparent to all.--But if, at any meeting in the future, anything may be necessary to be added, it may be done, by a majority of the votes, but in such a manner as not to come in conflict with the design and intention of the foregoing principles.

CONSTITUTION  
of the  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN TENNESSEE SYNOD

Which was adopted and ratified by the Session held in St. Paul's Church, Lincoln County, N. C., in the month of September, 1828

INTRODUCTION

The rules and principles of church-government are contained in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, no body of Christians have authority to dispense with or alter, or transact any thing contrary to them. Human traditions, or rules imposed upon the church as necessary to Christian fellowship, which have no foundation in the Scriptures, are condemned by our Savior. Matt. 15:v. 9, 13, 14.

Although, in executing the rules of the church, different times, persons, and local circumstances intervene: as for instance, in one age and country, one language is prevalent; but not in another age, and perhaps not in the same country; or, the church may flourish in one age and particular country, under a certain civil government; but in another age, in a different country and under a different government; nevertheless, Christ being omniscient, and his all-wise Spirit having inspired his apostles, they have provided the church with salutary rules, which are applicable to all persons in all places, times, and circumstances.

Nothing relative to doctrines and church-discipline ought to be transacted according to mere will of the majority or minority; but in strict conformity to the Scriptures.

Local and temporary regulations; such as the time and place of the meeting of the Synod, the ratio of representatives from congregations, etc., may be varied for the sake of convenience; hence are subject to be altered, amended, or abolished by the majority; yet they ought not to attempt to make their decisions in such cases absolutely obligatory upon the whole community; because such regulations are only subservient to the execution of the rules which are founded upon the Scriptures.

It was deemed expedient to add explanatory remarks on every article of this constitution, so that the true design and spirit thereof may



not be liable to any misconstruction.

#### ARTICLE I

The Holy Scriptures, or the inspired writings of the Old and New Testaments shall be the only rule of doctrine and church-discipline. The correctness or incorrectness of any translation is to be judged according to the original tongues, in which the Scriptures were first written.

#### ARTICLE II

The Augustan confession of faith, comprised in twenty-eight articles, as it is extant in the book, entitled "The Christian Concordia," is acknowledged and received by this body, because it is a true declaration of the principal doctrines of faith and of church-discipline. Neither does it contain any thing contrary to the Scriptures. No minister shall therefore be allowed to teach any thing, nor shall this body transact any thing that may be repugnant to any article of this confession.

Luther's smaller catechism is also acknowledged and received, because it contains a compendium of scriptural doctrines, and is of great utility in the catechising of youth.

#### ARTICLE III

Ministers and lay-delegates from congregations, shall be allowed to compose this body, and every lay-delegate shall have a seat and vote, as well as every minister.

It shall not be allowed, either for the Ministers to transact any business exclusively of the lay-delegates, or for the lay-delegates exclusively of the ministers: provided there shall be both ministers and lay-delegates present.

No business shall be transacted secretly, or under closed doors: except an unhappy period should arrive in which the church would be liable to a persecution by civil authority.

#### ARTICLE IV

The business of this body, shall be to impart their useful advice, to employ the proper means for the purpose of promulgating the gospel of Jesus Christ, to detect and expose erroneous doctrines, and false teachers; and upon application, to examine candidates for the ministry. When upon examination, any candidate shall be deemed qualified for the ministry, this body shall nominate one or more pastors, who shall consecrate such candidate to the office of the ministry by the laying on of hands, and with prayer.



But this Synod shall have no power to receive appeals from the decisions of, nor to make rules, nor regulations for congregations.

#### ARTICLE V

This Synod shall never be incorporated by civil government, nor have any incorporated Theological Seminary under their care. Neither shall they have any particular treasury for the purpose of supporting missionaries and Theological Seminaries.

#### ARTICLE VI

The grades of the ministry are two: Pastor and Deacon, or as St. Paul calls them, Bishop and Deacon. They must possess the qualifications, which are described by St. Paul, I Tim. 3:1-14; Tit. 1:4-9. The duty of a pastor is to perform every ministerial act. But the duty of a deacon is, to take care of the alms of the church, given for the support of the poor, and other benevolent purposes; to catechize, to preach, and to baptize.

Both pastors and deacons must be called to their offices by one or more congregations.

#### LOCAL AND TEMPORARY REGULATIONS

##### REGULATION I

Every congregation shall be entitled to send one lay-delegate to this body, who shall have a vote in all the transactions.

##### REGULATION II

This Synod shall meet from time to time, upon their own adjournments.

##### REGULATION III

This body shall at every session appoint a President, for whatever length of time they may deem expedient. His duty shall be to provide for, that all propositions for discussion be brought in a regular manner before the body, to keep good order, and preserve decorum among all the members. But it shall not be considered as necessary to publish in the reports of the transactions, who had been appointed President.

This Synod also shall appoint a Secretary, who shall serve until the succeeding session. His duty shall be to keep a record of the transactions, and to answer such letters as may be directed to this body.



## REGULATION IV

Every discussion on a proposition or subject, shall first take place in the German language; whereupon the same shall be resumed in the English,--provided there shall be both German and English members present; and after the discussions have been thus regularly ended, the decision shall be made.

(Minutes 1853, pp. 19-32.)

In 1866, the Tennessee Synod again revised its constitution. In this revised constitution the confessional basis is even more fully presented in order that the Synod's doctrinal position might be more clearly expressed. The following is a reprint of this revised constitution of 1866 as found in the Minutes of the Tennessee Synod of 1866.

CONSTITUTION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN TENNESSEE SYNOD  
(As Revised in 1866)

## ARTICLE I

The name of this Synod shall be THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN TENNESSEE SYNOD.

## ARTICLE II

The Holy Scriptures, the inspired writings of the Old and New Testaments, shall be the only rule and standard of doctrine and church discipline.

As a true and faithful exhibition of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures, in regard to matters of faith and practice, this Synod receives the three Ancient Symbols: the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian creeds; and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession of Faith. It receives also the other Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, viz.: The Apology, the Smalcald Articles, the Smaller and Larger Catechisms of Luther, and the Formula of Concord--as true Scriptural developments of the doctrines taught in the Augsburg Confession.

## ARTICLE III

This Synod shall be composed of regularly ordained ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and lay-delegates. The lay-delegates shall be appointed by the congregations in connection with this Synod to represent them in the Synodical Meetings.



Each one of these congregations shall have the right to appoint one such delegate who shall have equal rights and privileges with the ministers in transacting the business of Synod.

Every minister desiring to be received into connection with this Synod, shall, on his reception, be required to subscribe this Constitution.

No minister in connection with this Synod, shall be allowed to teach any thing, nor shall Synod transact any business contrary to the confessional basis as set forth in Article II.

No business shall be transacted secretly or under closed doors, unless an unhappy period should arrive, in which the Church would be liable to persecution, except such as relates to the moral character of a minister, and to the examination of candidates for the ministerial office. Cases of this kind, if deemed necessary and expedient, may be attended to in a private session of Synod.

#### ARTICLE IV

The business of this Synod shall be to employ the proper means for the promulgation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to impart its advice in matters of Christian faith and life, to detect and expose erroneous doctrines and false teachers, and to investigate charges of false doctrines, wrong practice, and immoralities of life, preferred against any of its ministers, and finding them guilty, to expel and depose from the Synod and holy office of the ministry, such as refuse after due admonition to repent of their wrong.

It shall be the duty of Synod, as soon as the wants of the church shall demand, and its resources will justify, to engage in the work of Missions, both domestic and foreign; and also in the work of Beneficiary Education, for the purpose of preparing indigent young men of talents and piety for the work of the ministry in connection with the Lutheran Church, according to such regulations as it may adopt, and consider best calculated to promote these great objects.

Upon application to examine candidates for the ministry, this Synod shall make the necessary provisions to attend to such application, and after due approval by a majority of two-thirds of the members voting, appointing one or more Pastors to consecrate such candidate to the office of the ministry at some suitable time and place by the laying on of hands and prayer.

Synod shall require a probationary period of not less than one year, during which time all candidates for the ministerial office shall be taken on trial.

Upon application, this Synod may receive congregations who may desire to be connected with it, provided they subscribe this Constitution.



## ARTICLE V

The officers of this Synod shall be a President, Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, and Treasurer. A majority of all votes cast will be required to constitute an election to any office. The duties of these officers shall be such as usually devolves upon the same in other public bodies, or as may be made obligatory upon them from time to time, by Synod. They shall be elected by ballot, at the regular session, annually, and hold their offices until their successors are elected.

## ARTICLE VI

Synod shall meet from time to time upon its own adjournments. Extra sessions may be called by the President, when requested for good and sufficient reasons, to do so, by two ministers and two laymen in its connection.

## ARTICLE VII

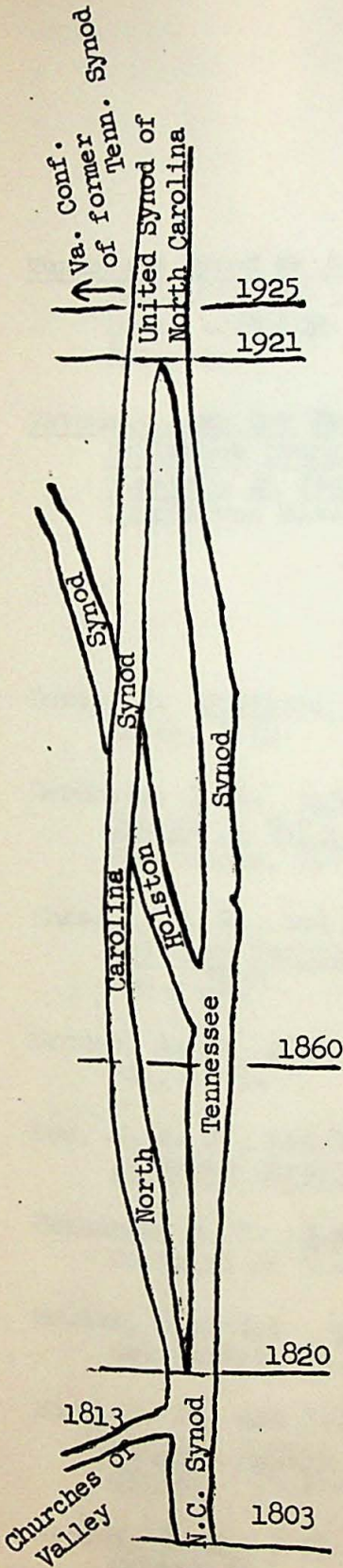
Synod may at any regular meeting, by a concurrence of two-thirds of all the members present, make such regulations and by-laws as may be deemed necessary, not inconsistent with this Constitution.

## ARTICLE VIII

If anything contained in these articles should hereafter be deemed contrary to the Confessional Basis of this Synod, oppressive, or inexpedient, it may be altered or amended. But nothing contained in this Constitution shall be altered or amended unless a proposition for alteration or amendment shall have been laid before one of the sessions of Synod, in writing, and agreed to by two-thirds of all the members voting. The proposition thus agreed to, shall then be laid, in due form, by the Synod in its Minutes before the congregations in its connection, for ratification or rejection by them; and the ministers or vestries of these congregations shall, at some suitable time, before the next succeeding session of Synod, take the vote of these congregations, on the Constitution as amended, allowing the members to vote for its ratification or rejection and send a statement of the vote to that session of Synod. If, then, it shall be ascertained by Synod that a majority of these congregations have voted in favor of ratification, the amendment shall become and be declared by Synod on the face of its Minutes a valid part of said Constitution, and the parts thereof repugnant to such alteration, void.

(Henkel, pp. 33-36. Minutes of 1866 unavailable.)





- 1803 Organization of the N. C. Synod.
- 1813 Five congregations in the Shenendcah Valley enter the N. C. Synod. These formed the nucleus of the Va. Conf. of the Tenn. Synod.
- 1820 Organization of the Tenn. Synod, occasioned by a rupture in the N. C. Synod. The Tenn. Synod had churches in Va., N. C., S. C., and Tenn.
- 1860 Organization of the Holston Synod out of the churches in the state of Tenn., belonging to the Tenn. Synod.
- 1921 Merger of the N. C. and Tenn. Synods, forming the United Synod of N. C.
- 1925 The Virginia Conf. of the U. Synod of N. C., formerly the Va. Conf. of the Tenn. Synod, united with the Luth. Synod of Va.



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