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### The Attitude Toward the Confessions Among the Lutherans in the United States from 1800 to 1867

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THE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CONFESSIONS AMONG  
THE LUTHERANS IN THE UNITED STATES  
FROM 1800 TO 1867

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A Thesis Presented to  
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary  
Department of Historical Theology

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Divinity

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by  
Paul Frederick Maassel

May 1947

Approved by: W. G. P. P. P.

Richard A. Jesse

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## OUTLINE

### THE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CONFESSIONS AMONG THE LUTHERANS IN THE UNITED STATES FROM 1800 TO 1867.

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    2. New York Ministerium (1786)
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## FOREWORD

In the past few years, there have been many discussions concerning Lutheran union. Very often the backgrounds play an important part in understanding some of the problems in connection with Lutheran union. In this paper no attempt is made to connect the past with the present, as space is limited. An attempt is made to show some of the causes for the attitude the Confessions of the Lutheran Church which prevailed between 1800 and 1867.

## **I. THE ORGANIZATIONS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19th CENTURY.**

### **Early Beginnings in Pennsylvania.**

For a long time Germany lacked a unified government. Germany was also impoverished by the Thirty Years' War. These two factors hindered Germany in making any plans toward colonization. Only individuals and small groups came to America. However, these were not Lutherans, but Quakers, Mennonites and mystics who sought refuge from the persecutions of the German State Church in the colony of William Penn.

The organization of the Frankfort Land Company was a result of one of Penn's visits to Germany. This corporation sold large tracts of land in the vicinity of the present Germantown. In 1683 Franz Daniel Pastorius with twenty German families founded "German Township." (Germantown.)<sup>1</sup>

In 1694 a group of forty men, German Pietists or mystics, came to this settlement. Among this group were three of particular significance: Henry Bernhard Koester, Daniel Falckner,<sup>2</sup> and later Justus Falckner.

The first German Lutheran service in Germantown was

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1. J. L. Neve, History of the Lutheran Church in America, p. 28.

2. Ibid., p.28.



conducted in 1694. Koester had trouble with the Quakers. He brought with him to America a copy of the Augsburg Confession, and he cautioned the people against the heresies of the Quakers. Koester was a preacher of high repute. He began English services in Philadelphia, which soon led to the founding of Christ Church, the first Episcopal church in Pennsylvania. Although he was an eccentric character, he maintained a strong position<sup>3</sup> against the rationalizing influences of Quakerism.

The work of the Falckners is of more importance. Daniel was ordained a minister either before he came to America in 1694 or during a later visit to Germany (1698-1700). By his vivid descriptions of Pennsylvania he encouraged other Germans to cross the Atlantic. It is generally believed that the largest part of the settlers in Falckner's Swamp immigrated with Daniel in 1700. These were organized into a congregation by him and received his pastoral services until 1708.<sup>4</sup> From Pennsylvania Daniel went to New Jersey, where he served several congregations on the Raritan River. In the period before the forming of the synod this congregation had the services of the following men: Daniel Falckner, Anthony Jacob Henkel, J. G. Schulze, John Caspar Stoecker, Jr., Gabriel Falk, and Muehlenberg.

Justus Falckner immigrated with his brother, Daniel

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3. Ibid., p. 29.

4. Ibid., p. 46.



in 1700. Justus had finished his theological training, but he came to America having been granted power of attorney by the Frankfort Land Company. Pastor Rudman asked him to become pastor of the Dutch congregation in New York, which position he accepted. In 1703 he was ordained in the Gloria Dei Church of Wicaco by the Swedish pastors.<sup>5</sup>

The congregation at Tulpehocken (near Reading) was founded by immigrants from the Rhenish Palatinate, who moved out of the Spoharie Valley in New York. These settlers had been defrauded of their land in New York and had moved to Pennsylvania at the invitation of Governor Keith of Pennsylvania. The date of the organization of the congregation at Tulpehocken practically coincides with the date of the settlement (1723.) Pastor Henkel likely visited the congregation and for a time S. Coever, Jr.,<sup>6</sup> was pastor here.

It was at this time, the middle of the eighteenth century, that German immigration reached a peak. This was largely caused by men called "Newlanders" who had been to America and made it a business of inducing others to go. The emigrants had to sign contracts printed in English which they couldn't read, and were practically made slaves. By long years of toil they repaid the costs of their passage across the ocean. The people who

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5. Ibid., p.30. E. J. Wolf, The Lutherans in America, pp. 172-173.

6. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p.47.



were thus hired out were known as "Redemptioners." News of the bad experience of the settlers on the Schoharie Valley, New York reached Germany which resulted in a divergence of the immigrant stream from New York to Pennsylvania.<sup>7</sup>

Germantown received its share of the immigrants and had a Lutheran congregation at an early date probably organized by the younger Stoever. The largest and strongest congregations of these early days were organized by the same man at Lancaster.<sup>8</sup>

Anthony Jacob Henkel came in 1717, the forerunner of a long line of Henkels who have been very influential in most of the synods. He made Falckner's Swamp his residence and from there served the congregations in the surrounding territory. He also traveled widely for mission purposes. He died in 1728.

John Caspar Stoever, Sr., who is supposed to have organized St. Michael's congregation in Philadelphia, came to America in 1732. He was ordained by Schulze in

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7. "History thus records a rapid increase of the German element in Pennsylvania. About the middle of the century the whole population of the province is set down between 175,000 and 220,000, and of this number fully one-half were Germans. Among these the Lutheran element outnumbered the Reformed two to one. It may be safely asserted that the Lutheran population of Pennsylvania alone, in the year 1750, aggregated the enormous figure of 60,000." E. J. Wolf, op. cit., p.202.  
8. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p.48.



1733. In 1734 the congregation sent him with two laymen on a fund raising trip to Germany. He succeeded in raising a sizeable amount and also induced George Samuel Klug, student of theology, to come to America.<sup>9</sup> On his return in 1738, he died and was buried at sea.

Of greater interest is his son, John Caspar Stoever, Jr., who arrived in 1728. Although he was not ordained, he performed many ministerial acts because of the scarcity of ordained ministers. He was ordained in 1730 by Schulze, whose congregation he was to serve during the latter's trip to Germany. Stoever traveled extensively throughout Pennsylvania, laboring for fifty-one years. He kept an accurate account of his activities which makes it easier for a historian to follow his activities. Hewas not on good terms with Muehlenberg and his followers and it was not until 1763 that he joined the synod which they<sup>10</sup> organized. He died suddenly in 1779.

There is another person who enters in this period, although the period of his activity is short. He is John Christian Schulze. He came to this country in 1732. He served three congregations: Philadelphia, New Hanover, and New Providence. Schulze was responsible in organizing these three churches into the "United Congretations." However frontier life did not appeal to him and in 1733 he returned to Germany. He took with him a call extended by the

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9. Ibid., p. 48.

10. Ibid., p. 49.



congregation. This call was placed in the hands of the  
<sup>11</sup>  
 officials of the University of Halle.

### Henry Melchior Muehlenberg.

The scattered Lutheran congregations which existed about the middle of the eighteenth century were in most cases loosely organized. They depended on the authorities in Europe to supply them with pastors and teachers. However, immigrants came to America so rapidly that the demand far exceeded the supply. Quite often the congregations were without a pastor for a long period of time. Because of William Penn's policy of toleration to all religions, many sects settled in Pennsylvania, as e.g., Quakers, Moravians. As a result the sects lead away many Lutherans, individuals and congregations. The Gloria Dei Church in Philadelphia is an example.

A leader was needed in America who would organize these Lutheran congregations and help them to maintain their Lutheran character. The Lord provided such a leader in the person of Henry Melchior Muehlenberg. Because of his extensive labors, he is called the Patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America.

Henry Melchior Muehlenberg was born at Einbeck, Hannover, Sept. 6, 1711. He received his education at the University of Goettingen, graduating in 1738. Having come in contact with the influences of Halle, he wished to

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11. F. Bente, American Lutheranism, Vol. I, p. 58;  
 J. L. Neve, op. cit., p.48.



go to India as a missionary. But for the time being this plan was not feasible. Therefore in August, 1739, he accepted a call to Grosshessendorf. In September, 1741, he paid a visit to Prof. G. A. Francke at Halle, who asked him whether he would accept the call extended by the three congregations of Pennsylvania: Philadelphia, New Providence, and New Hanover. Muehl<sup>en</sup>berg, considering this<sup>12</sup> a divine call, accepted.

When John Christian Schulze returned to Germany in 1733, he carried the call of the "United Congregations" to G. A. Franke at the University of Halle. However, Franke laid aside the call for eight years. During this time the Moravian Zinzendorf came to America and tried to establish a united church in Philadelphia. Zinzendorf persuaded the "United Congregations" to accept his services. When the officials at Halle heard of this movement, they quickly<sup>13</sup> sought a man for the place. Muehlenberg was the choice.

Muehlenberg traveled first to London where he visited the court preacher, Pastor Ziegenhagen. His purpose was to become more familiar with the English language. He remained in London about three months. He arrived in Charleston, Sept. 23, 1742. Before preceding north to Pennsylvania, he visited the Salzburger colony, Ebenezer. He came<sup>267</sup> announced to Philadelphia and found the three churches confused and distracted. In Philadelphia the majority followed

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12. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p.55; F. Bente, op. cit., pp. 59-60; W. G. Polack, The Building of a Great Church, p. 15.  
 13. A. R. Wentz, The Lutheran Church in American History, pp. 59-60.



Zinzendorf, while the minority had called the vagabond preacher, Valentine Kraft. At New Hanover, the congregation was worshipping in an unfinished long building, but the congregation was divided over the person of Empiricus Schmid. At Trape, Kraft had also imposed himself on the congregation. But in a short time Muehlenberg convinced the three congregations of the validity of his call and they accepted him as their pastor.

Muehlenberg's motto was: Ecclesia Plantanda.

Muehlenberg's activity was not confined to the "United Congregations," but he tried to help wherever help was requested. However, the field was too large and more men were needed.

The reports which Muehlenberg and his associates sent to Germany give a rather clear picture of conditions in America. These reports are called "Hallische Nachrichten." On reading Muehlenberg's articles in these reports, many pastors were moved to come to America and work among the Lutheran immigrants. In January, 1745, Muehlenberg was cheered by the arrival of three men, Rev. Peter Brunnholtz, and the catechists John Nicholas Kurtz and John Helfrich Schaum. These men also brought funds to help build churches. The field was divided among the men with Muehlenberg maintaining general oversight of the field. Muehlenberg spent much of his time on missionary journeys. It was on these journeys that he saw the influence which Zinzendorf and



other Moravians were exerting.

### Muehlenberg's Confessional Position.

Like the "Fathers in Halle," Muehlenberg, self-evidently desired to be a Lutheran and to build a Lutheran Church in America. His confessional position is shown in his ordination certificate, dated at Leipzig in 1739:

In agreement with apostolic doctrine, through the public and pious rite, we commend to him the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments, according to the call and rule given in the writings of the prophets and apostles, the sum of which is contained in the three symbols - The Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian - in the Augsburg Confession, A. D. 1530, laid before Emperor Charles V, in the Apology of the same, in Dr. Luther's Large and Small Catechism, in the articles subscribed in the Smalcald Convention and in the Formula of Concord, written A. D. 1576 on controverted points of doctrine. For he solemnly promised that he would propose to his hearers what would be conformed and consentient to these writings, and that he would never depart from the sense they give. 15

To the American shores Muehlenberg brought the piety which was similiar to that of the Lutheran school of Spener and Francke. The pietistic movement in Germany was a reaction to the period of formal orthodoxy of the preceding century. Mann has this to say concerning pietism in Germany:

Pietism was indeed the form under which in those years warm-hearted godliness almost exclusively existed in Germany. Those who were animated by it knew its strong points of experience, and, as may be expected, were rather shortsighted as to its weak ones. It was the

14. Ibid., pp. 70-71; J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 57.

15. Translated by Dr. W. J. Mann in Lutheran Church Review, Vol. VI, (1887) p. 28. Quoted by V. Ferm, The Crisis in American Lutheran Theology, p. 6..



living source from which then proceeded most works of Christian charity, missionary enterprises, care of orphans, the spreading of the Bible among the masses of the people, and instruction of the neglected. To this school, if we may so call it, Muehlenberg belonged. 16

Although Muehlenberg remained loyal to the influence of Spener and Francke, Muehlenberg did not break with the confessions and symbols of the Lutheran Church.

Muehlenberg's pietism was of a conservative nature. It did stress Christian life and spiritual friendship with all Protestant denominations. Muehlenberg had a high regard for the Church of England. 17 To his accusers he replied:

I defy Satan and every lying spirit to lay at my door anything which contradicts the teaching of our apostles or the Symbolical Books. I have often said and written that I have found neither error, nor mistake, nor any defect in our Evangelical doctrine, based, as it is, on the apostles and prophets, and exhibited in our Symbolical Books. 18

#### Organization of the Pennsylvania Ministerium.

During the first six years of Muehlenberg's ministry, he spent his time in visiting Lutheran communities, planting churches, settling controversies, and bringing various Lutheran settlements in closer touch with each other and with the church in Germany. He brought about a new confessional consciousness in America. The financial contributions sent over from Germany were applied to the building of churches. However, there was a very definite need for a larger organization. Four reasons can be given

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16. W. J. Mann, Life and Times of Henry Melchior Muehlenberg, p. 393.

17. V. Ferm, op. cit., pp. 5.6.14.18.

18. Quoted by F. Bente, op. cit., p. 70.



for the necessity of a larger organization. 1) To counteract the influence of Zinzendorf and his followers, 2) to get rid of unworthy ministers who tried to force themselves upon the congregations, 3) to present a united front, 4) to help establish day schools and a uniform liturgy.<sup>19</sup>

The organization took place in Philadelphia, August 26, 1748. St. Michael's Church in Philadelphia was ready for dedication and the occasion promised to bring together the representative men of the Lutheran Church in America. Then, the Tulpehocken congregation was strongly urging the ordination of Nicholas Kurtz. Thus here was an occasion for the organization of a synod. St. Michael's was dedicated on August 25, 1748 and the organization of a synod was effected on the next day. At the beginning there was no formal constitution. However, the confessional position is shown in the report sent by Muehlenberg to the Halle authorities.

August 14, the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, the invited preachers and delegated elders of our United Congregations assembled in and before Pastor Brunnholtz's dwelling, and went to the church in procession.... At the beginning of the service the hymn "Komm heiliger Geist, Herre Gott, erfuell mit," etc., was sung antiphonally and in harmony. All the preachers present stood around the altar, and all the delegates from the congregations formed a semicircle on the organ-loft. ... Thereupon one of us made a short address, calling to mind that the foundation-stones of this church had been laid with the intention that in it the Evangelical Lutheran doctrine, according to the

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19. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 57.



foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, and the unaltered Augsburg Confession and all the other Symbolical Books, should be taught.... Then the whole church, and its parts, the pulpit, the baptismal font, and altar were again consecrated to the use of the only saving Word and the Holy Sacraments, according to our Symbolical Books; and the Church Board (das Kirchen Collegium) of Philadelphia, had to promise publicly and orally that they would strive with God's assistance to keep the church (according to the foregoing consecration) unto their children and children's children, for the aforementioned purpose, as long as God would protect it from fire, water, and other accidents.... Then the preachers and delegates knelt and with hearty and earnest prayer commended to the Omnipresent God the church now named, St. Michael's. 20

The confessional character of the early church is also shown in the examination of the candidate John Nicholas Kurtz. He was asked "whether our Evangelical Lutheran is the only justifying and saving faith, and upon what scriptural foundations does it rest?" His reply was,

I hesitate to say, yea, I dare not say, that those, who are outside of this doctrine, who by their name fail to confess this doctrine, should be condemned. Yet, to the question, whether our Evangelical Lutheran doctrine be the only justifying and saving doctrine, I reply: Yea and Amen.... With us the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity.... Now, since the fundamental articles of the Lutheran doctrines clearly and plainly have their foundation in the Word of God, and since they are necessary to salvation, they must be the most correct and the best. If we examine our Symbolical Books, which contain the principles of our doctrine or religion, we will find that they are taken from the Word of God, and substantiated by the Word of God. Consequently they belong to the class of symbols, which set forth the correct divine truth. 21

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20. Documentary History of the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States. - Proceedings of the Annual Conventions from 1748-1821, p. 7-8.

21. Ibid., p. 20.



Kurtz, then, gave the following confessional pledge:

To teach in my congregation nothing, whether publicly or privately, but what harmonizes with the Word of God and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and, to this end, to study them diligently. 22

The first congregational constitution of the Lutheran Church in America was from Muehlenberg. This constitution was prepared for St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Philadelphia in 1762. It was very carefully prepared. The framing of this constitution was of far-reaching importance. It was used by the ministers who organized churches in Pennsylvania and adjacent states; it served as a foundation for the congregational constitution of the General Synod, and was thus the basis for the congregational constitutions of all synods until 1840. 23

Of particular interest is the doctrinal basis presented:

Chap. I. Concerning the Teacher.

1. The now-living teachers and their regularly called successors shall at regular times, on Sundays and Festival Days, at funerals and other solemn

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22. C. O. Kraushaar, Verfassungsformen der Lutherischen Kirche Amerikas, p. 231.

23. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 59.

"If in his whole life Muehlenberg had done nothing else of a remarkable character, the framing and introduction of this constitution in the Philadelphia congregation would suffice to crown his head with lasting honor." W. J. Mann, op. cit., p. 370.

"This constitution continues to live and exert its influence far and wide throughout the Lutheran Church in all parts of America.... A study of this constitution is necessary for all who would understand the church government within at least three of the four general bodies in the Lutheran Church in America." H. E. Jacobs, A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States, pp. 262-264.



occasions, preach publicly, openly, concisely, clearly, thoroughly and with edification God's Word according to the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets and the unaltered Augsburg Confession. 24

The first real constitution of the Pennsylvania Ministerium did not appear until 1781. The confessional obligations of the ministry were as follows:

Every minister professes that he holds the Word of God and our Symbolical Books in doctrine and life.... (Ch. VI, Sec. 2.)

In complaints brought against ministers the subject of investigation must refer to:

1. Positive errors opposed to the plain teachings of the Holy Scriptures and our Symbolical Books.... (Ch. V, Sec. 22.) 25

Soon after the death of Muehlenberg the Lutheran Church in America passes into a period marked by confessional laxity, open union, and a spirit of independent thinking which manifested itself in noticeable departures from the doctrines set forth in the Confessions. Nowhere is this more noticeable than in the Mother-Synod. In 1792 the Pennsylvania Ministerium revised its constitution, leaving out not only any reference to the historic Lutheran symbols but also any mention of the Augsburg Confession. Three ranks of pastors were recognized: catechist, licensed

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24. C. O. Kraushaar, op. cit., p. 18.

25. Documentary History of the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States - Proceedings of the Annual Conventions from 1748 to 1821, pp. 173.175.

The Ministerium of Pennsylvania began without any formal constitution. The pastors present knew one another as pledged to the same faith, and as those who would make the same demands of others. The constitution was to be developed in the life of the synod before it would be reduced to writing. H. E. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 241.



candidate, and ordained minister. The catechist "is to preach the Word of God in purity...; must... have acquired a systematic knowledge of Christian doctrines and ethics... and above all a practical knowledge of experimental religion."<sup>26</sup> The licensed candidate "is to preach the Word of God in its purity according to the law and the gospel."<sup>27</sup>

One of the problems in this period is rationalism. The close contact which America had with France during the Revolutionary War and during the making of the nation left behind much rationalistic thought. The Lutherans also did not escape the infection, although it came from another source. The spirit of rationalism also crept into Halle and the other German universities. Muehlenberg and his co-workers watched the theological discussions at Halle and feared the worst. Their fear was justified. Even before Muehlenberg died there came to America a group of ministers who knew not Spener and Francke. The results<sup>28</sup> were soon evident in the Church.

The second problem was unionism. The spirit of unionism was due to religious indifference. Rationalism had shattered confessional convictions and the points of difference among the denominations were obscured. Many of the church buildings in the rural districts had been

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26. Documentary History, Chap. V, Art. III, Sec. 3, 10, p. 252.

27. *Ibid.*, Art. II, Chap. V, Sec. 3, p. 251. Nothing further is stated as to requirements for the rank of ordained minister.

28. A. R. Wentz, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-116; H. E. Jacobs, *op. cit.*, pp. 133-134.



erected for the use of both Reformed and Lutheran. In a number of instances the congregations were under one church council and only alternated between Lutheran and Reformed pastors. Lutherans and Reformed cooperated in managing the affairs of Franklin College at Lancaster and did not consider it out of place to have a Catholic priest included among the trustees. The leveling process in confessional matters was promoted by Lutheran divinity students having to attend Harvard, Yale, or Princeton if they wanted to complete their theological education in America. It was not until 1826 that Gettysburg Seminary, the first Lutheran theological school, was opened. The religious magazine founded by the Ministerium in 1812 made a bid for Reformed and Moravian subscribers. In 1817 there appeared the "Common Hymnbook" in German which took the place of the Muehlenberg Hymnal, was endorsed by Dr. Quitman, and recommended by both the Lutheran and Reformed Synods in Pennsylvania. It may be that the trend towards union among these two conservative German-speaking bodies was partly due to their common reaction against rationalistic influences, but more important were the motives of expediency growing out of intermarriage, a common language, and the fact that the vast majority of people and pastors knew little and cared less about the questions at issue between them.

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29. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 120-121. Carl Mauelshagen, American Lutheranism Surrenders to Forces of Conservatism, pp. 41-42.



The third problem was the language. Muehlenberg preached in whatever language the people could best understand, and for that purpose mastered and used three languages. But after the Revolutionary War the shift toward English became rapid. The Synod in Pennsylvania changed its name in 1792, and introduced the word "German" in its title. In 1805 at Germantown a resolution was passed that only the German language was to be used in synodical sessions.<sup>30</sup>

Such were the problems facing the Pennsylvania Ministerium at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Their proper solution meant that the Pennsylvania Ministerium would be identified with the Lutheran Church. These same problems faced the other Lutheran bodies of this period.

#### Early Beginnings in New York.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Holland was an important sea power. Henry Hudson, an Englishman, working for the Dutch East India Company, came to America with the hope of finding a passage to the Orient. He discovered Hudson River and Hudson Bay. The Dutch crown claimed all the territory along the Hudson River, roughly corresponding to New York State. The territory was called New Netherlands. The principal city was New Amsterdam. The Dutch Reformed became the established state church. Other religious groups were invited into the colony. There were

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30. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 122-123.



German, Frenchmen, and even Jews. The Germans were usually Lutherans. In the colony the Germans thought they would have the same liberty as they had in Holland. But the policy of the Dutch West India Company, unlike the policy of the Dutch government itself, excluded all other religious bodies than the Reformed. They not only had to attend the Reformed services, but their children had to be baptized and confirmed in the Dutch faith. Governor Stuyvesant suppressed any attempt at cultivating the Lutheran faith. 31

By the middle of the seventeenth century the number of Lutherans in the colony had grown to such an extent and their sense of religious oppression had become so deep that they resolved to attempt an independent organization. They first appealed to the Lutheran consistory of Amsterdam to make an appeal to the directors of the West India Company. Nothing was done and four years later they repeated their request. Finally, in 1657 John Ernst Goetwasser came to America. The Reformed pastors protested. Goetwasser was prohibited from holding services or performing ministerial acts, but it was nearly two years before they succeeded in having him deported. It was not until 1663 that religious toleration was really in operation. A Quaker, punished by Stuyvesant, demonstrated to the Company that any other policy would hinder the financial development in the colony.

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31. Amsterdam alone contained 30,000 Lutherans, among them the wealthiest and most enterprising people in the city. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., p. 31.



However, just before this became effective, Abenius Zetscoorn, a Lutheran student, was deported to the Swedes on the Delaware.  
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In 1664 the government of the colony was changed when the English compelled Stuyvesant to surrender his fort and town. New Amsterdam became New York. The English governor granted the Lutherans permission to call their own pastor, but it was five years before their pastor arrived. He was Pastor Jacob Fabritius. He was so despotie and irascible that in less than two years (1671) he was compelled to resign. Later he took up work among the Swedish Lutherans in Delaware, where his record was honorable.

Fabritius' successor was Bernhard Arensius, who faithfully served the congregations in Albany and in New York for twenty years (1671-1691.) For the rest of the seventeenth century the pastorate was vacant. The Lutheran authorities in Amsterdam insisted that the Lutherans in New York look after their own needs, since the English now governed the country. In 1701 they invited Andrew Rudman to become their pastor. However, he remained only two years. In 1703 he ordained Justus Falckner to be his successor in New York. Falckner served a large field. It extended some two hundred miles, from Albany to Long Island and included settlements on both sides of the Hudson and in New Jersey. Falckner served this field for twenty years. After his

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32. Ibid., pp. 27-28. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 23.



death in 1723, his elder brother, Daniel, supplied the  
 33  
 congregations in this field.

The German Lutheran congregations in the colony of New York were made up of refugees from the Palatinate of the Rhine. In 1709 Rev. Joshua Kocherthal and a Lutheran congregation settled Newburgh on the west bank of the Hudson. Others settled at the foot of the Catskills and in the Schoharie Valley. Later immigrants settled along the Hudson. In all of these German parishes Kocherthal was the pastor. He served this field till his death in 1719. Then for several years these congregations were  
 34  
 added to the Dutch charge of Justus Falckner.

Falckner's successor was William Christopher Berkenmeyer. The Lutheran Consistory of Amsterdam extended him the call of the Dutch congregations in New York and Albany. After considerable hesitation, Berkenmeyer accepted the call and arrived in New York in 1725. Seeing that the field was too large to be cultivated well by one man, he sent to Germany for another minister. He himself took charge of the northern field, while the southern field was placed in charge of Michael Christian Knoll. Berkenmeyer's son-in-law, Peter Nicolas Sommer, labored in the Schoharie Valley. In the period following the work of Knoll and Sommer, these congregations of Palatinate immigrants were served by Albany pastors until such time as more pastors were available. By the time the New York Ministerium was organized

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33. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 29-31. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 23.

34. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 31-32.



the supply of pastors had increased. 35

### First Synodical Organization.

In this circle of ministers, Berkenmeyer was the leader. Their period of activity is parallel to that of Muehlenberg and his co-workers and also that of the Salzburg missionaries in Georgia. The Berkenmeyer circle refused to have fellowship with the group from Halle. This was probably due to the Pietistic controversies which were agitating the theological world in Germany. By 1734 the Lutheran churches of the Hudson Valley had formed an association. The title was "General Church Order for the Congregations adhering to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession... in the Province of New York and New Jersey." The very first article of this constitution reads:

All called preachers of the congregations shall regulate their teaching and preaching according to the rule of the Divine Word, the Biblical Prophetic and Apostolic writings, then also according to our Symbolical Books, the Unaltered Confession of Augsburg, its Apology, the Smalcald Articles, the two Catechisms of Luther, and the Formula of Concord. They shall not teach nor preach, either privately or publicly, anything against these, nor shall they use any new phrases which contradict them. 36

Though there is the record of only one meeting of this organization which was held at Pluckemin, New Jersey, in August, 1735. This organization continued to exist until 37 about the time of the Revolution (Letter of M. C. Knoll, 1774.)

35. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 33.

36. Quoted by Karl Kretzmann, The Atlantic District and Its Antecedents, pp. 8-9.

37. Ibid., p. 9.



### New York Ministerium.

The first synod to be organized after the Ministerium of Pennsylvania was the New York Ministerium. In the year 1775, the Rev. F. A. C. Muehlenberg, son of the patriarch, invited a number of clergymen and representatives of different congregations to attend a meeting held at German Lutheran Christ Church in New York for the purpose of organizing a second synod. But the organization did not seem to materialize. There may have been a meeting in 1785, but the first synodical gathering on record was in 1786. The occasion was the dedication of the Lutheran Church in Albany on October 22, 1786. On the next day three pastors and their congregational delegates attended the first conference. Seven pastors who were in this region did not attend. Dr. J. C. Kunze was elected president. <sup>38</sup>

The doctrinal basis of the New York Ministerium was the same as that of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania to which three of the pastors had formerly belonged. Thus the first constitution held to the "Word of God and our Symbolical Books." <sup>39</sup>

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38. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 64. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., p. 107.

Dr. John Christopher Kunze studied theology at Leipzig. He came to America in 1770. He married Muehlenberg's daughter. He became associated pastor of St. Michael's, Philadelphia, and also professor of Oriental languages in the University of Pennsylvania. In 1784 he accepted a call to New York in the hope that he might arrange a course for theological students in connection with Columbia College. This hope failed on account of the war. J. C. Jennson, American Lutheran Biographies, pp. 444-445.

39. A. L. Graebner, Geschichte der L. therischen Kirche in America, p. 469. Karl Kretzmann, op. cit., p. 10. F. Bente, op. cit., p. 40.



The confessional attitude soon changed. The Pennsylvania Ministerium revised its constitution in 1792 and left out any references to the Confessions. It did not write a new constitution, but simply adopted the revised constitution of the Pennsylvania Ministerium. The New York Ministerium also underwent confessional deterioration. In 1797 under the leadership of its president, Dr. J. C. Kunze, passed this resolution:

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 discipline, this consistory will never acknowledge a newly erected Lutheran church in places where the members may partake of the 40 services of the said English Episcopal Church.

Dr. J. C. Kunze remained president until his death in 1807. His successor was Dr. F. H. Quitman. Dr. Quitman had studied at Halle. The man who wielded the most influence at Halle was Johann Semler, who had pioneered in the use of critical and historical methods of Bible study and church history. Dr. Quitman was frankly an exponent of the movement in the American Lutheran Church known as "rationalism." In 1812 he prepared an English catechism as a substitute for Luther's, which was published with the consent and approval of the synod. This catechism has no relation with Luther, for all the doctrines

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40. Quoted by H. E. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 318.



are set forth on the basis of whether they can be  
 41 rationalized or not. In this catechism he denied the  
 inspiration and authority of the Bible and set aside all  
 the main doctrines of the Lutheran Confessions.

The rationalism of Quitman was embodied in the  
 constitution which was revised in 1816.

And we establish it as a fundamental rule  
 of this association that the person to be  
 ordained shall not be required to make any  
 other engagement than this, that he will  
 faithfully teach, as well as perform all  
 other ministerial duties, and regulate his  
 walk and conversation, according to the Gospel  
 of our Lord Jesus Christ as contained in Holy  
 Scriptures, and that he will observe this  
 constitution while he remains a member of  
 this Ministerium. 42

Congregations within the Ministerium could no longer require  
 the pastors to pledge themselves to the Confessions. On  
 the floor of synod doctrinal discussions could be carried  
 on only if "the fundamental principle of Protestantism, the  
 right of free research, be not infringed upon, and that no  
 endeavor be made to elevate the Ministerium to an inquisitorial  
 43 tribunal."

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41. "3. Q. Can any rational belief take place without a  
 sure foundation?

A. No, all unwarranted belief in superstition.

4. Q. Which are the grounds, that ought to constitute  
 the basis of rational belief?

A. Either natural perception and experience; or  
 the authority of competent witnesses; or finally, unquestionable  
 arguments of reason."

Introductory Questions and Answers to Part I, "The Articles of  
 the Christian Belief," p. 6 in Evangelical Catechism: Or, a  
 Short Exposition of the Principal Doctrines and Precepts of the  
 Christian Religion, for the Use of the Churches belonging  
 to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of the State of New York,

F. H. Quitman, D. D. Quoted by V. Fern, op. cit., p. 25.

42. A. L. Graebner, op. cit., p. 655.

43. Ibid., p. 679.



The major problem which confronted the New York Ministerium was that of Rationalism. Its leader was the president, Dr. Quitman. It can be said that German Rationalism was confined mostly to English-speaking congregations and most of these congregations were located in the New York Ministerium.

44

#### North Carolina Synod.

For more than a half century there had been a number of Lutheran settlements in North Carolina. Many of these had come from Pennsylvania, but some had come directly from Germany. Before the Revolutionary War pastors had been furnished by the Consistory of Hanover in Germany. The Revolutionary War cut off this ministerial supply and the Lutheran pastors felt that some kind of organization was necessary. The organization would have the power to examine and ordain men to the ministerial office. In 1800 and 1801 revivals spread over the countryside and the pastors decided to form an organization in order to protect themselves and their people from false views and practices. The result was the Mother Synod of the South, the North Carolina Synod, organized at Salisbury in 1803 by four pastors, Arends, Storch, Miller and Paul Henkel together with fourteen lay delegates. In the first constitution no reference, not even by implication, is made to the Augsburg Confession or the Lutheran Symbols. The title



"Lutheran" does not even occur. The requirements of ordination were:

No one shall be allowed to preach in our Churches who does not furnish satisfactory written evidence, from the congregation, in the midst of which he lives, that he leads an irreproachable life.

No one also shall be ordained to the ministry until the ministers who examine him are fully satisfied that he has a sufficient and satisfactory acquaintance with the New Testament in the Greek language, his faith (doctrines of the Church) and the Latin language, unless the Synod deems it necessary to make an exception in the case of a candidate who displays talents in another direction, and in such a case the whole or a part of the above rule may be dispensed with.... 45

In 1810 a resolution was passed permitting every pastor to administer communion to those of another faith. In the same year the Moravian G. Shober was ordained. Shober retained his membership with the Moravians. 46 Shober became an influential leader in the Synod. Long before the North Carolina Synod was organized the pastors of North Carolina had secured the publication of the "Helmstaedt Catechism" of Dr. Velthusen. This was used for many years and was known as the "North Carolina Catechism." It was full of the spirit of German rationalism and the Lutheran consciousness of the people was dulled. In 1812 it was unanimously resolved that Luther's Small Catechism was to be used in catechetical instruction. 48

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45. A. L. Graebner, op. cit., p. 630. Translated by V. Ferm, op. cit., P. #).

46. G. D. Bernheim, History of the German Settlements and of the Lutheran Church in North and South Carolina, p. 376.

47. V. Ferm, op. cit., p. 29.

48. G. D. Bernheim, op. cit., p. 396.



In 1817 there appeared the "Gemeinschaftliches Gesangbuch" which was to be a substitute for the hymn-book prepared in 1787 by Muehlenberg, Kunze, and Helmuth. This hymn-book was endorsed by Dr. Quitman and showed the rationalistic spirit of the times. This hymn-book was endorsed by the synod in 1817.

In a book prepared for the tercentenary celebration of the Reformation in 1817, Pastor Shoher explained the articles of the Augsburg Confession in a Reformed sense. He denied the Lutheran doctrines of the Lord's Supper and of Absolution and advocated for a union of all Christian denominations. In the conclusion of this book the following remarks occur:

I have carefully examined the doctrine of the Episcopal Church, have read many excellent writers of the Presbyterians, know the doctrine of the Methodists from their book Portraiture of Methodism, and am acquainted with the doctrine of the Baptists, as far as they receive and adore Jesus the Savior. Among all classes of those who adore Jesus as God, I find nothing of 49 importance which could prevent a cordial union.

However, it was this Synod which was the first since Muehlenberg's time to adopt the Augsburg Confession as its confessional basis. This it did in the new constitution of 1818 and it is significant that this constitution also provided that only ministers ordained or licensed by a synod in the United States could be admitted to the Synod of North Carolina. 50

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49. Ibid., p. 434.

50. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., p. 118. G. O. Kraushaar, op. cit., pp. 278-279.



### The Joint Synod of Ohio.

The New York Ministerium and the North Carolina Synod had been formed without a part breaking off from the Mother Synod. They were composed of congregations which lay outside of the bounds of the Pennsylvania Ministerium. But the fourth synod to be organized lay within the territory of the Ministerium itself.

As missionaries were sent out to follow the westward advance they came farther and farther from Philadelphia. These men still longed for the association of their brethren and therefore the Ministerium had established "Special or District Meetings" at which pastors and laymen could gather for conferences. In 1801 the Ministerium provided seven such districts. The "Western District" was west of the Allegheny Mountains. It seems that this district did not carry out this resolution until 1812. In 1816 the district asked for permission to organize its own "ministerium." The petition was submitted to the Pennsylvania Ministerium in 1817. The answer is not entirely clear; but the Ohio ministers went ahead and organized their "special conference" and was called "General Conference of the Evangelical  
51  
Lutheran Preachers in the State of Ohio."

This church body which was later to be known as the "Joint Synod of Ohio" was organized at Somerset, Ohio, September 14, 1818. The constitution of the Pennsylvania

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51. J. L. Neve, op. cit., pp. 253-254. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 109-110. A. L. Graebner, op. cit., pp. 673-674.



Ministerium was adopted in toto, the only change being the name on the title page. It contained no confessional paragraph whatever. It was not until some years later<sup>52</sup> that such a step was taken.

#### Synod of Maryland and Virginia.

The Virginia Conference of the Pennsylvania Ministerium was organized into the Synod of Maryland and Virginia at Winchester, Va., October 11, 1820. The organization was<sup>53</sup> with the consent of the mother synod.

#### Tennessee Synod.

Three months before the Synod of Maryland and Virginia was organized the Tennessee Synod had been founded by four pastors of the North Carolina Synod. This synod was a result of doctrinal controversy. The "Untimely Synod" was held in 1819. The leaders of the North Carolina Synod autocratically convened the body five weeks before the time fixed by the constitution in order that it might take part in the preliminary work in organizing the General Synod at Baltimore. This action caused much ill feeling because some of the members of the synod were opposed to joining the General Body, particularly Philip<sup>54</sup> and David Henkel.

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52. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 260.

53. Ibid., p. 65.

54. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., p. 111. F. Bente, op. cit., p. 122. Socrates Henkel, History of the Ev. Lutheran Tennessee Synod, pp. 16-18.



The final break came about a year later at the convention in Lincolnton, North Carolina, May 28, 1820. The unionistic party claiming that they had the majority insisted that the minority join the proposed General Synod. The minority appealed to the Augsburg Confession, insisting that everything should be judged in its light. The question was raised as to what the synod taught concerning baptism and the Lord's Supper. R. J. Miller and Peter Schmucker formulated the answer, which was approved by the synod.

We do not say that all who are baptized with water are regenerated and converted to God, so that they are saved without the operation of the Holy Spirit, or in other words, without faith in Christ.

We do not believe and teach that the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ are bodily received with the bread wine in the Holy Supper, but that the true believer receives and enjoys it spiritually together with all saving gifts of His suffering and death, by faith in Jesus Christ. 55

The minority rejected these answers and others given on election, conversion, and the certainty of the state of grace. The formation of the Tennessee Synod was a protest against the anticonfessional teaching prevailing in the North Carolina Synod. The synod was organized the same year, at Cover Creek, Tenn., July 17, 1820.

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55. Translated by F. Bente, op. cit., p. 127 from A. L. Graebner, op. cit., pp. 681-682.

56. F. Bente, op. cit., p. 154. Socrates Henkel, op. cit., pp. 20-23.



The Tennessee Synod was the only synod which placed itself squarely on the Augsburg Confession.

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.

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. 57

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57. Socrates Henkel, op. cit., pp. 25-26. C. O. Kraushaar, op. cit., pp. 289-290.



## II. THE FORMATION OF THE GENERAL SYNOD AS A CONTRIBUTION TO AN IMPROVED LUTHERAN CONSCIOUSNESS.

As the American nation expanded and new states were formed, these new territories were bound to the Federal Government. Very early there developed the feeling of a common nationality. As the Lutheran Church expanded and as new synods were formed, the need was felt for some general organization that would give a sense of unity among the Lutherans. The particular reason for such an organization was that more and better trained ministers were needed and by common action these could be better provided. The first suggestion for closer relations seems to have been given by Dr. Helmuth in an essay written for the Ministerium of Pennsylvania concerning congregations in North Carolina and sent to them in 1807. They felt the the weakness of Lutheran organization as compared with the compact organization of the Episcopal Church.<sup>1</sup> It was not till 1818 that the first move was made. At its convention in Harrisburg the Pennsylvania Ministerium adopted a resolution that it would be desirable to have closer connection with other synods. Dr. Quitman of the New York Ministerium and Rev. Shoher of the North Carolina Synod were very much in favor of such a plan.

At the convention in 1819 a committee was appointed to draw up a proposed plan. This plan was adopted by the

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1. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 128-129.



convention. The plan was then to be sent to the other existing synods, and if three-fourths adopted it, Dr. J. G. Schmucker, president of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, should call a convention of delegates. The proposed plan gave the following information:

Whereas, under the guidance of God, the Evangelical Lutheran Church has spread itself over the great part of the United States of North America...inasmuch as the number of particular Synods or Ministeriums has increased from time to time, on account of the wide extension of said church, and the continued and increasing operation of the same cause will probably lead to the still further increase of the number of Synods and Ministeriums, and this might in the end be the means of bringing about unnecessary and injurious divisions and departures from the end and object hitherto pursued in common by said church; it appears to be the almost universal wish of the existing Synods or Ministeriums in these United States may be effected by means of a central organization....

1. This central union...to be called the GENERAL SYNOD OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF NORTH AMERICA....

4. The General Synod has the exclusive right with the concurrence of a majority of the particular synods to introduce new books for general use in the public church service as well as to make improvements in the Liturgy;... But the General Synod has no power to make or demand any change whatever in the doctrines (Glaubenslehren) hitherto received among us....

6. Those Synods now existing, as well as those formally recognized or organized by the General Synod, shall never be hindered in the appointing and ordaining of ministers at their own discretion within their own bounds. 2

The delegates of the various synods assembled in Hagerstown, Md., October 22, 1820. The Pennsylvania

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2. Documentary History of the Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and Adjacent States - Proceedings of the Annual Conventions from 1748-1821, pp. 541-543.



Ministerium, the New York Ministerium, the North Carolina Synod and the Synod of Maryland and Virginia were represented. The delegates adopted the Constitution and it was resolved that the Constitution was to be brought before the individual bodies for ratification. The Tennessee Synod did not send delegates because the proposed plan (Plan Entwurf) did not mention the Augsburg Confession. The Joint Synod of Ohio sent no delegates for practical reasons.<sup>3</sup>

The condition that at least three synods must ratify the Constitution was barely met. The synods which had adopted the constitution by 1821 were: Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Maryland-Virginia. The New York Ministerium considered the plan "impractical." At the second convention, the Pennsylvania Ministerium refused to cooperate any longer.

Before the General Synod could contribute to an improved Lutheran consciousness, several obstacles had to be surmounted.

The Pennsylvania Ministerium's contemplated union with the Reformed.

The Pennsylvania Ministerium withdrew from the General Synod in 1823 because of the proposed union with the Reformed. The same convention which proposed a general organization among the Lutherans also elected a committee to confer with a committee of the Evangelical Reformed

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3. J. L. Neve, op. cit., pp. 73-74.



Synod in order to "devise ways and means for the founding of a joint Institution of Learning, in order to train young men in the future for the ministry."<sup>4</sup>

This close kinship with the Reformed was the contributing factor in the withdrawal of the Pennsylvania Ministerium from the General Synod. However, it was not the church leaders as such that were responsible for this action. This was due more to the prejudices which were prevalent among the congregations. This new union had a foreign taste, even though it carried the name "Lutheran." Among the congregations, particularly the rural districts, fellowship with the Reformed had been established through union churches, intermarriage, and common language.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore a pamphlet written by a certain Carl Gock declared that the General Synod was only a plan which would take away the rights of the people, do away with their language, and burden them with unnecessary expenses.<sup>6</sup> The leaders yielded to the

4. Documentary History, etc., pp. 516-517.

5. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 134-135; V. Fern, op. cit., pp. 43-44.

6. "A country school-teacher, by the name of Carl Gock, published a small volume, in which he excited the prejudices of the country people against the projected General Synod of the Reformed Church. The scheme was declared to be a plan of the ministers to tread the rights of the people underfoot. An entire chapter was devoted to a picture of the despotism exercised by Catholic priests in Europe, and a warning that the formation of a General Synod was attended with such perils. Another chapter dwells on the great evils of theological seminaries, and urges that the money of the people would be better spent in the establishment of elementary schools. All the proceedings of a General Synod, it is urged, will be in English, and the rights of the German will be given away, because the lay delegates will not know what is transpiring. It will be an 'aristocratic spiritual congress.' As to the expenses, 'who is to pay? we farmers. Collections upon collection,' etc...." H. E. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 360.



demands of the people believing that it would be only a temporary withdrawal. But this separation lasted for thirty years.

#### Influence of Revivalism.

After the Revolutionary War rank unbelief prevailed throughout the country. It was at this time that Wesley's Methodism came to this country and soon was a power throughout the land. In the decades following 1830 practically all the English Lutheran Churches were affected by revivals. The German churches were generally kept free. The Anxious Bench by Dr. J. W. Nevin, a Reformed professor, vigorously attacked the methods of revivalism. However, many Lutherans such as Schmucker, Kurtz, Harkey, and Passavant became extremists in advocating revivals, or as they were also called "new measures." They considered these as most needful in reviving the Lutheran Church. Dr. Kurtz wrote in the "Lutheran Observer," November 17, 1843:

The so-called 'anxious bench' is the lever of Archimedes, which by the blessing of God can raise our German churches to that degree of respectability in the religious world which they ought to enjoy. 7

The revivals continued throughout the nineteenth century. However, after about the middle of the century, the number decreased. As a whole the movement harmed the Lutheran Church of America. The reason for the general apathy among the Lutherans was due to faulty instruction. Dr. Hazelius said: "We have missed the one which is at the

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7. Quoted by F. Bente, op. cit., p. 81.



root of the evil, viz., the remissness of many of our<sup>8</sup> pastors in the religious instruction of youths."

It was quite some time before the Lutheran Church fulfilled its obligation of thorough instruction, particularly of the young.

#### Evangelical Alliance.

Dr. Chalmers, the founder of the Free Church of Scotland, was instrumental in calling a meeting in London of Protestants from all countries, who wished to unite more closely. This meeting was held in 1846. The Alliance insisted on liberty of conscience and religious tolerance and was opposed to the papacy and to Puseyism. The Evangelical Alliance did not seek organic unity among the churches, but to bring about a closer fellow-<sup>9</sup>ship of individual Christians.

The General Synod selected as delegates for the first convention Drs. S. S. Schmucker, Benjamin Kurtz and J. G. Morris. Dr. Schmucker was also the author of the plan "Apostolic Protestant Union" which contained the following features: "Unity of name, unity in fundamental doctrines, while diversity in non-essentials was conceded; mutual acknowledgment of each other's acts of discipline; sacramental and ministerial inter-communion; convention of the different churches of the land in synod or council for mutual consultation or ecclesiastical regulation." This was

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8. Quoted by F. Bente, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 87.

9. Concordia Cyclopedia, p. 241.



endorsed by the General Synod at its meeting in  
 New York, 1848.<sup>10</sup> By this action it seemed that the  
 General Synod was ready to give up the distinctive  
 doctrines of the Lutheran Church. However, later events  
 proved that the General Synod wished to adhere to the  
 Lutheran Confessions.

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10. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 85.



### III. PROGRESS IN CONFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

The preliminary constitutional draft of 1819 stated that "the General Synod has no power to make or demand any changes whatever in the doctrine of faith adopted heretofore among us."<sup>1</sup> The primary object of its organization was not confessional but practical. A positive stand in confessional matters was precluded by its broad purpose and wide differences in doctrine and practice of the district synods.<sup>2</sup> The Constitution which was to be presented before the several Synods contemplating this union shows its general doctrinal character:

1. The General Synod shall examine all books and writings, such as catechisms, forms of liturgy, collection of hymns, or confessions of faith, proposed by the special Synods for public use, and give their well considered advice, counsel or opinion concerning the same....  
3. But no General Synod can be allowed to possess or arrogate unto itself, "the power of prescribing among us uniform ceremonies of religion for every part of the Church; or to introduce such alterations in matters appertaining to the faith, or to the mode of publishing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, (the Son of God, and ground of our faith and hopes) as might in any way tend to burden the consciences of the brethren in Christ....

Section V ... 1. The General Synod may give advice or opinion, when complaints shall be brought before them, by whole Synods, Ministeriums, Congregations, or individual Ministers, concerning doctrine or discipline. They shall however be extremely careful, that the consciences of the Ministers of the Gospel be not burdened with

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1. V. Ferm, op. cit., p. 36.

2. Lars P. Qualben, A History of the Christian Church, p.487.



human inventions, laws or devices, and that no one be oppressed by reason of differences of opinion....

Section VIII. The General Synod shall apply all their powers, their prayers and their means, toward the prevention of schisms among us, and be sedulously and incessantly regardful of the circumstances of the times, and of every casual rise and progress of unity of sentiment among Christians in general, of whatever kind or denomination, in order that the blessed opportunities to heal the wounds and schisms already existing in the Church of Christ and to promote general concord and unity, may not pass by neglected and unavailing. 3

The Constitution of the first united Lutheran Church in America does not mention the historical symbolical books of the church, not even the Augsburg Confession. It definitely respects the differences of opinion within its constituency both as doctrine and practice. It also placed on record that it was ready and willing to unite with Christians of whatever kind or denomination.

Of particular interest is the attitude taken by the leaders toward the historic confessions and such doctrines as were later the subjects of controversy. An example is found in the person of Dr. George Lohman, who became the first president of the General Synod in 1821. Dr. Lohman published a little book in 1818 entitled The History, Doctrine and Discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. For him the Augsburg Confession contains articles that were obsolete and he insisted that a modern viewpoint must be taken.

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3. V. Ferm, op. cit., pp. 38-39.



The Augsburg Confession contains twenty-eight chapters or articles. Some of them however only point out the errors and abuses, that occasioned their separation from the church of Rome. Presuming that such articles would be of little use to christians of our days, we have contented ourselves with translating and making remarks on such only as are esteemed essential and necessary to salvation. 4

Dr. Lochman also rejected the doctrine that personal guilt is imputed to all since the fall of Adam:

The consequences of the fall of Adam were:  
1. the moral disease, which we call, in the language of theology, original sin, or innate depravity of nature; and 2. the loss of immortality. Thus far is the sin of Adam imputed to us. We have, in consequence of it, an innate natural depravity, and we are all liable to death - but further, the fall of Adam is not imputed to us. 5

Dr. Lochman concludes his book with the following statement on Church Unity:

... I cannot help expressing my pleasure, in observing that the different denominations are drawing nearer to each other, and that bigotry is rapidly declining. In some parts of Germany and in Prussia, the distinction of Lutheran and Reformed is already done away, and both churches consider themselves as one body. And God grant! that this spirit of union and brotherly love may continue to spread. 6

Dr. Christian Endress, whose name appears among the leaders in the beginnings of the General Synod, wrote an article in the first volume of "The Evangelical Lutheran Intelligencer," a magazine published by the Synod of Maryland and Virginia. In it he reflects the thought of

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4. George Lochman, "The History, Doctrine and Discipline of the Evangelical Lutheran Church," quoted in V. Fern, op. cit., p. 53.

5. Quoted in V. Fern, op. cit., p. 56.

6. Quoted in V. Fern, op. cit., pp. 59-60.



many of the Lutheran ministers of the time.

Christ is my master, the Bible my code of religious instruction; in this I shall always be a Lutheran. There is in Luther's works much that I cannot assent to, much in which the Lutheran church has never gone with him. 7

The leader of the General Synod was S. S. Schmucker. What Dr. Walther was to the Missouri Synod, what Dr. C. P. Krauth was to the General Council, that to a certain extent, was Dr. Schmucker to the General Synod, at least during the half century in which he was the leader. Three years after its organization he saved the General Synod from dissolution. In 1825 he prepared the constitution for the seminary and four years later he drafted the model constitution for the district synods. In these two constitutions he proved that in his confessional position he was more Lutheran than his contemporaries. However, the confessional advance was too much for him and he became an opponent of the confessional movement. His standpoint was a peculiar admixture of Puritanism, Pietism and shallow Rationalism.<sup>8</sup> This viewpoint was shown in his association with the "Evangelical Alliance." His opposition to the confessional movement culminated in the publication of the Definite Synodical Platform, An American Recension of the Augsburg Confession. Because of the publication of this pamphlet, impeachment proceedings were instituted by the

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7. Quoted in V. Fern, op. cit., p. 62.

8. Adolph Spaeth, "The Schmuckers: Samuel S. and Beale." Lutheran Church Review, Vol. XXV. (1906.) p. 471.



Board of the Seminary. Dr. C. P. Krauth, a former pupil, interceded for him and no sentence was passed. He resigned his position as professor at the seminary in 1864. 9

Constitution adopted for District Synods (1829)

One of the leaders of the General Synod, Dr. S. S. Schmucker, did much in giving a proper place to the Confessions. When he was elected to the theological chair at Gettysburg Seminary, he drafted an oath to be given by professors and to which he himself promised allegiance. He considered this oath of allegiance sufficient basis for perpetuating a Lutheran consciousness. The Constitution of the seminary was written by him and contains the oath of allegiance of professors:

Part I.... Resolved, 1. That the General Synod will forthwith commence, in the name of the Triune God... The establishment of a theological seminary, which shall be exclusively devoted to the glory of our Divine Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who is God over all, blessed for ever. And that in this seminary shall be taught, in the German and English languages, the fundamental doctrines of the Sacred Scriptures, as contained in the Augsburg Confession. ... 7. Any Professor may be impeached, at any time, for fundamental error in doctrine, immorality of deportment, inattention to the duties of his office, or incapacity to discharge them;....

Part II.... Article I.... Introduction. Design of this Institution.... It is designed:... To provide our churches with pastors who sincerely believe, and cordially approve of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures, as they are fundamentally taught in the Augsburg Confession, and who will therefore teach them in opposition to Deists, Unitarians, Arians, Antinomians, and all other fundamental errorists.

... Article II... 9. The Board of Directors shall inspect the fidelity of the Professors, as well with regard to the doctrines actually taught, as to



the manner of teaching them. If any just reason be given them to suspect either the orthodoxy, or piety...it shall be their sacred duty to institute an investigation...

... Article III... 2. Every Professor elect of this institution, shall on the day of his inauguration, publicly pronounce and subscribe the oath of office required of the Directors, and also, the following declaration: "I solemnly declare in the presence of God and the Directors of this Seminary, that I do ex animo, believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the inspired word of God, and the only perfect rule of faith and practice. I believe the Augsburg Confession and the Catechisms of Luther to be a summary and just exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the word of God....

3. The preceding declaration shall be repeated by each Professor at the expiration of every term of five years, in the presence of the Directors; and at any intermediate time, if required to do so by a vote of the Board of Directors. And no man shall be retained as Professor who shall refuse to make and repeat this declaration, in the manner and at the times above specified.... 10

The need for a more definite confessional obligation was felt and in 1829 the General Synod adopted a constitution for district synods, which in its formula for ordination required an affirmative answer to the Augsburg Confession.

Chapter XVIII. Examination and Licensure of Candidates.... V. The Ceremony of Licensure shall be performed as follows: viz. after an address from the President as prescribed in the Liturgy, he shall read the duties and privileges of licentiates in Ch. X, Sec. VI-Sec. X. and then propose to him the following questions:

1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice? 2 Tim. 3, 16. Eph. 2, 20.

2. Do you believe that the fundamental doctrines of the word of God are taught in a manner substantially correct in the doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession? 2. Tim. 1, 13.

3. Do you promise, by the aid of God faithfully to perform all the duties enjoined on you in this Formula, and to submit yourself to its rules of



Government and Discipline, so long as you remain a member of a Lutheran Synod? 2 Pet. 5,5....

Chapter XIX. Ordination.

II. The Ceremony of ordination, wherever performed, shall be as follows: viz.

2. The President of the Ministerium, or the Chairman of the Conference or Committee, shall then, after a short address, such as is contained in the Liturgy, propose to the candidate the following questions:

1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

2. Do you believe that the fundamental doctrines of the word of God, are taught in a manner substantially correct, in the doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession?

5. Do you promise faithfully and zealously to preach the truths of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour <sup>11</sup> Jesus Christ, as contained in the Holy Scriptures?...

In 1835 the Constitution of the General Synod was amended, but a definite confessional statement was lacking. The doctrinal basis is as follows: "All regularly constituted Lutheran synods holding the fundamental doctrines of the Bible as taught by our Church, not now in connection with the General Synod, may at any time become associated with it by adopting this Constitution and sending delegates to its convention, according to the <sup>12</sup> ratio specified in Art. II."

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Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States: Located at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Together with the Statutes of the General Synod on which it is founded. Quoted in V. Fern, op. cit., pp. 78-80.

11. Minutes of the Proceedings of the Fifth General Synod of the Ev. Luth. Church in the United States. Convened at Hagerstown, Md. October, 1829. Quoted in V. Fern, op. cit., pp. 82-84.

12. Proceedings, 1839. Quoted in F. Bente, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 38.



In examining these confessional obligations, particularly that contained in the formula of ordination, a lack of definiteness is noticeable. The term "substantially correct" was interpreted by the representatives of the so-called "American Lutheranism" to mean that not the entire Augsburg Confession was in accordance with Scripture and that they were at liberty to reject whatever they chose.

#### Influence of the Tennessee Synod.

An entire series of circumstances worked together to bring back the Lutheran Church to a confessional consciousness. One of these was the Tennessee Synod. The Tennessee Synod had been organized around a definite<sup>13</sup> expression. It was the first organized effort to bring the Lutheran Church back to a confessional consciousness. From the very outset, the Tennessee Synod insisted on the importance of confessional Lutheranism, though not always in the most tactful manner. The Henkels translated the Book of Concord and printed it on their own press. Other translations came from their press and after a fashion supplied the need for English literature. They were unsparing in their attacks of the liberalism of the General<sup>14</sup> Synod and the Pennsylvania Ministerium.

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13. Ante, p. 28.

14. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 91. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., p. 199. V. Ferm, op. cit., pp. 64-70.



### Influence of the Missouri Synod.

Beginning with about the year 1830 a wave of immigrants came from Germany and settled in the United States. These were to have a profound influence on the Lutheran Church in America. The attempts at union in Germany between the Lutheran and the Reformed caused a restudy of the Lutheran confessions. The result was that many Lutherans proclaimed adherence to the Lutheran Confessions. Many Germans came to America in order that they might be free to worship according to the Lutheran Confessions. One of these groups settled in and near St. Louis. This group is called the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. In Germany they were known as "Separatists;" in America by the name "Old Lutherans." C. F. W. Walther was the leader. The strict confessional basis of the Missouri Synod is shown in its constitution adopted in 1847.

Sec. 3. In our congregations shall be recognized all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as God's revealed Word and all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the extracted Forms and Norm of the Word of God.... These are: the three Chief Symbols, the unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the same, the Schmalcald Articles, Dr. Luther's Smaller and Larger Catechisms, the Formula of Concord and the Visitation-Articles.

It is therefore allowed (that)

Sec. 4. No one may, moreover, become a member, still less an official of this congregation, nor have a share in the claims of a parishoner, other than he who: (a) is baptized; (b) holds himself to all the canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments as to the only divine precept and rule of faith and life, and (c) is acquainted with, amidst indeed a present lack of knowledge of all



the above mentioned Symbolical Books, at least the Augsburg Confession and the small Catechism of Luther, and holds himself thereto;...

Sec. 8. The incumbency in the congregation may be intrusted only to such a preacher who holds himself to all the canonical Books of the Old and New Testaments, as the revealed Word of God, and to all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church derived therefrom, of which paragraph 3 has mentioned, upon which the same, as well as the schoolmaster, is bound by his calling. 15

Only a few years after Walther came to this country, he began publishing a periodical known as Der Lutheraner. The first issue appeared on September 7, 1844. As editor, Walther announced the following program:

1. To familiarize the reader with the doctrines, the spiritual treasures, and the history of the Lutheran Church;
2. To furnish proof that the Lutheran Church is the ancient true Church;
3. To teach the reader how a true Lutheran, though a sinner, may be a firm believer and lead a truly Christian life;
4. To expose false doctrine and ungodly practice wherever they would be found, especially among people that call themselves Lutherans. 16

Through this periodical Walther called for a return to the Confessions. It was enthusiastically received by many in this country and did much to awaken the confessional consciousness among the Lutherans in the United States. Owen has this to say concerning Der Lutheraner: "What Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg did for Confessionalism in Germany through his publication of the Evangelische Kirchenzeitung, that Walther did in America through his editorship of Der Lutheraner." 17

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15. C. O. Kraushaar, op. cit., pp. 126-127. Translated by V. Ferm, op. cit., p. 126.

16. Ralph Dornfeld Owen, "The Old Lutherans Come," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, Vol. XX, (April, 1947), pp. 30-31.

17. R. D. Owen, ibid., p. 31. Ebenezer, Review of the Work of the Missouri Synod During Three Quarters of a Century, (St. Louis, 1923), pp. 41-52.



One of the most serious faults which the leaders of Missouri found with "American Lutherans" was their readiness to compromise in matters of doctrine. In this respect the "American Lutherans" were no better than the church in Germany. The Missouri Synod was determined to arouse a stronger confessional consciousness within the Lutheran Church in America. The Missouri Synod, through Der Lutheraner, strenuously objected to the concessions in Sacramental doctrines and practice by the "American Lutherans." In the celebration of the Lord's Supper, any Protestant could attend. The words of institution were spoken so that the doctrine of the Real Presence could be omitted. <sup>18</sup>

The Saxons of the Missouri Synod were uncompromising in their support of the Lutheran confessions as they were toward the Sacraments. They declared that the Symbolical Books were "the pure and uncorrupted explanation and statement of Divine Word." <sup>19</sup> The statement made by Dr. Dau a few years ago is the same as that of his predecessors. He said: "For one to declare that he accepts the Lutheran confessions 'as far as' they agree with the Scripture, not only throws suspicion on these confessions but also opens the door to doctrinal latitudinarianism andincerity." <sup>20</sup> This unconditional stand on the confessions influenced others

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18. Carl Mauelshagen, American Lutheranism Surrenders to Forces of Conservatism, pp. 102-104.

19. V. Fenn, What is Lutheranism? p. 4.

20. Ibid., p. 219.



and did much to bring about a return to the confessions. Neve says: "The imposing unity of the Missouri Synod, together with its size - for it soon grew to be the largest Lutheran Synod - exerted a mighty influence everywhere, and especially in the Eastern synods strengthened the confessional consciousness which had<sup>21</sup> already awakened from its slumber."

Charles Porterfield Krauth.

The leader in the Confessional development within the General Synod was Charles Porterfield Krauth, born in Virginia in 1823 and graduated from Gettysburg Seminary in 1841. His accepting the Confessions was not due so much to direct contact with Confessional Lutherans from Germany, but it was independent study. According to his biographer, by the year 1849 he had convinced himself "that the truth of the authoritative Word was nowhere set forth with such clearness, purity, and fullness, as in the collected Confessions of the Lutheran Church, and that in all their doctrinal teachings the Confessions were in<sup>22</sup> harmony with that Word."

Krauth fought "American Lutheranism," and his literary contributions to the Missionary and the Evangelical Review helped to strengthen the cause of conservative Lutheranism. In 1859 he published an English translation of Tholuck's Commentary on the Gospel of St. John. His chief work in 1872, The Conservative Reformation. He was very

<sup>21</sup>. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 186.

<sup>22</sup>. Adolph Spaeth, Charles Porterfield Krauth, Vol. I, pp. 160-161.



instrumental in the founding of the General Council. It was he who wrote the "fundamental principles of faith and polity" that established the basic character of the body.<sup>23</sup>

#### Reaction to the Prussian Union in Germany.

In 1817 Frederick William III decreed a union for the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Prussia. Hardly had the decree been published before a bold protest appeared in the form of 95 Theses published by Pastor Claus Harms.<sup>24</sup> The revolt against the Prussian Union in Germany caused an avalanche of articles defending the Lutheran Confessions. E. W. Hengstenberg, who was editor of the Evangelische Kirchenzeitung,<sup>25</sup> proclaimed confessional Lutheranism.

In 1841 at Breslau a Lutheran synod was organized with special reference to the Confessions. Interest in the Confessions was promoted by the publication of numerous editions of the Symbolical Books. Many pamphlets appeared which discussed, in one way and in another, the question of the authority and value to the Church of the Symbolical Books. However, the movement for confessional Lutheranism grew rapidly.<sup>26</sup>

Much of the literature produced in Germany in favor

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23. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 329-331. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 77.

24. English translation in "Lutheran Church Review," Vol. 35, (1916,) p. 357ff.

25. R. D. Owen, op. cit., pp. 6-9; V. Fern, The Crisis in American Lutheran Theology, pp. 120-123.

26. Lars P. Qualben, op. cit., p. 396.



of the Confessions found its way to America. They were read either in the original, or in translations that appeared on the pages of the Evangelical Review. Loehe published the Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und ueber Nord-Amerika. This monthly not only contained news about mission work in America, but also criticized the doctrinal expressions of the General Synod and to praise the Confessional Lutherans. The literature which was produced in Germany was an important factor in bringing the Lutheran Church in America to a strict confessional basis.<sup>27</sup>

#### The Return of the Pennsylvania Ministerium.

The Pennsylvania Ministerium had made rapid strides confessionally since 1823. The explanations which can be given for this confessional revival are as follows:

- 1) The Pennsylvania Ministerium was predominantly German and as such would have a natural aversion to the revivals which were sweeping the country.
- 2) Many conservative Lutherans who came to America round the middle of the nineteenth century found their way into the older congregations and synods. A number of influential Wuertembergers joined the Pennsylvania Ministerium and helped to deepen confessional loyalty. The literature which was produced at this time in Germany found its way into the hands of many men in the Pennsylvania Ministerium.
- 3) The Pennsylvania Ministerium used Luther's catechism

27. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 91. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., p. 191. H. E. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 419.

28. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., p. 190. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 105. H. E. Jacobs, op. cit., pp. 416-417.



and the evangelical hymns of the Lutheran Church. In  
 29  
 the English synods other literature was used. The  
 result was that such resolutions as this one were passed  
 at its convention in 1850:

That, like our father, we regard ourselves as  
 a part of the one and only Evangelical Lutheran  
 Church, that we too acknowledge the Word of God,  
 as contained in the Holy Scriptures, as the  
 only ground of our faith, and that we too have  
 never renounced the Confessions of our Church, but  
 continue to regard them as a faithful exposition  
 of the Divine Word. 30

By the year 1853 the Pennsylvania Ministerium placed  
 itself squarely on the confessions.

Whereas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church has,  
 of late, arrived at clearer views of its  
 doctrinal and other distinctive features; and,  
 whereas, we are justified in expecting that  
 both the internal and external welfare of our  
 church will be thereby essentially promoted;  
 and, whereas, we recognize the importance of a  
 historico-confessional basis for the church;  
 therefore, resolved,

A. That we also in common with the Evangelical  
 Lutheran Church of our fathers acknowledge the  
 collective body of the Symbolical Books as the  
 historico-confessional writings of the Evangelical  
 Lutheran Church, and that we also, like the  
 Evangelical Lutheran Church of former times,  
 accord to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and  
 Luther's Small Catechism an especial importance  
 among our Symbolical Books generally.

B. That we enjoin it upon all the ministers and  
 candidates of our church as their duty to make  
 themselves better and more thoroughly acquainted  
 with these venerable documents of the faith of our

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29. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 106.

30. English Minutes of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania,  
 1850 as quoted in S. E. Ochsenford, Documentary History of  
the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in  
North America, pp. 55-56.



fathers than has hitherto been the case with many.

C. That it is not by any means our intention hereby to diminish the absolute authority of the Holy Scriptures, but much rather to place them in the clearest light possible, and that we by no means design through these symbols to place constraint upon the consciences of any, but much rather through them to bind the conscience to the Holy Scriptures as the Divine Source of Truth. 31

When the Pennsylvania Ministerium rejoined the General Synod in 1853, it brought a large conservative force which was to be felt in the General Synod. It joined the General Synod again carefully guarding its peculiar rights. The resolution which was passed became the subject of violent controversy in the subsequent history of the Lutheran Church in America.

Resolved, That this Synod regards the General Synod simply as an association of Evangelical Lutheran Synods, entertaining the same views of the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, as these are expressed in the Confessional writings of our Evangelical Lutheran Church, and especially in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, and that we advert to the fact, that the General Synod is denied the right by its constitution, of making any innovations or alterations of this faith....

...But that, should the General Synod violate its Constitution and require of our Synod or any Synod, as a condition of admission or of continuation of membership, assent to anything conflicting with the old and long established faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, then our delegates are

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31. English Minutes of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, Reading, 1853, quoted in S. E. Oehsenford, op. cit., p. 68.



hereby required to protest against such action, to withdraw from its sessions, and to report to this body. 32

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32. Ibid., pp. 77-78.



#### IV. THE DEFINITE SYNODICAL PLATFORM.

The confessional movement in the Lutheran Church in America found its antithesis in what was called "American Lutheranism." The confessional movement was strengthened by the position of the Tennessee Synod and the attitude of Lutherans in New York and Missouri. The Lutheran reaction against the Prussian Union helped the movement in America. In the General Synod Dr. Krauth was the leader of the conservatives.

The leaders of the General Synod opposed this conservative movement. They felt that a church body adhering to the Symbolical Books would lose its spirituality and aggressiveness. They were alarmed at the confessional reaction and determined to resist it. They advocated a modified Lutheranism, conforming more to the Reformed doctrines. By a modified Lutheranism it was meant that the Lutheran Church in America must make wide concessions to the revivalistic and puritanic spirit<sup>1</sup> of the surrounding denominations.

The leaders in this movement were particularly Kurtz and Schmucker, with Sprecher in the West. Schmucker as professor at Gettysburg Seminary wielded a great influence.

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1. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 95; A. R. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 198-200.



He saved the General Synod from dissolution in 1823. The professor's pledge which he prepared, as well as the constitution for district synods, gave evidence that he was advanced confessionally. Later, when confessional Lutheranism became a dominant force, he became a leader<sup>2</sup> in opposing it.

While Schmucker was wielding his influence from the professor's chair, Kurtz was exercising his influence through the Lutheran Observer. Even the Augsburg Confession was severely criticized. He advocated the extensive use of revival methods and placed personal piety above everything else. Those who were opposed to these so-called "new measures" were called "head Christians."<sup>3</sup> *heart Christians also*

Dr. Sprecher had been trained by Dr. Schmucker and adopted the views of his teacher. He was president of Wittenberg College for twenty-five years and was quite pronounced in advocating "American Lutheranism."<sup>4</sup>

Efforts were made to turn back the forces of confessional Lutheranism. Dr. Kurtz was a member of the Maryland Synod *within this synod he attempted* but he tried in vain to commit that body to the "new measures." As to the confessions there was much uncertainty in the General Synod. The confessional basis recommended

2. Ante, pp. 42-43.

3. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 202-203.

4. Ibid., p. 203.



to district synods was "that the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God are taught in a manner substantially correct in the doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession."<sup>5</sup> In order to place the General Synod on a more definite basis, it was proposed in 1844 that the Maryland Synod prepare an "Abstract of Doctrines and Practices of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Maryland." Dr. Kurtz was the leader in preparing this "Abstract," but the synod refused to adopt it as it omitted or repudiated all distinctive Lutheran teachings.

On Regeneration - We believe that the Scriptures teach that regeneration is the act of God, the Holy Ghost, by which, through the truth, the sinner is persuaded to abandon his sins and submit to God, on the terms made known in the gospel. This change, we are taught, is radical, and is essential to present peace and eternal happiness. Consequently, it is possible, and is the privilege of the regenerated person to know and rejoice in the change produced in his....

Of the Sacraments - We believe that the Scriptures teach, that there are but two sacraments, viz.: Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in each of which, truths essential to salvation are symbolically represented. We do not believe that they exert any influence "ex opere operato," but only through the faith of the believer. Neither do the scriptures warrant the belief, that Christ is present in the Lord's Supper in any other than a spiritual manner....

Of the Symbolical Books - Luther's Larger and Smaller Catechisms, the Formula Concordiae, Augsburg Confession, Apology, and Smalkald Articles are called in Germany the Symbolical Books of the

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5. Ante, pp. 44-45.



church. We regard them as good and useful exhibitions of truth, but do not receive them as binding on the conscience, except so far as they agree with the word of God. 6

Dr. Schmucker and Dr. Sprecher were very much interested in the "Abstract." In 1845 a resolution was passed in the General Synod that a committee was to frame "a clear and concise view of the doctrines and practices of the American Lutheran Church." Dr. Schmucker was chairman of the committee. In 1850 the committee presented a report closely resembling the Maryland Synod "Abstract" and it was rejected by the General Synod. 7

The advocates of "American Lutheranism" now made a final attempt against Confessional Lutheranism. In September 1855, Schmucker, upon the advice of Kurtz and Sprecher, circulated anonymously the "Definite Synodical Platform." The general confessional basis recommended to the district synods includes, first, the acceptance of the Old and New Testaments as the only infallible rule of faith and practice; secondly, the acknowledgment of the two historic symbols of the Christian Church, viz., the Apostles' Creed and the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, as explanations of the Christian faith; and thirdly, the

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6. S. S. Schmucker, D. D., *The American Lutheran Church, Historically, Doctrinally, and Practically Delineated*, in several Occasional Discourses, quoted in V. Ferm, *op. cit.*, pp. 164-165.

7. A. R. Wentz, *op. cit.*, p. 206.



avowal of the "American Recension of the Augsburg  
<sup>8</sup>  
 Confession" as here in printed.

In the Definite Platform it is definitely stated that  
<sup>9</sup>  
 the Augsburg Confession contains five errors: 1) The  
 approval of the ceremonies of the Mass. The Platform cites  
 no proof for its contention that the mass and its ceremonies  
 were repudiated unanimously by the Lutheran Church in Europe  
 and America. The passages given "afford reason enough why  
 we cannot receive the Augsburg Confession without qualification."  
<sup>10</sup>  
 2) The second error found in the Augsburg Confession and  
 omitted in the new revision is that of "Private Confession  
 and Absolution." The reasons for omitting this article  
 in toto are, in the first place, there is no Scriptural  
 warrant for such a rite; secondly, doctrinally it is  
 dangerous to the principle "of justification of grace alone  
 through faith in Jesus Christ;" thirdly, it has no place in  
<sup>11</sup>  
 the way of salvation. 3) The third error is "The Denial  
 of the Divine Institution and Obligation of the Christian  
 Sabbath." The position taken by the Platform is that  
 Christians are obligated to observe the Christian Sabbath  
 as a day divinely instituted. Two arguments brought forth were:

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8. Definite Platform, Doctrinal and Disciplinarian, for  
 Evangelical Lutheran District Synods; Constructed in Accordance  
 with the Principles of the General Synod, pp. 5-6.

9. Ibid., p. 5.

10. Ibid., p. 21.

11. Ibid., pp. 25-26.



the Old Testament had its special day; that this day was not a mere Jewish institution but that it had been appointed "at the close of the creative week," which<sup>12</sup> makes it a pre-Jewish observance. 4) The fourth error found in the Augsburg Confession and omitted in the American Recension is the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. The Platform states: "Baptismal regeneration, either in infants or adults, is... a doctrine not taught in the word of God, and fraught with much injury to the souls of men."<sup>13</sup>

5) The Platform rejected the doctrine of the Real Presence. They claimed that the passage, "This is my body," is plainly figurative. The bread and wine are only emblems which are to remind us of the Lord's body and blood. Such<sup>14</sup> a doctrine is against man's reason.

To insure unity the author of the Platform advised its adoption by the synods of the General Synod, with the resolution "that we will not receive into our synod any minister who will not adopt this Platform."<sup>15</sup> Such a resolution would have excluded from the General Synod all who denied that the Augsburg Confession contained certain fundamental errors.

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12. Ibid., p. 27.

13. Ibid., p. 31.

14. Ibid., pp. 39-40.

15. Ibid., p. 3. H. E. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 425.



The reception of the Definite Synodical Platform was a great disappointment to Schmucker and his colleagues. It was adopted by only three small synods - East Ohio, Wittenberg, and Olive Branch Synods. Quite a number of the synods either flatly rejected the document or took no official notice of it. The strongest literary refutation was written by J. W. Mann bearing the title, A Plea for the Augsburg Confession in Answer to the Objections of the Definite Platform: An Address to All Ministers and Laymen of the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church of the United States. The emphatic rejection of the Platform spelled definite defeat to the "American Lutherans." Typical of the refutations of individual synods was that of the Pittsburgh Synod. This testimony was formulated by C. P. Krauth, "... we declare that, in our judgment, the Augsburg Confession, properly interpreted, is in perfect consistence with this our testimony, and with the Holy Scriptures, as regards the errors specified."<sup>16</sup>

When Dr. Kurtz found that he could not resist the conservative element in the Maryland Synod, he withdrew in 1857 and with others founded the Melancthon Synod. The "Declaration of Faith" was the doctrinal basis. Although it accepted the Augsburg Confession, it denied the same doctrines as did the Definite Synodical Platform. In 1859 it applied

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16. J. L. Neve, op. cit., p. 100. V. Ferm, op. cit., p. 312.



for admission to the General Synod. The General Synod now was faced with the problem of recognizing a body which stood four square on the declarations of the Platform. The application for admission of this body created a violent storm. C. P. Krauth, Jr. favored such a reception provided they would withdraw the implied charges against the Augsburg Confession.

We would fraternally solicit them (i.e., the Melancthon Synod) to consider whether a change, in their doctrinal basis, of the paragraph in regard to certain alleged errors, would not tend to the promotion of mutual love, and the furtherance of the great objects for which we are laboring together. 17

This action brought forth a violent protest from the delegates of the Pennsylvania Ministerium and the Scandinavian delegates attending the convention. 18 The admission of the Melancthon Synod was one of the causes for the breaking up of the General Synod. *It caused unrest and division.*

The Withdrawal of the Swedes.

In 1860 the General Synod was more of a "general" body than at any time in its history. A few leaders entertained the hope that a single organization would soon be effected. But in the next six years they occurred an exodus and the

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17. Proceedings of the Nineteenth Convention of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States, assembled in Pittsburg, Pa., 1859, quoted in V. Fern, op. cit., p. 338.

18. H. E. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 433.



General Synod lost nearly half of its members. The first group to withdraw was that of the Swedes and Norwegians from the Synod of Northern Illinois. In 1851 a number of Swedes and Norwegians under Prof. L. P. Esbjorn helped to form the Synod of Northern Illinois, a district synod of the General Synod. In 1854, one year after its affiliation with the General Synod, the leadership of the Synod of Northern Illinois was taken over by the more confessional Swedish Lutherans, who forced through a revision of the constitution by substituting for the words "mainly correct" as applied to the Augsburg Confession, the word "correct."<sup>19</sup> The Swedes were very much disturbed over the admission of the Melancthon Synod to the General Synod. Trouble arose between Esbjorn and some other professors at Springfield. The result was that Esbjorn resigned and moved to Chicago taking the Scandinavian students with him. Shortly after that all the Swedes and Norwegians formally left the Synod of Northern Illinois and in June 1860 founded the Augustana Synod. As a result of this withdrawal the conservative element in the General Synod was greatly weakened.<sup>20</sup>

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19. Carl Mauselshagen, op. cit., p. 181.

20. J. L. Neve, op. cit., pp. 101-102. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 216-217.



### Withdrawal of the Southern Synods.

The second break in the General Synod came in 1862. The convention which had been called for in 1861 had been postponed because of the Civil War. The southern delegates refused to participate in the convention of 1862. The reason was that the General Synod had passed a resolution proclaiming loyalty to President Lincoln. The southern Lutherans interpreted this as to mean that they were barred from future membership in the General Synod. In 1863 five district synods which had withdrawn organized "The General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Confederate States of America." The synod adopted a rather strict confessional statement.

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. 21

However, in 1866 the third paragraph was stricken from the Constitution. At this same convention it was decided not to rejoin the General Synod, but to plant



themselves "firmly upon the Augsburg Confession, the proud bulwark of Protestantism, despite all opposition from whatever source arrayed against us."<sup>22</sup>

#### Admission of the Franckean Synod.

The final crisis came in 1864, when the Franckean Synod applied for membership. In 1839 the General Synod had mentioned the Tennessee Synod and the Melanckthon Synod as the two extremes endangering Lutheran union. But in 1859 the Melanckthon Synod had applied for membership and had<sup>23</sup> been received. This caused the Franckean Synod to apply for admission, hoping it would be received since the Melanckthon had been admitted. However, the Franckean Synod had never accepted the Augsburg Confession. The attitude shown toward the Augsburg Confession is indicated by the charter of the western conference of the Synod:

Believing as we do with other good men, both in and out of the Lutheran Church, that the Augsburg Confession does teach Baptismal Regeneration, Christ's Bodily Presence in the Eucharist, Private Auricular Confession and Priestly Absolution, and sets aside the Divine Institution and Obligation of the Christian Sabbath, therefore no minister or candidate for the ministry who advocates a subscription to the Augsburg Confession as a test of ministerial office, or church membership, shall be received into our connection. Neither shall they be employed to teach in our classical or theological schools of learning, and we advise our churches not to employ such as their pastors. 24

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22. H. E. Jacobs, op. cit., pp. 453-454.

23. Ante, pp. 62-63.

24. Quoted in S. E. Ochsenford, op. cit., p. 73.



In place of the Augsburg Confession the Franckean Synod had adopted its own declaration of faith, in which the distinctive doctrines of the Lutheran Church were not found. The paragraph on baptism and the Lord's Supper is as follows:

9. That Christ has instituted the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper for the perpetual observance and edification of the church; baptism is the initiatory ordinance, and signifies the necessity of holiness of heart, and the Lord's Supper is frequently to be celebrated, as a token of faith in the atonement of Christ, and of brotherly love. 25

The Franckean Synod was to be "admitted as an integral part of the General Synod as soon as it shall give formal expression to its adoption of the Augsburg Confession as received by the General Synod." But on the following day the delegates of the Franckean Synod asked that the question be reconsidered, declaring that by accepting the constitution of the General Synod, they thought they had also accepted its confession of faith. Finally the Franckean Synod was accepted, provided it would adopt the Augsburg Confession as its doctrinal basis at its next convention. By this act it was considered that any synod could enter the General Synod, without declaring beforehand its adherence to the Augsburg Confession. 26

25. Quoted in H. E. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 458.

26. J. L. Neve, op. cit., pp. 102-103. V. Ferm, op. cit., p. 339. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., p. 221. H. E. Jacobs, op. cit., p. 455-458.



### Withdrawal of the Pennsylvania Ministerium.

When the Franckean Synod was admitted to the General Synod, the Pennsylvania Ministerium protested that the action was unconstitutional.

1. The Constitution of the General Synod, in Article III, Section 3, provides for the admission of regularly constituted Lutheran Synod is one that 'holds the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, so taught, are explained in the Augsburg Confession. The whole history of the Franckean Synod presents it as having no relation nor connection whatever with the Augsburg Confession; and upon diligent examination of its official documents we have failed to discover any evidence that it has ever accepted of said Confession. It is not, therefore, a regularly constituted Lutheran Synod; and, by admitting it as an integral part of the General Synod, the General Synod has violated its Constitution. 27

At the same time another document was submitted in which the Pennsylvania Ministerium stated that it was withdrawing from the General Synod on the ground that the conditions originally agreed upon in 1853 had been broken. The Pennsylvania Ministerium passed this resolution when it rejoined the General Synod,

...that should the General Synod violate its Constitution and require of our Synod assent to anything conflicting with the old and long-established faith of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, then our delegates are hereby required to protest against such action, to withdraw from its sessions, and report to this body. 28

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27. Quoted in S. E. Ochsenford, op. cit., pp. 74-76.

28. Quoted in S. E. Ochsenford, op. cit., pp. 77-78.



After the Pennsylvania Ministerium withdrew from the general body, the General Synod passed resolutions clarifying the confessional basis to be recognized by synods desiring to unite with the General Synod.

This synod, resting on the Word of God, as the sole authority in matters of faith and its infallible warrant, rejects the Romish doctrine of Transubstantiation and with it the doctrine of Consubstantiation, rejects the Romish mass and all the ceremonies distinctive of the mass; denies any power in the sacraments, as an opus operatum, or that the blessings of Baptism and the Lord's Supper can be received without faith; rejects auricular confession and priestly absolution; holds that there is no priesthood on earth but that of all believers, and that God only can forgive sins; and maintains the divine obligation of the Sabbath, and while we would with our whole heart reject any part of any confession which taught doctrines in conflict with this our testimony, nevertheless, before God and His Church we declare that, in our judgment, the Augsburg Confession properly interpreted is in perfect consistence with this our testimony and with the Holy Scriptures as regards the errors specified. 29

This was never more than a resolution for it lacked the sanction of the district synods to make it binding. 30

The York convention proposed a change in the constitution which was adopted by the district synods and became a part of the constitutions of the General Synod.

The amendment is as follows:

All regularly constituted Lutheran synods, not now in connection with the General Synod, receiving and holding with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of our fathers the Word of God, as contained in the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

30. J. L. Neve, *op. cit.*, p. 107.



Testaments, as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and the Augsburg Confession, as a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Word, and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word, may at any time become associated with the General Synod by complying with the requisitions of this Constitution and sending delegates to its convention to the ratio specified in Article II. 31

For many years many had been advocating the establishment of a seminary in Philadelphia as Muehlenberg had planned, but up to this time had not materialized. After the break at York, the Pennsylvania Ministerium established its own seminary in July 1864 in Philadelphia. Drs. C. F. Schaeffer, and W. J. Mann were the professors. This event convinced many that there was a definite break in the General Synod. 32

When the General Synod met in Fort Wayne, Indiana, on May 17, 1866, everyone was expecting a conflict. The president of the General Synod was Dr. Sprecher. When the delegates of the Pennsylvania Ministerium presented their credentials, he declared that the Ministerium was in a state of withdrawal and that the General Synod must first elect officers before it could act on restoring the relations of the Pennsylvania Ministerium. An appeal was made, but the General Synod supported the chairman. The purpose of the majority of the delegates at the convention was not to exclude the Pennsylvania Ministerium, but to compel its delegates to apply for readmission. When the Ministerium

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31. Quoted in S. E. Ochsenford, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

32. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., p. 223. J. L. Neve, op. cit., pp. 108-109.



would apply for admission, it would be admitted with the condition which the Ministerium attacked to its admission in 1853 annulled, or that the Ministerium would withdraw it of itself. The delegation of the Ministerium agreed to this, provided the General Synod would acknowledge their constitutional right to be represented before the election of officers and to take part in it. The majority of the General Synod refused to make such an acknowledgment because it would have kept the condition made by the Ministerium in 1853. As a result the delegates of the Pennsylvania Ministerium withdrew for the last time. <sup>33</sup>

#### Confessional Basis of the General Council.

A few weeks after the delegates of the Pennsylvania Ministerium had withdrawn from the General Synod, the Ministerium meeting in May, 1866, ratified the action of its delegates. At this same convention the Ministerium issued a call to all Lutheran Synods acknowledging the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, inviting them to form a new general body "on a truly Lutheran basis." The call was prepared by Dr. C. P. Krauth, and is known as "The Fraternal Address." <sup>34</sup>

The first convention was held at Reading, Pennsylvania,

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33. S. E. Ochsenford, op. cit., pp. 80-81; 84-86; 89-90; 91-92. A. R. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 225-226.  
J. L. Neve, op. cit., pp. 109-116.

34. S. E. Ochsenford, op. cit., pp. 123-124.



December 11-14, 1866. Delegates were present from thirteen synods and one synod was represented by letter. The principal work of this convention was the discussion and adoption of the theses on "Fundamental Principles of Faith and Church and Polity," which was prepared by Dr. Krauth.

IX. In thus formally accepting and acknowledging the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, we declare our conviction that the other Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, inasmuch as they set forth none other than its system of doctrine and articles of faith, are of necessity pure and scriptural. Pre-eminent among such accordant pure and scriptural statements of doctrine, by their intrinsic excellence, by the great and necessary ends for which they were prepared, by their historical position, and by the general judgment of the Church, are these: The Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Catechisms of Luther, and the Formula of Concord, all of which are, with the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, in the perfect harmony of one and the same scriptural faith. 35

The following year, November 20-26, 1867, the first regular convention was held in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Eleven synods adopted the documents of the Reading Convention. The German Iowa Synod and the Joint Synod of Ohio were represented, but did not join. The Missouri Synod was not represented and never joined. Though both the Missouri and Norwegian Synods were perfectly satisfied with the doctrinal basis adopted by the Reading convention, they were not ready to join. They recommended the holding

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35. Ibid., pp. 136-139.



of free conferences in which all synods might arrive at a common understanding of doctrines and practices as an outward expression of loyalty to the confessions.

Correspondence with the Missouri Synod ceased after  
36  
1869.

In 1867 the "American Lutheran" church was divided into three major groups, the remnants of the old General Synod, the General Council, and the General Synod of the South. The latter two synods had surrendered completely to the confessional basis of the "Old Lutherans." The General Synod was gradually drifting toward a more confessional basis. These groups remained until the formation of the United Lutheran Church in 1918.

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36. J. L. Neve, op. cit., pp. 158-159. Ebenexer, op. cit., p. 323.



### CONCLUSION

An examination of the doctrinal statements of the Lutheran groups from 1800 to 1867 reveals a gradual movement toward accepting the Lutheran Confessions. The Confessions were in the process of being accepted as true exhibitions of Scriptural doctrines. Such an attitude entitled the various groups to the name "Lutheran." In the subsequent years, differences still existed, but with patience and much deliberation many of these were eliminated. The hope remains that at some time all differences will cease to exist.



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