

### G. In Summary, an Evaluation

*The eminent church historian Philipp Schaff, in his Amerika, die politischen, sozialen und kirchlich-religiösen Zustände der Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Deutschen, aus eigener Anschauung dargestellt (Berlin, 1858), summarized the development of religious conditions, also of Lutheranism in America.*

The Old Lutheran division has just recently immigrated to America from Germany, chiefly from Saxony (the Stephanites), out of Prussia (Grabau and Ehrenstroem — who died a wretched man in California — and his adherents), and out of Bavaria (Loeche's missionaries). They are still totally German and have not mixed in the least with the English and the American spirit. Even though outwardly they are progressing quite well, they are still strangers and foreigners, in a new world. With the second generation things will probably look quite different. One of their preachers, an outstanding individual, told me that his own school children were scolding each other with "You dumb Dutchman" on the street — an evil omen for the future of Old Lutheranism in America.

① The pastors of the Old Lutheran group are for the most well indoctrinated, faithful, conscientious, and self-sacrificing, but at the same time, if a fortunate consequence does not hinder them, they are extremely exclusive and narrow-minded people (so much so) that they could hardly consider the most pious Reformed as a Christian and would not at any price partake of the Lord's Holy Supper with him. Luther is for them the highest human authority, and especially that Luther who in the discussion at Marburg, with tears in his eyes, denied the brotherly handshake of Zwingli. "God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure" (— as if these two were unconditionally identical! —) "Shall in eternity endure" is the characteristic motto of the Lutherans from St. Louis. With honorable zeal and great sacrifice they have founded two

theological seminaries in St. Louis and Fort Wayne. They maintain church order and discipline in their congregations and are concerned about their schools. Compared with the latitudinarian and uncertain experimentation of the Neo-Lutherans they have the advantage of a firm principle, a well-formed dogmatic basis, and a logical consistency, even though at times their logical consistency would lead them in an entirely different direction from one of their fundamental points. They are not even in agreement among themselves. Concerning the doctrine of the ministry, which has also become a firebrand of controversy among the strict symbolical Lutherans in Germany in spite of all honorable agreements of doctrinal unity, they are spread into two enemy camps and are vying with each other in their church papers from week to week with an antipathy and bitterness which in truth is not an honor to Lutheranism and Christianity and does not in the least command respect from the Anglo-American concerning this section of the German Christianity in case he should by chance hear of it. The Synod of Missouri, which was organized in 1847 and since then has grown rapidly, represents in this controversy, especially through the *Lutheraner*, edited by Professor Walther, the usual Protestant point of view, which considers the ministerial office as the mouthpiece of the universal priesthood and bases its belief on the published documents of the Lutheran Church and the private writings of their outstanding theologians. The Synod of Lutherans Immigrated from Prussia presents the catholicizing doctrine. This is set forth in *The Informatorium*, edited by Pastor Grabau in Buffalo, New York. It bases its stand especially on the doctrine of ordination and the universal priesthood of the baptized members, which have a very specific priestly office, on the basis of important proofs from

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Scripture and tradition. At the same time, however, this is done in a spirit which reminds one of the tumultuous times of Lutheran polemics, where it was proved clearly and decisively that the anathematized Calvinistic heretics had 666 theses in common with the Turks, and instead of praying to the living God they were praying to a "bellowing ox" or even "were praying to, and teaching, the living devil." Mr. Grabau, it is said, each year on Maundy Thursday is cursing and damning everyone from his pulpit, from the Baptists and Calvinists down to the Missouri "would-be-Lutherans and factious spirits" (*Maullutheranern und Rottengeistern*), who does not belong to the church, that is, his little synod, which is composed of about a half dozen Lutheran preachers. His anathematizations, however, are quite harmless and have not even set a barn on fire in Buffalo, much less anywhere else.

② The moderate Lutheran tendency standing as in the center of these two extremes, which in reality are associated by name only, really has the oldest American Lutheran tradition on its side, because the first missionaries came for the most out of the Halle Orphanage and from the Spener and Francke schools of Pietism, which were known to be not very strict symbolically and really half Reformed. This group is represented by the oldest and largest synod, the so-called Pennsylvanian, and in some degrees also by the Joint Synod of Ohio, which a few years ago has announced that the Symbolical Books, including the Formula of Concord, are obligatory. It does not sympathize with the exclusive spirit of the Old Lutherans, since its leaders are too Americanized already and know the English Reformed Church better than to accuse them of heresy unhesitatingly. *The Lutheran Standard*, which appears in Columbus, may in a manner be considered its organ. A goodly number of

their preachers, especially among the older men, have few firm convictions, are poorly educated, stagnant, and are much more concerned about building programs and politics than theology and church affairs. They follow almost blindly a few leading intellectuals. However, we must excuse them when we consider that 20 or 30 years ago there were no regular opportunities to gain a theological education in the German Church of America. A deeper spiritual life and a church consciousness developed within recent years in the Pennsylvania Synod. The most influential man in this movement in the last two decades was without a doubt Dr. R. Demme of Philadelphia, who was born in Altenburg. He is an outstanding pulpit orator and a man with a noteworthy solid, strong, and a true German personality, the author of the liturgy and new hymnbook in use in this synod. One of the most outstanding among the younger spiritual leaders is a colleague of his, the Rev. W. J. Mann of Philadelphia, who had studied theology in Wuerttemberg. He is endowed with extraordinary gifts, a lively spirit, a wide scope of knowledge, and an amiable character; he belongs to the school of the new Evangelical theology of Germany, which will probably come to the fore more and more in this body, since it would be very unnatural for the Lutheran Church to shut itself out from the evolution and progress in the theology of the mother country. To this group are also added many promising young theologians, some of whom were trained in America and some of whom have emigrated from Europe, who follow the same tendencies for the most part. The true task of the old Pennsylvania Synod lies herein, not only to be a conciliatory force between the ecclesiastical Old-Lutheranism and the Puritanic Neo-Lutheranism, but also at the same time to mediate between the European-German and the American in-



terests and thereby effect a drawing together and consolidation of the different elements in the Lutheran Church of America. This task it can rightly fulfill now for the first time, since its more progressive members have effected the passage of two important measures, the union with Gettysburg and with the General Synod. Previous to this the strongest and certainly not unfounded accusations were voiced against them because of their predominant un-Lutheran and un-German spirit. This synod has, after numerous unsuccessful attempts to establish their own theological school, set up a German professorship at the Gettysburg institution. No one, however, is filling this chair yet. The spirit of the institution had changed during that time and approached their views. Through the establishment of the professorship it has a legitimate permanent influence on the institution and on the next generation of pastors. Accordingly it has joined the General Synod and at its last session in 1853 sent 6 delegates, who used their voices in behalf of a stronger Lutheran and ecclesiastical influence.

The difference between these three camps of American Lutheranism makes itself felt more or less upon all the different phases of church life.

First of all, with reference to the doctrine and position towards the Symbolical Books, the Synods of Missouri and Buffalo of course naturally adhere, as do the strict Lutherans in Germany, to the entire Book of Concord, and especially also to the Formula of Concord as the consequent logical development of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and as the dividing line between the pure Lutheran doctrine and the Reformed as well as the Roman Catholic Church. The Pennsylvania Synod satisfies itself simply with the Augsburg Confession and the small Lutheran Catechism and assures itself of the Melancthonian tendency,

which manifestly is excluded by the Formula of Concord as Crypto- and Semi-Calvinism.

③ The Neo-Lutherans, on the other hand, have really given up all specific characteristics of Lutheran doctrine in contradistinction to the Reformed, with the exception of the rejection of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. In its stead they put the Arminian-Methodistic theory of the free will, also un-Lutheran. At the same time they not only hold fast to the antithesis of Romanism, but exaggerate it in a Puritanic sense. While it is true that the General Synod and the Gettysburg Seminary are built upon a certain acknowledgment of the Augustana, they hold to it, however, only according to its essential content, therefore with a restricted *quatenus*, which then naturally brings with it the danger that anyone can interpret it according to his own wishes. Dr. Schmucker has his own dogmatic position, which his numerous scholars and brethren in the faith have defined and characterized as follows: 1) the rejection of the binding authority of all Lutheran symbols, with the exception of the Augsburg Confession; 2) the acceptance of the latter, but only so far ("in a manner substantially correct") as it is an expression of the cardinal doctrines of the Bible as the only true norm of faith and life. The following Lutheran teachings and customs are rejected as unbiblical: a) the exorcism; b) the doctrine of original sin and original guilt; c) the private or auricular confession as it is taught in Luther's Small Catechism; d) the lax view of the Augustana on the Christian sabbath; e) the Lutheran doctrine of Baptism with reference to regeneration and of the Lord's Supper.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> A rare copy of the *Amerika* is available in C. H. I. August R. Suelflow, "Nietzsche and Schaff on American Lutheranism," *CHIQ.* XXIII (Jan. 1951), 149—153, has translated the section pertaining to Lutheranism in America. The translation is taken from this article.

Lutheran  
Confessions