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The Augsburg Confession
in the United States

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Taking Stock of Lutheranism

The articles in this issue form an American response to the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession. Written by a representative team of scholars, under the sponsorship of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. and Lutheran World Ministries and edited by Eugene L. Brand, they attempt to define the significance of the CA (Confessio Augustana) in the history of the United States. All this is part of a worldwide program of commemoration and self-examination inaugurated by the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strasbourg. To keep the document manageable in length, a selection process was employed resulting in a type of case-study approach. Inevitably this produced lacunae, including, for example, the question of relationships with other religions. The selection reveals the predilections of the drafting committee; another group may have chosen accents and contents differently.

The question of who we are, chapter one, can be broken down into periods — colonial, 19th century, and 20th century. The 19th century was a time of widely divergent attitudes, of confessional revivals and denominational splits, and of mutual distrust. The 20th century dawned with twenty different Lutheran bodies and has continued with bipolar confessional postures: ecumenical confessionalism (LCA, The ALC, AELC) and exclusive confessionalism (LC-MS, Wisconsin). Today Lutherans are almost completely Americanized, and they have become influential religious leaders. Contact with other Christian bodies has grown, but Lutherans strike a balance between concern for Lutheran unity and wider ecumenical responsibility. The dream of unity for all American Lutherans in this century seems doomed, though close cooperation and a move toward union characterizes the life of LCA, The ALC, and AELC.

The goal of Lutheran identity today is to become a reforming *movement* in national Christianity that will help the church think through issues of teaching and practice on the basis of justification

of faith. To make such a proposal to the church would be the highest commemoration of the Augsburg Confession. In sharing our view of the Gospel as the unconditional preaching of justification we could again take the CA as a practical, daily, and uncomplicated norm.

Chapter two spells out how the CA has been applied within the lives of the churches. Corporate worship is always at the center of church life, and the production of the *Lutheran Book of Worship* serves as a test case for evaluating the impact of CA. All the American churches took quite seriously the doctrinal implications of this new hymnal, and many of its affirmations and innovations can be seen as "Augustanic" in content and tone. The primacy of baptism, an emphasis on lay leadership in worship, and the centrality of Holy Communion in the church's worship are three positive contributions of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship, which drafted LBW. One could also mention the emphasis on the sacramental benefits of both Communion and Absolution and the restoration of a rite of individual confession and forgiveness. Like the CA, the church's liturgy confesses human sin and gives thanks for God's saving acts in Jesus Christ.

When it comes to matters of order and organization, the CA has had little direct effect. Our essayists, however, provide a comprehensive review of major issues in policy — congregational or centralized authority, bureaucratic change, centralization of power in LC-MS, and the ongoing quest for a definition of the ministry. In deciding for the ordination of women, the majority of American Lutherans could make no explicit use of CA, but appealed to the Lutheran conception of the gospel and the use of Scripture, and to the confession's openness about the ordering of the church.

Programs and materials have also been affected by the CA. The decision to postpone confirmation and to lower the age of communion to the age of ten are examples of deliberate change in

prevailing Lutheran practice. A number of studies and documents dealing with mission, planning, seminary training, and the effectiveness of Lutheran nurture are surveyed in the search for the CA's role in popular church life.

Social concerns from the revolutionary period, through slavery and the rise of the labor movement, to the many contemporary ethical issues, have met with an often uncertain witness from the church of the Augsburg Confession. Yet most would find the CA opposed to ethical activism *and* quietism, to secularism *and* clericalism. Lutherans in this century have tried to overcome the rigidly dualistic understanding of the two kingdoms typical of their forebears. A two kingdoms hermeneutic, nevertheless, guards against christianizing society or secularizing the church.

The focus of chapter three is on ecumenical relations. Our past has been marked by the divergent positions of a Schmucker and a Walther, and by the varying extent to which the "Old Lutheran" position was worked out. Within the orthodox doctrinal position could be found a considerable range between Missouri and the General Council, and the alphabet soup of 20th century Lutheranism — NLC, ULCA, LCA, The ALC, LC-MS, AELC, LC/USA — has provided ample opportunity for working out ecumenical and exclusivistic understandings of CA.

Ecumenical dialogues have flourished during the last generation. Lutheran discussions with the Reformed could have led to pulpit and altar fellowship had not inter-Lutheran troubles intervened. Participants in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues have produced a spate of excellent publications in ecumenical theology while conversations with the Episcopalians have identified their concern about our supposed sub-catholic ministry and our concern about their supposed doctrinal formlessness. But both sides in this case have proposed that such differences could be most easily handled within greater fellowship.

The possibility of a doctrinally and structurally united Lutheranism offers many internal benefits and may well be an effective step toward unity with other Christian churches. Consider this heady prospect: "As Lutherans draw nearer to each other and to all those who believe the gospel, they are laying the foundations for a free and genuinely ecumenical council in which reconciliation with other parts of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church can solemnly and publicly be manifested."

If Lutherans are to be a confessional church, their confession must have a number of marks or characteristics: confession is proclamation in crisis; confession takes place in a context where the unity of new interpretation and of fidelity to tradition is threatened; confession establishes norms for subsequent Gospel-proclamation; confession is always *over against* those from whom the challenge comes; confession is always on behalf of the whole Christian community. Chapter four, therefore, asks us to make these marks our own if we wish to be called confessional Lutherans.

And so, with apologies to the framers of the conclusion of CA, par. 6, we have desired to present the following articles as a declaration of our confession and the teaching of our American sisters and brothers. If anyone should consider that they are lacking in some respect, we are ready to present further information in subsequent issues on the basis of the divine Holy Scripture.

Your most obedient servant:
Ralph, citizen of St. Louis
editor

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Chapter 1
The Augsburg Confession and Denominational Identity

Establishing Lutheran Identity In The United States

The Lutheran Church traditionally has pointed to the Augsburg Confession (CA) as the chief statement of its identity. At the 450th anniversary of that confession, therefore, self-examination is a most appropriate form of commemoration. What role has the CA played, and what role does it now play, in giving shape and vitality to the life and mission of Lutheranism in the United States?

The purpose of this study is, on the one hand, to help Lutherans in America clarify their sense of identity and mission. Equally, the purpose is to communicate to Lutherans outside North America, and to non-Lutheran neighbors here and abroad, some insight into who we Lutherans in the United States are. Our concern is to examine not only where we have been and where we are now, but also, in some sense at least, in what direction we should be moving.[1]

Beginnings

Dutch, Swedes, Finns, and Germans, together with other Europeans, shared in populating the early American colonies. Germans became the largest non-Anglo-Saxon bloc; Lutherans became the largest religious bloc among the Germans. Predominantly poor, widely scattered, meagerly supported ecclesiastically, "foreign" in the colonial culture, still groping for a sense of autonomy and mission, the German Lutherans nevertheless gradually developed a certain sense of identity.

Confessional diversity characterized colonial Lutheranism: (1) There was one state-established Lutheran colony: New Sweden (1638). It was nominally orthodox. The Swedish crown lost territorial control within less than twenty years, but it continued to supply clergy for over a century. When the Swedish colonists swung over to the English language, however, their churches chose to become Episcopal rather than make common cause with their German Lutheran neighbors. No other colonies were founded on the American seacoast by Lutheran states in Europe; indeed, it is significant that the vast majority of colonial German (and Dutch) Lutherans came from territories which did not have a Lutheran state church. (2) There were some decidedly orthodox Lutherans, mostly from northern Germany. (3) Predominantly, however, the German Lutherans (and Reformed) were moderate pietists. Most of them came from southwestern Germany (they were indiscriminately called "Palatines"), but they received their support, such as it was, from Halle and Augsburg, and from Lutherans in London and Amsterdam.

The pietistic Lutherans were neither sectarian nor anti-orthodox. Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, the patriarch of colonial Lutheranism, pledged many

new congregations to the Lutheran symbolical books and defended his orthodoxy against several adversaries. In those times and circumstances, however, the symbolic books were more a traditional badge of identity than a dynamic doctrinal center. Lutherans experienced some theological tensions but no major confrontations except for that of Muhlenberg with the Moravian, Zinzendorf. Nevertheless Lutherans, despite considerable fraternization, generally marked themselves off from the German and Dutch Reformed. Proposals of merger never commanded great support, nor were the differences between the two sides as slight as implied by the common dictum that the one side prayed *Vater Unser* while the other prayed *Unser Vater.* Germans "of the Augsburg Confession" showed many strong if indirect influences from their churchly tradition: in style of worship, the role of the sacraments in pastoral care, instruction (especially through Luther's *Small Catechism* and Lutheran hymnody) and — with their German Reformed and some English-speaking neighbors — insistence on an educated ministry and on the pietism-flavored cultivation of "experiential" or "living" piety. Already in the mid-18th century colonial Lutherans, adapting ideas from Amsterdam and London Lutherans and from the local Presbyterians, also began to develop autonomous forms of church order suitable for a free and pluralistic society.

At all these points, as elsewhere in history, it is important to note that the role of the Lutheran confessions in American church life cannot be assessed exclusively in terms of explicit allusions to them. Clearly visible in the life-style of colonial Lutherans were characteristics of the well-established Lutheran tradition: a central commitment to the gospel of grace, orderliness, but also flexibility in regard to ecclesiastical forms, a sense of the relationship between church and common life. That relationship confronted the colonists, for example, in their dilemma of citizenship and revolution.

Nineteenth Century

The youthful nation, aided by a vast influx of European immigrants, strode into the 19th century with an exuberant spirit and great eagerness to push across the continent. With the disestablishment of religion in the states, meanwhile, all the churches were put to the challenge of strictly voluntary self-support. Lutherans, starting with the disadvantages of "foreign" languages and little experience in ecclesiastical autonomy, met that challenge rather well. As the American denominational pattern was taking shape at the beginning of the century Congregationalists and Presbyterians were the leading groups. By the end of the century Methodists and Baptists had raced to a commanding numerical lead among Protestant bodies, but Lutherans were in fourth place and soon would become third.

In a context of population mobility, religious indifference, and rationalism, and in the context of religious pluralism, Lutherans began to face the test of clarifying their identity. As Lutheran synods began to proliferate, thoughtful leaders formed a General Synod (1820), a loose confederation for mutual support and counsel. At the time, no tight organization or confessional control would have commanded acceptance. Young S.S. Schmucker of Gettysburg, chief proponent of the General Synod, advocated the CA as the rallying point for Lutherans but, in emphasizing absolute

allegiance to the Scriptures alone, he interpreted it in a latitudinarian fashion. His formula for ordination (1829) prescribed the question: "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?" Such a commitment, Schmucker thought, would be definite enough for Lutherans of various stripes to recognize one another, but genial enough to enable them to cooperate with other "evangelical" (non-Roman, non-Unitarian) Protestants in the "advancement of Christ's kingdom." Rising confessional consciousness in the second and third quarters of the 19th century, however, brought this conception of Lutheran identity and mission under increasing criticism. Schmucker's opponents detected in his formula three equivocations: fundamental, substantial, and doctrinal.

But it was waves from the confessional awakening in Germany which constituted the chief force which polarized Lutheranism in America around mid-century. Rationalism and subsequent movements based on the self-sufficiency of the human spirit challenged Christianity at its core. Among the counter-attacks was an energetic revival of Lutheran confessional consciousness, which maintained that God's truth is found purely and authoritatively in the symbolic books as interpreted by 17th century orthodoxy. This confessional revival, a minority movement in Germany, became a major influence in North America. Especially among the immigrants on the western frontier, but also among the people of the more settled East, Lutheran confessional precision appealed to many as the way to establish a community proclaiming the pure gospel of Christ, and to counter the rising tide of secularism and the many denominational versions of the gospel which Lutherans found defective.

There was considerable disagreement among Lutherans, meanwhile, on just how this community should be identified and ecclesiastically controlled. In the East the Ministeriums of Pennsylvania and New York became the leading conservative forces summoning Lutherans to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the other symbolical books. They led in the formation of the General Council (1867). In the Midwest the Missouri Synod together with several other conservative bodies established in the Synodical Conference (1872) a pattern for Lutheran cooperation based on doctrinal allegiance to the whole *Book of Concord* and complete agreement in church practice.

A great flurry of synodical realignments in the latter 19th century, however, suggested that even those synods which professed unqualified allegiance to the entire *Book of Concord* would not necessarily find themselves united. Switches took place in General Council and Synodical Conference affiliation. The five major midwestern conservative forces — the Missourian, Joint Ohio, German Iowa, Norwegian and Augustana Synods — all concluded the century out of fellowship. In the meantime the General Synod, repudiating Schmucker's lax view of the authority of the CA but still interpreting the Confessions more flexibly than its rivals did, also continued to flourish and grow.

The picture is completed by sketching developments among the Scandinavians: the Swedes gathered mainly in the Augustana Synod, which aligned itself solidly with the General Council's form of doctrinal conservatism. The Danes

and the Finns both split internally, chiefly over tensions between conservative pietism and cultural Christianity or state-church tradition. The Norwegians, most numerous of the Scandinavian immigrants, were also the most deeply fragmented. Their eventual move toward a massive union in 1917 came about on a conservative doctrinal basis, but one which made room for a degree of theological diversity.

In the 19th century context, then, we can discern four major alternatives for expressing Lutheran identity and church alignments: (1) The CA is a "substantially correct" interpretation of Scripture, but subject to improvement by recension (Schmucker's "American Lutheran" party in the General Synod).[2] (2) The historic CA, without revision, is the authoritative and sufficient symbol of Lutheran unity, but it is to be interpreted with some flexibility (this view, rejecting Schmucker's stand, became the dominant position in the General Synod from 1986 on). A later spokesman wrote: "The Augustana Confession is the symbol of Lutheran catholicity; all the other distinctive portions of the *Book of Concord* are symbols of Lutheran particularity, creeds of Lutheran Churches, but not in an undisputed sense of the Lutheran Church."[3] (3) The *Book of Concord* in its entirety presents the correct doctrine of Scripture, and the CA must be interpreted through the Formula of Concord; ecclesiastical practice and discipline, moreover, are a necessary test of true allegiance to Lutheran doctrine (Missouri Synod and other "Old Lutheran" bodies in the Synodical Conference). (4) The CA is "by pre-eminence" the document by which a Lutheran is identified, but the other Lutheran confessions also are "in the perfect harmony of one and the same scriptural faith" (General Council). The General Council steering between the "laxity" in the General Synod and the "rigidity" of Missouri, tried to uphold what it regarded as the position of full historic Lutheranism. Closely related was the position maintained by Wilhelm Loehe's disciples, the German Iowa Synod (which adopted a limited relation with the General Council).

The actual dynamics of latter-19th century confessional rivalry and unity efforts in the United States will require closer attention in Chapter Three of this study. In general, however, we may observe here:

(1) All the Lutheran bodies claimed to abide in the genuine faith of the CA.

(2) Officially, most Lutherans claimed that right doctrine was the touchstone for determining church identity and unity, and that right doctrine would produce and guard right life.

The majority assumed that true Lutheranism is to be identified primarily in terms of the doctrinal tradition stated in the whole *Book of Concord.* Sharp disputes arose, however, over whether this doctrinal tradition was fixed and errorless, or subject to a degree of diversity of interpretation, whether or not the Lutheran confessional tradition presented a pattern of church practice and discipline which both constituted a necessary mark of an "orthodox" Lutheran church.

(4) The prevailing mood among synods was mutual distrust; church unity and even cooperation were matters that had to be negotiated doctrinally; the goal was the establishing of "pulpit and altar fellowship." Examples of these efforts were Ohio's "Four Points" (1868) and the General Council's "Galesburg Rule" (1875). Bitter theological wars were fought, chiefly among the mid-

western conservative synods, over such doctrines as church and ministry, chiliasm, whether there are any "open questions" in the Scriptures, and predestination (by far the most bitter controversy). Moreover, conflicts over such practices as revivalist techniques ("New Measures," fought over in both East and West), sabbath obligation, membership in secret societies or "lodges," praying with "heterodox" Lutherans, were interpreted by most Lutherans as essentially theological issues, clear corollaries of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. And yet it was plain that none of these controversies could be settled by an explicit appeal to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession itself.

(5) This polemical mood enormously reinforced the already strong tendency of immigrant groups to face inward upon themselves, at the expense of establishing broader religious, cultural, economic and political contacts in American society. For most Lutherans in this era, ecumenical responsibility meant chiefly assuming the role of a holy remnant, a brand snatched from the burning. Lutherans were especially repelled by the growing tendency of Protestants to find their identity in practical programs rather than in doctrinal clarity.

(6) Nonetheless, Lutherans on all sides were making sincere and at times heroic efforts to discern and remain faithful to their historic tradition. All these efforts, however, did not produce the longed-for Lutheran unity nor, apart from the effectiveness of competitive zeal, establish the effectiveness of Lutheran mission. Some Lutherans sensed the need for reappraisal not only of ecclesiastical positions but also of presuppositions and strategies; others reaffirmed their traditional patterns. But as the century finished its course, none were left unchanged.[4]

Twentieth Century

In the early 20th century, as the United States was beginning to enter the arena of international power, the mainline Anglo-Saxon Protestant churches by and large were still confident that they had been the chief religious and moral force in shaping this "God-favored" nation. Except in the East, Lutherans were generally regarded as outsiders to this ostensibly dominant influence. For their part, the Lutherans welcomed the freedom and religious pluralism which enabled them to concentrate on their own affairs. Most of them had developed a curious attitude of social and cultural isolation, if not inferiority, coupled with religious or doctrinal superiority. Their phenomenal record of growth simply delayed their critical examination of these patterns.

The 20th century has been a time of bewildering change. In the first half of the century technological advances, expanding political, commercial, and cultural influence, and military power in two world wars continued to bolster American self-confidence. But since then accelerating changes in every area of life and the radical disintegration of traditional patterns of thought and life have progressively undermined this complacency. The nation has had to face the limits of its own skill and wisdom as well as the rise of effective forces in other parts of the world. Traditional Christian moral values have been challenged frontally by both secularistic and religious alternatives. By the 1960s and 70s, moreover, the mainline religious groups had lost their impressive growth rate, and many, including Lutherans, have experienced several years of net loss in membership. All these groups have been shaken awake by such challenges to the

adequacy of their belief-patterns and their practical programs. To a considerable degree, Christian triumphalism in America has been chastened.

Within this vastly changing scene, Lutheranism as a denominational family in America has undergone enormous changes:

Cooperation and Union. The 20th century began with over twenty autonomous Lutheran bodies. But a strong tide (though with notable countercurrents) soon swept them toward cooperation and merger. The Norwegian (later called Evangelical) Lutheran Church merger of 1917 united almost 90% of Norwegian Lutherans. Two previously disputed ways of expressing the doctrine of election were both recognized as legitimate. Following the tradition of Norway, the church officially accepted the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's *Small Catechism* but did not reject the other symbolical books.

In 1918 the General Council, the United Synod South and the General Synod (eastern bodies separated since the 1860s) formed the United Lutheran Church. In 1888, all three bodies had cooperated in producing the Common Service, and they had gradually effected cooperation in several other areas. The new body established its doctrinal statement upon the Scriptures, the three "Ecumenical" creeds, and the *Book of Concord,* but in a stratified manner which offered recognition to all churches which "sincerely hold . . . the doctrines of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession." It also declared that the other 16th century documents are "in the harmony of one and the same pure scriptural faith".

In 1930, after long and painstaking doctrinal negotiations, the Joint Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo synods merged to create the American Lutheran Church. In its doctrinal basis it confessed "each and all of the Symbolical Books" as "the true exposition . . . of the faith;" declared "unity in doctrine and practice the necessary prerequisite for church fellowship," thus rejecting all "unionism"; and denounced lodges which teach salvation by works.

The Missouri Synod, meanwhile, cooperating only within the Synodical Conference, reinforced its strict position on orthodox doctrine and exclusivistic practice by adopting in 1932 its lengthy *Brief Statement.* It also engaged actively in negotiations with other midwestern bodies, however, to seek support for its conception of Lutheran unity.

Meanwhile, eight bodies, overcoming their hesitation to commit themselves to inter-Lutheran cooperation, even "in external matters," formed in 1918 the National Lutheran Council, primarily to meet wartime and postwar needs. The story of this remarkable agency shows how inextricably related are the questions of identity and mission. The council survived an early backlash of criticism, chiefly by the theological conservatives, and by the time of World War II it had recovered the trust of its member churches, enabling it to develop an amazingly aggressive and effective program of service at home and abroad.

The dynamics of all these organizational changes cannot be spelled out here.[5] They all have to do, however, with the manifold confrontations of two types of confessional hermeneutic which E. Clifford Nelson has dubbed "ecumenical confessionalism" and "exclusive confessionalism." The classic episode of these confrontations took place within the National Lutheran Council in 1919 between Presidents F.H. Knubel (ULCA) and H.G. Stub (Norwegian Lutheran Church). Their clash reached

outward expression, on the one hand, in the ULCA's "Washington Declaration" (1920) and on the other hand in the "Minneapolis Theses" (1925). The issues were whether doctrinal consensus is based on the "orthodox" view of scriptural inerrancy or on what the ULCA claimed was a more "evangelical" conception of the infallibility of the gospel message, and whether Lutheran ecumenical responsibility requires or forbids cooperation where theological consensus is not complete. In its "Savannah Resolution" (1934) the ULCA repeated its willingness to recognize as Lutheran "all Christian groups which accept the Holy Scriptures . . . and sincerely receive . . . the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church (especially the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism) . . ." It added: "We set up no other standards or tests of Lutheranism . . ." and expressed the "belief that we already possess a firm basis on which to unite in one Lutheran Church in America and that there is no doctrinal reason why such a union should not come to pass." Here was manifestly a different conception of Lutheran "doctrine" from that which had dominated the 19th century struggles based on repristinated orthodoxy.

The conservative criticism within the National Lutheran Council, meanwhile, resulted in the formation of the American Lutheran Conference (1930) by five of the council's members: the Norwegian, American, Augustana Lutheran churches, and small Danish and Norwegian bodies. This Conference was a power bloc based on the "exclusive confessionalism" of the Minneapolis Theses. It became a useful laboratory for testing the adequacy of this confessional hermeneutic.

A new wave of ecclesiastical realignment appeared after World War II. The eight bodies of the National Lutheran Council were reduced to two by mergers creating The American Lutheran Church (1960) and the Lutheran Church in America (1962). The former was founded on the basis on the Minneapolis Theses by four American Lutheran Conference members. The Augustana Church, which had swung independently toward the "ecumenical confessional" position, now joined with the ULCA and small Finnish and Danish bodies to form the latter. Although rival conceptions of Lutheran identity were operative in the two mergers, the new bodies (embracing nearly two-thirds of over eight million Lutherans in the United States and Canada) remained friendly and proceeded to grow even closer in spirit.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod had achieved doctrinal agreement with the (former) ALC ("Common Confession," 1950/53) yet had rejected church fellowship on the basis of it. Now, although still maintaining that doctrinal unity must precede fellowship, yet engaging cautiously in several forms of cooperation with the National Lutheran Council and its members, Missouri found it possible to join The ALC and the LCA in establishing the Lutheran Council in the USA and a Canadian counterpart. Founded in 1966, the LC/USA replaced the National Lutheran Council as an agency for selective cooperation. The USA National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation — renamed Lutheran World Ministries in 1977 — remained a separate entity.

The LC-MS took an active role in launching bilateral confessional dialogues, a far-reaching cooperative restudy of Confirmation and First Com-

munion, and a joint project to produce a new hymnal and service book. In 1965 it adopted a remarkable set of "Mission Affirmations," which urged an "evangelical" rather than "legalistic" approach to the church's mission. A conservative reaction, however, soon set in. Missouri's reinterpretation of its position on church relations had already aroused such tension that in 1963 the Synodical Conference disintegrated. Tensions also mounted within the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod itself, and a traditionalist conservative campaign won synodical control in 1969. Through President J.A.O. Preus' "A Statment of Scriptural and Confessional Principles" (1972), the new administration announced its exclusive and orthodox confessional identity in the most uncompromising terms. Missouri still maintains its membership in the LC/USA, especially to press for ongoing explorations of doctrinal unity. In the area of practical cooperation, however, it severely reduced its support. Meanwhile, polarization within the synod caused a schism; the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, a splinter body favoring much closer cooperation with fellow Lutherans, formed in 1976.

Americanization. Shortly after World War I many ethnic Lutherans began to become "Americanized," abandoning their linguistic isolation. As Lutherans entered the mainstream of the rapidly changing nation, they discovered that they occupied a surprisingly strong position in the secular as well as the religous realm. Intellectually, artistically, and in public affairs, they began to make an impact on the national scene and to provide leadership.

Theological Stance. At the same time Lutherans were gradually outgrowing their theological isolationism. A striking editorial in the *Christian Century* in 1942 had declared:

> *In the rediscovery by American Protestantism of the truth and the faith through which the Reformation brought new spiritual life to Western Christianity, Lutherans of America would do well to weigh the fact that they have played an almost negligible role . . . The gross fact is that our American churches have for two decades been moving in a general way toward the position occupied by their Lutheran brethren, but only the slightest credit can be taken by the Lutheran churches for this rapprochement.*[6]

This pattern soon changed. Opening themselves to broader currents of biblical, historical, theological, ethical, and liturgical thought, Lutheran theologians have gained and also contributed both critical and constructive insights which have greatly affected Lutheran and non-Lutheran thinking alike. Whether or not this greater openness of thought is a faithful development of historic Lutheranism is a disputed question which we shall examine later.

Social Posture. Through the National Lutheran Council and the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., the Lutheran churches have become increasingly active and realistic in addressing great social problems. They achieved an impressive record in wartime and postwar humanitarian service. To some extent Lutherans have managed to alter their traditional pattern of social quietism without simply turning into another pragmatically-oriented American Protest denomination. Historian Sidney Mead has remarked that Lutherans are theologically the "least eroded" of the mainline Protes-

tant groups; they still retain the abilty to face great problems theologically, viz. to ask what the implications of the gospel are for a given problem. As for programs of churchwide social action, the Lutheran record has not been aggressive.

Ecumenical Position. There has been a great change likewise in the ecumenical outlook of Lutherans. With the exception of the General Synod, they had been highly suspicious on both theological and practical grounds of early 20th century ecumenical organizations. By mid-century, however, some American Lutherans were instrumental in founding the Lutheran World Federation (1947), the World Council of Churches (1948) and the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (1950), and Lutherans have exercised a continuing influence in them. Since the 1960s, moreover, Lutherans have been heavily involved in bilateral confessional dialogues. This area of ecumenical concern will engage our closer attention in chapter three.

To summarize the current situation of American Lutheranism (nearly nine million members strong) in 1980:

(1) The ostensible influence of mainline Christianity (and Judaism) in the American scene has been radically challenged. However, within the sphere of that religious influence which remains soberly vigorous, Lutherans have attained a new prominence. Almost completely Americanized, they have established their credentials for influential participating in American society and a share in its religious leadership.

(2) Lutherans work in much closer contact than ever before with other Christian bodies, yet a certain aloofness remains. Lutheranism still self-consciously maintains its identity; it continues its struggle to learn how to strike a proper balance between concern for Lutheran unity and ecumenical responsibility.

(3) Lutheran internal fragmentation has been sharply reduced both organizationally and ideologically. In terms of confessional outlook, Lutherans seem to be assuming a bipolar pattern: the LCA, The ALC, and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches on the one side, the LC-MS and the Wisconsin Synod on the other. All but the last-named, meanwhile, remain engaged through the LC/USA in some areas of practical cooperation and in the ongoing quest for doctrinal unity.

Doctrinal unity has been one goal in the Lutheran struggle for identity within the context of American Protestantism and culture formed by Anglo-Saxon influences. Is there a further role for the CA in the present and future as the Lutheran churches continue to struggle?

Prospect

The Augsburg Confession's Function in Identity

There is disagreement about the function of the CA's propositions in the life of an American-style denomination, a disagreement which the CA itself cannot resolve, since it does not envisage any such churchly entity as an American-style denomination. All types of confessional hermeneutic considered earlier in this chapter are still present in American Lutheranism; and the adherents of each are convinced — perhaps rightly — that if only all could be brought to share their hermeneutic, Lutheran identity would be decisively advanced. But how is this conversion to be achieved? Not, at least, by the CA, since it is about the reading of the CA that there is dissensus.

An American voluntarist denomination cannot, for example, exist without

some list of "fundamental" doctrines, which all who affiliate themselves must, with greater or lesser passion, affirm. The "fundamentalist"/"modernist" division does not mark a division on this point; "modernists" simply have differently accented lists. But can "justification by faith alone" be such a fundamental? Can it function as one item in a list of things that must be believed? What can it mean to say that we *must* believe that we are justified by believing? Or, for another example, can we legitimately search the CA for references to doctrines variously affirmed or denied by "fundamentalists" and "modernists"/"liberals" and argue from such references that the CA commits us in each case to one or the other side of the controversy? Can, for example, a Lutheran body ally itself with the Southern Baptists in the matter of "inerrancy" and legitimately justify this alliance by the CA's references to scriptural authority? Or can another Lutheran body legitimately use the CA's lack of a theory of such authority to make the absence of a theory a matter of principle?

At present the liveliest branch of American Christianity is the "evangelical" revival, an attempt to return to the power and authenticity of the great American "evangelical kingdom" which prevailed prior to the "fundamentalist"/"modernist" division. The questions posed to American denominations by this movement are posed also to the Lutherans: what sort of "method" can legitimately be used to "convert"? What experiences are necessary marks of faith, if any? It may seem clear to most Lutherans that the CA will not let Lutherans be "evangelical" in this style; yet S.S. Schmucker, American Lutheranism's first great confessionalist, thought the opposite during evangelicalism's first great period. And if we are not "evangelicals," do we therefore belong to "mainline" Protestantism? It is unlikely that the CA will make the choice for us this time, any more than the first time around, when Schmucker found one answer in it and his own students found the contrary.

All American Lutherans have decided views on these and a multitude of similar questions. They even support their views by arguments from "Lutheran" principle. But it is clear that neither allegiance to the CA as a norm nor affirmation of its propositional contents can resolve disagreements of *this* sort, or they would long since have been resolved.

Identity as Reforming Movement

There may, however, be another kind of Lutheran identity needed and possible in America, having both better prospects and more use for the CA. It would be, moreover, an identity closely akin to the original Lutheran coherence. The great American denominations — *including* the Lutheran — are not in fact very different from one another; indeed, it sometimes seems that their organizational separatism varies inversely with the theological, liturgical, and missionary relevance of their separation. Ecumenical discussions in this country invariably reveals that the living problems are shared by all present and that disagreement about solutions cuts across denominational lines. This should not really surprise anyone, since the problems and alternatives of American denominationalism are basically defined by political and organizational disagreements inside the Reformation in England and Scotland.

One common characteristic of the homogeneous national Christianity is

how little it has been affected by, or even exposed to, Lutheranism's original proposal: that discourse and practice in the church must always be so shaped as to open the sort of justification that faith apprehends rather than the sort that works apprehend. There is a real sense in which American Christianity resembles the Christianity of the declining Middle Ages: it is diffuse, uncertain, vigorous, and unified at least in a great lack (the same lack as obtained in the Middle Ages).

Moreover, when anyone speaks in ecumenical gatherings on the common problems of American Christianity and shapes one's analyses and proposals by the Lutheran doctrine of justification, one is regularly received with an enthusiasm that transcends denominational lines. American Christianity is not "works-righteous" because it has rejected a more profound insight, but because it has not — at least recently — been consistently offered such an insight. A Lutheranism that was and understood itself as a reforming *movement* in the church as a whole, i.e., that re-occupied the position of the original Lutherans, would not only have a wide-open calling in the immediate future of American Christianity, but great hope of exerting considerable impact. Whether such a Lutheranism coincided with a denomination, or was an informal alliance of church men and women and thinkers in whatever denominations these persons found themselves, or was a mixture of both, would be a secondary matter in its own self-understanding.

To the identity of such a Lutheranism, the CA of course would be again fundamental. Lutheranism as a movement offers to the church a doctrine — that we are justified by faith alone — and the task of thinking through all the great issues of Christian teaching and practice by that rule. The act of Augsburg was the greatest single occasion on which this proposal was made to the church, and the document by which the proposal was made is the greatest single example of good work at the task of rethinking. A movement of Lutheran reform within American Christianity would and could again take the CA as its practical, daily, and uncomplicated norm of purpose.

Reforming Movement and Lutheran Denominational Identity

The considerations just advanced may even mitigate the negative conclusions in the first section. For there is no intrinsic reason why the Lutheran denominations should not define their identity by the calling of the Lutheran movement. *Why,* after all, should there be such entities as the LCA or the LC-MS or The ALC or the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches? Any or all of these bodies that answered, "In order to promote in the whole church in America, that radically unconditional preaching of the gospel stipulated by *justification by faith alone,*" would thereby have an identity for which the CA would again be constitutive.

The Lutheran denominations, instead of putting the question of their identity "What makes a Lutheran?" could put it, "What do we have to say to the church about what constitutes the gospel?" To the former question, the CA seemingly offers no answers that lead beyond U.S. Lutheranism's present limited achievement of identity. To the latter question it has much to say not yet heard in this country.

Through most of its history, the LC-MS has pressed the "free conference"

path to Lutheran unity: i.e., conferences on vital theological and churchly matters, not organized for negotiation between church bodies, but simply for discussion of the matter at hand, by participants not officially accountable for all their opinions. It may well be that just such a method is that best adapted to pursue the sort of unity here proposed.

For American Lutheran bodies to *achieve* this sort of identity, they would of course have to act very differently than they now do. They would have to take different attitudes to church fellowship than any now do, for the proposed vocation in and to the whole church cannot be conducted outside of fellowship in the practice of the faith. They would have to take financial and other responsibility for the theological enterprise in a way none now do. They would even have to change their national and regional bureaucracies. One may not be optimistic about any such re-ordering happening soon. But the possibility is there.

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[1]General Literature:
For a comprehensive history, see E.C. Nelson *et al.*, **The Lutherans in North America** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

An indispensable collection of sources: R.C. Wolf, **Documents of Lutheran Unity in America** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966). A survey of the role of the confessions in American Lutheran bodies of German background (by R.H. Fischer) and of Scandinavian background (by E.L. Fevold) are in V. Vajta and H. Weissgerber (eds.), **The Church and the Confessions** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963). J.C. Brauer, "The Identity of Lutheranism in America." Paper delivered at the Colloquium of the Strasbourg Institute for Ecumenical Research, Madison, Wisconsin, 1976.

R.H. Fischer, "Recent Lutheranism in North America" (since World War II), in V. Vajta (ed.), **The Lutheran Church Past and Present** (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977).

[2] Schmucker's **"Definite Synodical Platform" ("American Recension of the Augsburg Confession,"** 1855) specified five errors which needed correction. A yet more radical alternative than Schmucker's is that displayed by a few small bodies which, on various grounds, did not self-consciously treat the Lutheran confessions as central in establishing their identity: e.g. Franckean Synod, Melanchthon Synod, Eielsen Synod, Danish Ev. Lutheran Church.

[3] Milton Valentine, in **Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evang. Lutheran Church in the United States** (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1893), p. 47.

[4] Invaluable insight into the developed positions of the various Lutheran bodies is afforded by **Distinctive Doctrines and Usages,** mentioned above.

[5] E. Clifford Nelson has done this analysis with great care but also with visible partisanship in **Lutheranism in North America, 1914-1970.** (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), pp. 21ff, 70ff *et passim.* See also his subsequent book, **The Lutherans in North America.** Documents in Wolf, *op. cit.*

[6] **Christian Century** (4 November 1942). Quoted in Nelson, **Lutheranism,** p. 161.

Chapter 2
The Augsburg Confession and Church Life

Confessing is not merely verbal activity; the life of the church is to realize the confession it makes. When the church is described as holy, its holiness is both a gift and an obligation. Holiness is to be lived out in the life of the church in its social context. The CA makes this clear by applying its central affirmation, the justification of the ungodly, to many aspects of practical life, e.g., ecclesiastical order (Article 14), church usage (Article 15), marriage of priests (Article 23), the distinction of foods (Article 26), and ecclesiastical power (Article 28). The church is more than a religious grouping around a common religious commitment. It is, as Saint Paul says, the place where Christians present their bodies "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, *the service that correlates to [their] confession" (logiken latreian,* Rom. 12:1).

Thus any account of the history and significance of the CA among Lutherans in America and any evaluation of its future role must also discuss how it has been applied within the lives of the churches. A series of significant topics both past and present needs to be discussed. If the *lex orandi* (rule of prayer) reflects the *lex credendi* (rule of belief), then the liturgy and hymnody of the church ought to be gathered and shaped by the CA. The church should both sing and pray its confession; the lay people's confessional book is often the hymnal and service book of their church. The structure of the church and its governance should reflect the confession. The presence or absence of church discipline (Office of the Keys) and the manner in which it is exercised should be evangelical. The ministry to social or racial minorities should reflect the gospel, while the role of women in the ministry should live out the commitment to the CA. The list could be extended almost infinitely. All that the church does as the living community of Christ should be formed and normed by its confession.

The holiness of the church is also lived out in the social context of a particular time and place. The Lutheran churches by their words and actions support, permit, or attack the problems of social justice and the common good: slavery, immigration, labor and management, abortion, universal suffrage also for women, genocide, equal educational opportunities for all, war, nuclear energy, racial equality, economic imperialism, and whatever else affects the social fabric of our world. No church ever achieves living out the "justification of the unrighteous" in all these areas. The CA allows neither complacency in the face of evil nor the pessimism of desperation. Like the doctrine of justification, it both accuses and forgives. It calls churches to ongoing concern in all areas of life.

What follows in this chapter illustrates the above by discussing selected issues which emerge from the life of Lutherans in America: corporate worship, church

order and organization, official programs and materials, and social concern. It will be recognized at once that other issues could have been added; the list is selective.

Corporate Worship

There is a dialectical relationship between theology and liturgy. Sometimes theology determines liturgical piety; sometimes the existetial sequence is *lex orandi* (the rule of prayer), *lex credendi* (the rule of belief). This reality has not always been admitted by Lutherans. In any case, as Pelikan says, "liturgy is the melody of theology."[1]

The difficult thing to determine is how the dynamics of the interrelationship between liturgy and theology function with regard to authority, Scripture, and tradition. In this arena the Lutheran Confessions have a unique role as the Lutheran Church's interpretation of Scripture.[2] From the formula of the CA, "Our churches teach . . ." to the Formula of Concord's "We believe, teach and confess . . .," Lutherans have insisted upon the apostolicity and catholicity of their doctrine. Melanchthon asserted that ". . . nothing has been received among us in doctrines or in ceremonies that is contrary to Scriptures or the Church catholic" (CA, Conclusion 5).[3] But in theological and liturgical matters this evokes the knotty question as to how consensus is to be reached and decisions made. These issues were a constant factor in the work of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (1966-1978). The specter of "liturgical anarchy" arose in which "canonicity and catholicity" are displaced by "individual judgment" and "personal taste."[4] The "democratization of decision-making"[5] opened up the possibility that "our new book will be the result of a mere popularity poll."[6] Furthermore, "if one gives any weight to 'what the majority of our people are doing,' however, we must raise some further questions: 'who are our people?' Do we really want to suggest that the people of God and The ALC are coterminous?"[7] This drives us back to the ecumenical *consensus* of the people of God, past and present — which is a comfortable context in which to discuss the CA.

Liturgical Revision

In explaining the resolution of the 1965 Detroit Convention of the LC-MS to the initial meeting of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (ILCW) in February 1966, President Oliver Harms expressed the "strong hope that in this endeavor all might walk together in complete submission to Holy Scripture and in full harmony with the Lutheran Confessions."[8] At the same time session, Walter Buszin expressed concern about doctrinal indifference creeping into the Lutheran churches via liturgical practices from Roman Catholic or Reformed churches.[9] Yet the press release from the consultation stated that there was a consensus to express both "ecumenical and Lutheran traditions of worship."[10] This indicates that the consultation saw no necessary contradiction between ecumenical borrowings and confessional integrity.[11]

"Theological soundness and confessional integrity"[12] were tested by theological responses elicited by the ILCW to its first liturgy for Holy Communion, published as *Contemporary Worship 2* in 1970. A thological symposium convened in October 1973[13] dealt with the topics of the epiclesis, absolution in relation to the eucharistic rite, offertory pro-

cessions, and eucharistic prayers (in the light of CA 24, 21-38).[14]

The October 1974 convention of The ALC instructed its newly appointed review committee to pay paticular attention to the theology of the liturgy and hymns and further instructed its ILCW representatives to vote to include in the new hymnal not only the three ecumenical creeds, but also Luther's *Small Catechism* and the CA.[15]

The November 1974 "Progress Report" of Clifford Swanson, the ILCW chair, asserted that the hymn committees "carefully scrutinize every text for its congruity with Scripture and its fidelity to the Gospel as it is preached and taught in the churches of the *Book of Concord.*"[16]

The review process in the LCA and the LC-MS (although the latter did not begin in earnest until the appointment of the "blue ribbon" Special Hymnal Review Committee in July 1977) and the seminary review conducted by LCA in January 1977 indicate the seriousness with which the churches took the doctrinal implications of the *Lutheran Book of Worship.*[17]

The Lutheran Book of Worship

The *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978) is clearly attempting to restore a balance of Word and sacrament in worship. There are provisions for restoring baptism to a prominent place in the Church's eucharistic worship, thus reflecting the CA's strong doctrine of baptism (Article 9, 1). In urging weekly celebration of the Holy Communion, the ILCW mirrors the practice of the 16th century Reformers reflected in the declaration that "the Mass is retained among us and is celebrated with the greatest reverence" (CA 24, 1).[18] Provision for the celebration of marriages and funerals within the Holy Communion has suggested to some a revival of nuptual and requiem masses.

The fact that the opening "Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness" is preliminary to and separate from the eucharistic rite emphasizes the sameness of the sacramental benefits of both the Communion and the Absolution.[19] The concern expressed about making the confession optional reflects fears about communing unworthily. The CA however, asserts that absolution is included in *anamnesis:* "to *remember* Christ is to remember his benefits" (Article 24, 31).[20]

The restoring of "Individual Confession and Forgiveness," a rite modeled after Luther's *Small Catechism,* not only underscores the sacramental character of absolution but also restores a lost treasure to Lutheran piety and practice. "Private absolution should be retained and not allowed to fall into disuse." (CA 11, 1) Where this resource of pastoral care has been neglected, Lutherans have been unfaithful to their confessional heritage.

The CA's strong statement about "original sin" (Article 2) is reflected in the addition to the prayer of confession adapted from the new *Book of Common Prayer.* Like the rites in *The Lutheran Hymnal* (1941) and the *Service Book and Hymnal* (1958), the prayer of confession begins with an acknowledgement of our sinful condition: "We confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves."[21]

Deliverance from bondage, regeneration, eternal life, the gift of the Spirit, incorporation into Christ' body, faith, love, and obedience are stressed in the pastor's opening address in the baptismal rite. The adaptation of Luther's

Sintflutgebet (Flood Prayer) picks up the themes of deliverance, cleansing, regeneration, new life, and the inheritance of God's kingdom. It is interesting that the *Lutheran Book of Worship* reflects the content and (lack of) organization of the CA's doctrine of baptism,[22] which parallel the benefits given in baptism, absolution and communion.

After the renunciation of "all the forces of evil" and the confession of faith, the baptismal washing occurs. Thereafter the major baptismal benefits are "acted out," i.e., ritualized in the church's ancient rites: the gifts of the Spirit, being clothed with righteousness, being ordained to priestly ministry. The rite permits no separating of "water-baptism" and "Spirit-baptism," nor yet any division between the Spirit's sanctifying work and Christ's redeeming work.[23]

Critics charged a needless and confusing multiplication of ritual acts in the rite,[24] but the attempt to "spread out" the manifold meaning of baptism ritually was done so that its various benefits could be seen and heard clearly. A distinction was maintained between baptism and its theological explanation on the one hand and the baptismal rite and its liturgical language and action on the other hand. (Cf. Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration 7, 73-87.)

The prominence given to baptism in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* is accompanied by a "down-playing" of confirmation as a *de facto* Lutheran sacrament. Instead, confirmation becomes an "Affirmation of Baptism." In effect the reintroduction in the baptismal rite of the laying-on-of-hands with prayer for the Spirit reintegrates "confirmation" with baptism.

There are some christological points at which the CA has been appealed to in opposition to some of the critics of the ILCW, as well as in opposition to the ILCW itself. One instance is the ILCW's reluctant decision to retain the traditional English rendering of the *descensus* clause of the Apostle's Creed, "he descended into hell," rather than "he descended to the dead." The latter was part of the version of the International Consultation on English Texts. The German text of the CA renders it *Hölle* (*hell,* Article 3, 4); moreover, The Formula of Concord interprets the *descensus* in the sense of Christ's victorious triumph over the powers of hell (Article 9).[25]

A second instance is seen in the controversy centered around the language of sacrifice. The concept of sacrifice was questioned not only by those critics of the ILCW who feared the implications of "eucharistic sacrifice" language[26], but also by those who wanted to absorb all discussion of Christ's saving work under the motif of "Christus victor."[27] That motif had been put forward as a corrective to those Lutheran and Reformed Orthodox theologians, who had tried to make vicarious satisfaction the dominant atonement motif into which all others had to be squeezed. In the CA's teaching on the atonement, "Christus victor," vicarious satisfaction, and the sacrificial interpretation are all to be found (Articles 3 & 4); sacrifice is linked in Pauline fashion to both reconciliation and propitiation (Article 3, 3).

Ecumenical Dimension

The *Service Book and Hymnal* had already moved beyond the Lutheran consensus of the Common Service and reintroduced the ancient pre-Gregorian Kyrie litany preserved in the Eastern Orthodox churches. Furthermore, it had

borrowed the *epiclesis* of its Prayer of Thanksgiving from the East via the *Book of Common Prayer.* It can be argued that such *epicleses* are consonant with the CA. For the unique contribution of the CA's doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the subtle tension and delicate balance between the promise and the freedom of God: God is free to work faith "when and where he pleases in those who hear the Gospel" (CA 5, 2); yet Melanchthon asserts that in faithfulness to the promise, God "gives the Holy Spirit" through the Word and Sacraments as through means/instruments" (CA 5, 2). Therefore, prayers that "implore" rather than formulae that "bestow" the Holy Spirit seem more appropriately to reflect the careful distinctions and implicit dialectic of the CA.

The inclusion of a eucharistic prayer (the Great Thanksgiving) in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* is a second instance of persisting in the course beyond the Common Service consensus set by the *Service Book and Hymnal.* Luther's rejection of the canon of the mass (because he thought it reeked of sacrifice) is widely known,[28] and his negative polemic is embodied in the CA (Article 24, 21-38). Ths positive appreciation of "eucharistic sacrifice" comes in the Apology to the CA.[29]

Where liturgical developments have gone beyond the Lutheran consensus (as reflected in the Common Service of 1888), the question arises whether the CA remains the "source and guide of liturgical reform." This question can entail not only further application of Luther's liturgical principle of reform (i.e. retaining helpful traditions not forbidden by Scripture), but also moving in directions pointed to or at least not precluded by the CA.

To that question the CA's final warning is relevant: "we obtain grace through faith in Christ, and not through certain observances or acts or worship instituted by men" (Article 28, 52). Worship is the sacrificial response of the community of faith to the gracious initiative of God in and through his Word. Worship is the time and the place (in space and time) when the voice of God addresses us and faith responds in prayer, praise and thanksgiving.

In their own way, therefore, the church's liturgies parallel such documents as the CA in confessing human sin but also in the doxological voice of thanksgiving for God's saving acts in Jesus Christ.

Order and Organization

The Lutheran confessions say little about the ordering of the church. Firmly aligned with the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ, as the creator and head of the church, and to the written Word as the norm for distinguishing between that which is of divine institution and that which is of human devising, Lutherans generally have placed church polity in the latter category. This conviction surfaces in the first attempt to form a national body of Lutherans of America. The preamble to the constitution of the General Synod (1820) begins: "Jesus Christ, the Supreme Head of His Church, having prescribed no special Regulations concerning Church government, and every sectional portion of the Church being left at full liberty to make such regulations to that effect, as may be most adapted to its situation and circumstances . . ."[30]

In the United States as in Europe Lutherans have lived under several types

of polity. The Eielsen Synod (1846) and the Lutheran Free Church (1897) were examples of a strictly congregational form. At the other extreme stood the Buffalo Synod (1845) with its deliberate clericalism and centralization of authority. Buffalo's position aroused the antagonism of the Missouri Synod (1847), which had shaken off the episcopal pretensions of its first leader. Missouri espoused a congregational polity in which the voter's assembly had the final responsibility to judge teachings but strictly, of course, on the basis of the Word of God (i.e. as expounded by pure Lutheran doctrine — a situation which actually left overwhelming power in the hands of the clergy who naturally were the interpreters of doctrine).

Missouri taught that the ordained ministry received its authority by "transfer" or conveyance *(Übertragung)* from the members of the universal priesthood. This view was opposed by the Loehe-inspired Iowa Synod, which argued that God gave the pastoral office to "the whole church in its totality," not to the individual members of the church as such. Like the General Synod, the Missouri Synod declared itself to have exclusively advisory powers, but unlike its rival Missouri identified its unity in terms of orthodox doctrine which made rigorous ministerial discipline possible. The Missouri Synod, therefore, consisted of autonomous congregations united by a strictly disciplined confessional consensus; the synod was subdivided administratively into districts.[31]

Most Lutheran bodies, meanwhile, have adopted a mixed, congregationally oriented polity in which congregations have assigned a measure of authority to larger bodies. The General Council (1867) held that congregations are "the primary bodies through which the power [of the church] is normally exercised," but the representatives of congregations convened in synod are "representatively, the congregations themselves" and " "the judgments of synods are the judgment of the church.' "[32] The General Council itself was at first decentralized. However, after the General Synod moved to relatively greater centralization of functions and powers, in due time the General Council followed the same tendency.

The United Lutheran Church in America (1918) was constitutionally composed of congregations, but these were represented in the general body by synods (geographic units). In their internal affairs the synods retained all powers not explicitly delegated to the general body, including full control of ordination and of ministerial discipline. In effect, then, the ULCA like its predecessor bodies functioned as a federation of synods. A much tighter polity was effected by its successor, the Lutheran Church in America (1962), largely because of the influence of the Augustana Church. LCA synods became simply subdivisions with powers assigned by the national body. The LCA proclaims an "elliptical" view of the church: the Church of Jesus Christ "exists both as an inclusive [universal] fellowship and as local congregations;" "congregations find their fulfillment in the universal community of the Church, and the universal Church exists in and through congregations. [The LCA], therefore, derives its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its inherent nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful." (Article 4, 2) The LCA describes its membership as consisting of "congregations and ministers." The

American Lutheran Church (1960), on the other hand, is "a union of congregations." Its membership consists of congregations; clergy as well as laypeople are members of The ALC by virtue of holding membership in a congregation. The districts (geographic units) of The ALC are purely administrative subdivisions of the denomination. The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod is made up of congregations, ministers, and teachers. Its districts have a function and status similar to those of The ALC.

In the foregoing picture the CA seldom plays an explicit role beyond occasional reference to Article Seven. The most notable exception is C.F.W. Walther's effort to develop a doctrinally articulate membership. His St. Louis congregational constitution (1843) prescribed that a member "should at least be acquainted with, and adhere to, the Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism of Luther;" it assumed that "members who adhere to the confession of the Unaltered CA . . . accordingly have obligated the ministers and teachers of the congregation to adhere to all the Symbols . . ."[33] Walther also claimed explicit scriptural sanction for Missouri's congregational polity,[34], thus removing the matter from the status of an open question.

The 1970s have witnessed large-scale structural revisions in all three major bodies. On the basis of the report of a "Commission on Function and Structure" (1970-72) charged to "test concepts of organizational development" over against "a basic understanding of the church as God's people, his instrument active in the world," the LCA effected major structural changes. Theological perspectives which were said to underlie the proposals for change were drawn from expressions already in the LCA constitution. But it was from the "organizational perspectives" that new emphases, new language and new structures emerged. This is not to say, however, that the LCA restructuring lacked theological attention; a glance, for example, into the new constitutional statement of the five functions of the congregation: worship, learning, witness, service and support (Approved Constitution for Congregations, 3, 1), shows an intense concern "for congregations to develop and articulate a vision of their nature and mission" in terms of becoming "the active, serving body of Christ for their times."[35] The restructuring of The ALC took place along lines fairly parallel with those in the LCA. In neither case was the basic relationship between the districts/synods and the churches altered, nor between the congregations and the churches. It was rather a restructuring of the bureaucratic machinery of the churches and the districts/synods.

Changes in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod constitution have been occasioned by the crisis which resulted in the schism of 1976 and have involved a considerable centralizing of that body's polity. The tightening of doctrinal and disciplinary reins by the adoption of *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* (1972) and by related actions raised a dispute whether the Synod thereby was adding a new confession. And this controversy in turn raised a polity issue in the form of a tension between the autonomous congregation and a "strictly advisory" synod. It is still disputed whether the crisis in the LC-MS has been basically theological or basically political. In any case, the problem could not be handled by appeal to the CA.

The question of using the title of "bishop" has recently gained promi-

nence, partly as the result of greater ecumenical experience and discussion. It has been pointed out that the Lutheran confessions do not oppose episcopacy as such but only the abuse of it (Apology, Article 15). The ALC has officially made the use of the title permissive. The LCA will vote in 1980 whether to change the title of its president and of the synodical presidents to that of bishop; proponents argue that "unlimited power over the placement of the clergy and life-long tenure are not essential to the use of the title."[7]

Lutheran church bodies in America engage at frequent intervals in elaborate reexaminations of the office of the ministry. It was from the LCA's "comprehensive study" (itself not completely adopted by the 1970 convention) that the impetus arose for the Function and Structure enterprise already mentioned. Concurrently The ALC engaged in a similar study. These recent activities have been necessitated partly by ecumenical developments, partly by the fast-changing situation in American society, and (related to both) partly by the pervasive questioning of traditional conceptions and practices regarding the nature and mission of the church and the relationship of clergy and laity. Does not "clericalism" still hobble the church? Is an allegedly more flexible and human-service oriented conception of the ministry needed to replace or supplement the traditional concept of Ministry of Word and Sacraments? On the opposite side, do not the traditional Lutheran "functional" view of the ministerial office and American ways of conceiving the "priesthood of all believers" undercut our realization of the divine institution and proper authority of the office? Should not lay ministeries be officially recognized as well as the ordained ministry? Do not all the church's ministries need to be handled in a much more flexible and even experimental way?

Noteworthy in modern studies of church and ministry is the attention devoted to analyses of the concrete situation in society and in the churches, along with the reexamination of the biblical testimony and historical tradition. It is no longer adequate simply to restate an eternally fixed doctrinal message to be addressed by any and all human situations. This conviction, however, by no means induces Lutherans to let the current human situation dictate their understanding of the nature of the church. For instance, the LCA 1970 report, with explicit appeal to CA 5 and 7, reaffirmed the divine institution of the church and the centrality of "Word and Sacraments" for its identity and mission. Efforts directed toward the renewal and empowerment of the whole people of God, the enhancement of many kinds of lay ministry, and the elimination of clericalism all call afresh upon the concept of the priesthood of all believers, the insistence on church order (CA and Apology 14 and 28), the Reformation critiques of abuses of authority, and the realization that the church *is* mission. Nevertheless, the fundamental importance and the divine dimension of the ordained ministerial office also are reaffirmed vigorously. In the LCA document the ordained ministry is described as official and representative: "The 'official' dimension calls attention to the *ordering* of this ministry (viz. of Word and sacraments), and the 'representative' dimension reflects its *function.* Both dimensions are necessary to distinguish the ordained ministry from other ministries performed by individual Christians."[37]

The most radical change adopted in

1970 by both The ALC and the LCA was the ordination of women. Here was a classic example of differences among Lutherans in confessional and biblical hermeneutics, for the LC-MS firmly disapproved of the move. A majority in the other two bodies, rethinking the question "in close conjunction with the church's teaching on creation, redemption, baptism, rite as over against sacrament, the concept of vocation, the freedom of the Christian, sacredness of individuality, ecumenism, and a new and dynamic concept of the ministries of the church,"[38] agreed that "there were no hard and fast biblical or theological reasons for denying ordination to women" and that sociological, psychological, and practical reasons strongly favored ordaining them. The CA, taking for granted the restriction of ordination to males, could not be appealed to directly, but it was argued that the Lutheran conception of the gospel, of the handling of Scripture, and of the openness proper to the ordering of the church, all favor the welcoming of women into the ordained ministry at this time. Missouri disagrees.

Programs And Materials

In their congregational life, Lutherans have experienced several drastic changes since World War II. To cite a few examples: many children received the bread and wine of the Holy Communion several years before the rite of confirmation. A majority of Lutherans had accustomed themselves to a new pattern of liturgical worship (*Service Book and Hymnal,* 1958) and recently have adopted another (*Lutheran Book of Worship,* 1978). Women now serve as ordained ministers. Shaped by guidelines quite different from those which prevailed before the war, the relationships of a Lutheran parish to neighboring non-Lutheran and other Lutheran churches have changed.

Some members of each of the Lutheran church bodies have not been pleased with these changes. As noted, the ordination of women has been officially rejected by the LC-MS. It is significant, however, that the majority of Lutherans worked together and agreed on instituting these new practices, for this fact indicates not only a new pattern of relationships among the Lutheran bodies, but also a conviction on the part of the majority that these changes of practice are authentically *Lutheran.* To debate this latter judgment requires both advocates and critics to reveal their respective confessional hermeneutics.

Space limitations preclude examining the whole realm of popular church life in order to discover the CA's role in each area. Instead, a few examples of Lutheran programs and materials, designed to nurture the fellowship are sketched in this section. These relate to preaching, corporate worship, confirmation, first communion, parish education, mission, long range planning, and seminary training.

Traditionally, Lutheran preaching has been doctrinal and exegetical; the concern to edify, to build up the people's Christian life, has also been characteristic of it, whether the accent has been "orthodox" or "pietistic" or of some other type. During the 1950s and the 1960s a new emphasis on social responsibility developed and, with it, the need to experiment with new forms of Christian witness and service. In the 1970s there has been a tendency to return to "the basics" of the Christian message. Some observers interpret this to mean that openness to the new has receded, others

that experimentation has become more sober and realistic. Amid these shifts of emphasis, Lutheran homiletical and devotional literature no doubt reflects the diverse approaches to the Lutheran doctrinal tradition. Lutherans seem to have no inclination to replace the message of "justification by faith alone" with a different gospel. But neither is it apparent that they have consciously appealed to the Augsburg Confession itself as the major source of homiletical and devotional inspiration or as the focus of plans for church renewal.

Developments in liturgical worship are treated in the first section of this chapter. Significantly, it is now considered to be the self-evident norm for Lutherans to shape corporate worship in order to express "the unity of the people of God and their continuity with Christians across the ages" rather than to find "the common consent of the pure Lutheran liturgies of the sixteenth century." The theological counterpart to this newer outlook, of course, is an emphasis on the ecumenical intention and significance of the CA.

The revised concept of confirmation and first communion, arrived at jointly by the LC-MS, The ALC, and the LCA, and submitted to these churches in 1970, is another prime example of deliberate change in prevailing Lutheran practice. Studying both the (frequently changing) historic Lutheran practice and the "theological aspects of confirmation," the commission proposed changes based on their conviction that a new and wider concept is entirely consistent with the Lutheran heritage. The joint commission recommended redefining confirmation as "a pastoral and educational ministry . . ." (rather than a single rite), admitting children to first communion at about the age of ten (rather than after "graduation" from catechetical training), and providing a rite celebrating confirmation usually at a later age than the then current average of fourteen years. The LCA and The ALC adopted the report and a majority of the congregations put the new program into effect, though the practice is still far from uniform. Though criticism of it was stronger in the LC-MS, congregations were free to try the new program.

Parish education programs claim to maintain, whether consciously or not, their rootage in the Lutheran confessional heritage. The LC-MS and the Wisconsin Synod still commit themselves to the parochial school system, through which they can build into their children's education a strong emphasis on orthodox theological indoctrination. The other Lutheran bodies have developed not only Sunday Church School materials but also a whole network of other programs for the nurture of the fellowship. In several instances The ALC and the LCA have cooperated in planning and production; special mention may be made of an "Evangelical Outreach" program (which includes a remarkably effective new evangelistic training course called "Word and Witness"), and a basic policy-planning study, "Foundations for Educational Ministry."[40] In all this educational program planning, as in past generations, Lutherans have examined afresh the confessional tradition, but it seems safe to say that in the planners' work attention to the CA has been more subconscious than conscious.[41]

Catechetical training and church school programs for youth and adults in basic Christian beliefs still concentrate on Luther's *Small Catechism,* ordinarily with little attention to the CA or the *Large Catechism.* Study materials on

popular theology, of course, cite generously the Lutheran confessions.[42] To encourage familiarity with the CA itself, Lutheran bodies in the past have occasionally printed it in their hymnals (most recently the *Lutheran Hymnary,* 1935), but apparently the results were not impressive. A few excellent brief study guides on the confession, however, are presently available.

From time to time Lutheran churches have made concerted efforts to focus the minds of their constituencies on basic Christian beliefs (just as at other times special emphasis has been placed on stewardship, mission outreach, or social justice). Notable among these projects are:

(1) The *Mission Affirmations* of the LC-MS in 1965, a brief but vigorous statement which affirmed that "the Evangelical Lutheran Church is chiefly a confessional movement within the total body of Christ rather than a denomination emphasizing institutional barriers of separation. The Lutheran Christian uses the Lutheran Confessions for the primary purpose for which they were framed: to confess Christ and His Gospel boldly and lovingly to all Christians." Lutherans should work with others except "when it would deny God's word." This positive and evangelical, rather than defensive, posture toward the mission of the church reinforced the Synod's determination to take part in creating the new Lutheran Council in the USA (see chapter three, first section). In the process of retrenchment in the 1970s, however, the Synod has found it necessary to reinterpret the *Affirmations* in the direction of a more conservative stance.

(2) The LCA's *Manifesto: God's Call to the Church in Each Place* (1966), a succinct 6-point statement drafted by a commission on the nature and mission of the congregation, called on each congregation to "find the means and methods by which it best fulfils God's call to be his people." Without explicitly quoting the Lutheran confessions in its specific recommendations, the *Manifesto* clearly shows that the Lutheran understanding of the gospel is its point of departure. The *Manifesto* "never seemed to find concrete expression in the life of the church," an observer commented later; it has had some influence, however, on subsequent long-range planning for the renewal of congregational life.

(3) In 1974 an LCA commission to draft a statement of theological affirmations reported in a novel form: not a collection of theses, not an essay, but a congregational study-booklet, *In, Not Of* [i.e. the world]. Designed for parish discussion groups, and liberally citing Luther and the Lutheran confessions, the study laid central emphasis on the assertion "I am baptized!" as a dynamic of personal and corporate Lutheran identity and mission.

Lutheran involvement in world mission and ecumenism (the latter aspect is treated in the next chapter) shows in a special way the urgency for Lutherans to sort out what is essential from what is accidental and humanly adaptable in their witness. To mention only one recent development, the Lutheran World Federation's Mission on Six Continents, begun in 1973, aimed to help Lutherans in America learn from the witness of fellow believers from other parts of the world rather than to perpetuate their American self-image as the teachers and witness-givers. Meanwhile, missiologists and ecumenists are pointing out that preoccupation with questions of Lutheran identity may stunt our concern and action in the world-wide sharing of the Christian life.[44]

Long-range planning assumes a growing role in all Christian churches, i.e. the procedure of reading current trends in order to define the policies which underlie the production of programs and materials. Two such studies, though not strictly comparable, offer an interesting insight into the LCA's evolution. *Significant Issues for the 1970s, Theology and Social Change* (Fortress Press, 1968), a task force report keenly conscious of the embattled position of the churches, called for energetic activity and experimentation. *The Shaping of the Parish for the Future* (Parish Life Press, 1975), is a "think tank" symposium and report dedicated to "conscious planning to enable the church to meet an uncertain future, a time to rediscover our mission and to understand ourselves more fully in the process" (p. vii). The process comes to focus in a concerted long-range Parish Life and Ministry Development program. In neither report does the CA play an important explicit role. Some observers may judge that social, scientific, educational, and administrative mentalities predominate in both and that the confessional heritage is simply taken for granted. Such a judgment, however, would be far from fair to the intention of the planners; the confessional point of departure is clearly discernible in the conscientious concern to understand God's call to his people in the concrete situation of the times.

Lutheran seminaries provide for the study of the Lutheran confessions, of course, but except in LC-MS and Wisconsin Synod schools the place, purpose, and approach of such courses has changed considerably. On the logistical level alone it is apparent that the time devoted to the classical confessional tradition has been diminished to make room for other subjects. Trust that the confessional heritage will be learned more realistically and vitally by induction in connection with other studies is often unjustified. The relationship of the study of the Lutheran confessions to the biblical, constructive-theological, and ministerial disciplines is now far from clear. Receiving wide and appreciative attention, however, is a new approach to the teaching of the confessions in seminaries exemplified by Eric Gritsch and Robert Jenson's *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* (Fortress Press, 1976); it presents Lutheran doctrine not as an ecclesiastical end in itself but as a "proposal" to the universal church of a faithful way to approach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Mention may also be made of a controversial testing device widely used in the seminaries, *Readiness for Ministry,* developed by the Association of Theological Schools in the U.S. and Canada (1975-76) to help chart "various behaviors and attributes for beginning ministers" in individual seminaries. It is controversial because deep problems remain regarding the relation between the gospel and secular culture, and between the "ministerial ofice" and professionalism. A Lutheran Edition (ATS, 1978) has been devised, which explores eleven "special Lutheran characteristics" derived from the Lutheran Seminarian Project.[45] Interesting are the implicit views (based on an extensive sampling of judgments) of the relationships between doctrine and other factors, and the effort to chart theological learning by means of empirical evidence on attitudes and judgments.

Finally, is there any way to assess the effectiveness of Lutheran nurture in developing a fellowship which understands the gospel and is motivated and strengthened to live it? An elaborate

"family portrait of Lutherans in the U.S.," *A Study of Generations* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), — the first denominational profile ever made on such a large scale — was prepared by a skilled research team (Youth Research Center, Minneapolis) led by Merton Strommen. Examining "78 dimensions relating to what Lutherans believe, value, aspire to, and do," the team studied nearly five thousand Lutherans between the ages of fifteen and sixty-five. One may dispute the validity of the investigative and analytical procedure, but the fact remains that the book presents the most comprehensive body of such evidence ever assembled. A few features from the "Summary of Findings"[46] are the following: "The values and beliefs of Lutherans are the best indicators of what they will think and do;" "for most Lutherans faith in Jesus Christ is at the heart of what they value and believe." (p. 287) "Some doctrines which are neglected by contemporary theology are some of those most potent in the piety of Lutherans. These are the doctrines of eternal life, providence, and sanctification." "Though Lutherans hold to a particular faith that makes exclusive truth claims, most are not exclusivistic in their attitudes towards other Christians." (p. 298) "Law and gospel were found to be more than theological constructs . . . About three in five reflect an awareness of a personal God who cares for them in Jesus Christ, a certainty of faith, a positive attitude toward life and death, and a sense of ministry and mission . . . [This] orientation to the gospel is the best indicator of Lutherans who are open to renewal and change in the ministry of the church." (p. 289) "Differences among Lutherans due to region, sex, and church body are relatively small." (p. 297) The summary closes with a three-page section on Implications for Christian Educators and two pages on Implications for Lutheran Theologians, both of which offer pointed reference to many of the issues which underlay the production of the 16th century confessions.

Social Concern

The Augsburg Confession has played an indirect rather than a direct role in shaping the social outlook and activity of Lutheranism in America. In the first place, only in a limited sense does the CA itself deal directly with social problems. Secondly, it was a long time before immigrant Lutherans in America, most of them of very modest status and trained to a docile social outlook, felt called and able to exercise any decisive public influence. By then the nation was grappling with social problems scarcely dreamed of in the 16th century.

We cannot undertake to sketch the social history of American Lutheranism in this section.[47] Indeed, it must be understood that Lutheranism in America is not a monolith, but is characterized by ethnic diversity and by different theological, confessional and ecclesiastical emphases.

As we have seen, colonial Lutherans were strong pietistic influences, exemplified in the "Patriarch of American Lutheranism," Henry Melchior Muhlenberg. Muhlenberg and his sons illustrate the differences among colonial Lutherans about the Christian's relationship to society and secular issues. During the American Revolution Muhlenberg argued that it was the duty of the church to preach the Gospel and not to become involved in political issues. His two sons, John Peter Gabriel and Frederick Augustus Conrad, argued over the appropriate

role for a clergyman in the Revolutionary War. Frederick supported his father in arguing that a preacher should not be a soldier, while Peter argued that while he was a clergyman he was also a member of society. Frederick expressed the situation among colonial Lutherans: "How different are our ways of thinking!"

One of the major issues over which Lutherans were divided in the 19th century was the issue of slavery. Karl H. Hertz has distinguished three major Lutheran groupings with regard to their responses to the American environment: American Lutherans, cultural isolationists and dualists, and moderate confessionalists.[48] Samuel Simon Schmucker best represents the American Lutherans:

> *Whatever Schmucker's theological shortcomings, in political ethics — consciously calling upon the writings of the Reformers — he gave positive content to the political duties of magistrates and citizens. He insisted on the responsibility of government for the public welfare; he underlined Christian responsibility for promoting and preserving just institutions; he stood up to be counted on the question of slavery.*[49]

Wilhelm Sihler best represents cultural isolationism and dualism:

> *In and of itself, the Gospel has nothing to do with the circumstances of his [the slave] physical bondage . . . the Gospel has nothing to do with the outer person and with physical subjection of the slave to his master . . .*[50]

And Theodore E. Schmauk best represents moderate confessionalism:

> *There is to be entire separation between Church and State, but not between the Christian and the State. The 'Let alone' policy which Lutherans are apt to assume and teach with reference to the State is a great mistake.*[51]

This division among Lutherans in America about the Christian's response to the American environment also expressed itself in official synodical proceedings. While all Lutherans agreed on the necessity to preach the gospel to the Negro (the work of the Church in the Heavenly Kingdom), the issue of emancipation was divisive. Though the Missouri Synod had an aversion to making public social pronouncements, C.F.W. Walther held the position that slavery was not a sin but the result of sin, and that what God wants is for master and slave to come to faith in Christ through the Gospel. Norwegian-American Lutheran lay people were strongly opposed to slavery, but the clergy, while supporting abolition, would not call slavery a sin.

> *Although according to the Word of God, it is not in and by itself a sin to keep slaves, nevertheless it is in itself an evil and punishment from God. We condemn all abuses and sins connected therewith, and furthermore, when official duties require it and when Christian love and wisdom demand it, we will work for its abolition.*[52]

The General Synod did not take a definite stand on slavery until 1862 after the southern synods had withdrawn and were considering a General Synod of the Confederate States. The Committee on the State of the Country presented a report which was adopted containing the following resolution:

> ***Resolved,** That while we recognize*

this unhappy war as a righteous judgment of God, visited upon us because of individual and national sins, of which we have been guilty, we nevertheless regard this rebellion as more immediately the natural result of the continuance and spread of domestic slavery in our land, and therefore hail with unmingled joy the proposition of our Chief Magistrate, which has received the sanction of Congress, to extend aid from the General Government to any State in which slavery exists, which shall deem fit to initiate a system of constitutional emancipation.[53]

The most aggressive and outspoken of all the American Lutheran Synods was the Franckean Synod, organized in 1837. In 1844 it stated that:

. . . slavery is manifestly a sin against God, a violation of the laws of nature, the claims of justice, and the doctrines of divine revelation, depriving those who were created in God's image, and for whom Christ died, of social rights and domestic privileges and the means of religious improvement.[54]

Nineteenth century Lutheran efforts to befriend and convert the "American Indians" and the black people, before and after the Civil War, were sincere and sometimes heroic, but suffered from public opposition, meager support and unrealistic methods.

William A. Passavant of Pittsburgh (General Council) became the most aggressive Lutheran activist of the second half of the century. He tried to rouse eastern and midwestern Lutheranism from its inertia and make of it a practical, "working church," active in personal service and tangible support. Not only did he promote the habitual work of the church, congregations, missions, and schools; but, inspired by Oberlin, Wichern, Fliedner, Bodelschwingh, and Sutter, he founded several hospitals and orphanages, and introduced the female diaconate to America. He befriended and aided the new Scandinavian immigrant communities. Passavant was the first Lutheran leader to urge systematic attention to the expanding cities, and to extend practical Lutheran concern to all suffering people regardless of religious affiliation. For the Missouri Synod the new term "inner mission" meant home missions, the gathering of Germans into the church; for Passavant it meant the care of all the needy.

Like most Protestant leaders Passavant had little sympathy for the new "social gospel"; he had still less sympathy for the (then radical) new labor movement. With one notable exception, the Lutheran church which claimed so many people of the working classes (predominantly rural at this time) made no impact at all on the early struggle to build up the urban labor movement or to attack other social problems by concerted action. That exception was the theoretcian J.H.W. Stuckenberg (Wittenberg Seminary, General Synod), who discerned that "society is sleeping on a volcano."

It was in the 20th century that the great shift in Lutheran social attitudes and activities took place. One major catalyst was the situation created by World War I, when many midwesterners who still spoke European languages experienced a severe problem, public hostility. The vast majority of Lutheran churches made the transition to English within a decade. Meanwhile, through the newly created National Lutheran Council, Lutherans for the first time cooperated across synodical lines in a

large-scale program of postwar aid. Both developments helped to bring Lutheranism slowsly into the mainstream of American society.

The Great Depression of the 1930s and, alongside it, the intensification of world totalitarianism, put to flight the naive optimism of liberal Protestants about human moral progress and "Christianizing the social order." In company with influences from European crisis theology, the Lutheran renaissance, and ecumenical social thought, Reinhold and Richard Niebuhr's social realism helped Lutherans as well as their neighbors to develop a more sober, penetrating approach to national and world problems than the traditional ecclesiastical pronouncements of social ideas buttressed with biblical quotations. Particularly through the NLC, Lutherans began to broaden and sharpen their outlook both in the realm of welfare work and of social and political concern. Among Lutheran church bodies, the ULCA and the Augustana Church led the way among Lutherans in opening themselves to a more profound social concern; A.D. Mattson of Augustana Seminary and Bertha Paulssen of Gettysburg were the early pioneers.

During and following World War II, practical social involvement was decisive in accelerating the changes in social outlook among Lutherans. Such practical work is epitomized in Lutheran World Action. Begun in 1940 and developed by Ralph Long and Paul Empie, it became a model of resourceful, efficient, and gospel-graced humanitarian aid whose scope was global. Its success was accompanied by the expansion of other programs administered for the churches by the National Lutheran Council and its successor, the Lutheran Council in the USA: refugee resettlement, social welfare work, social studies and planning.

In recent decades the Lutheran churches have been challenged by escalating social problems: movements of liberation and equal rights among black people, Hispanic Americans, and native Americans; the women's liberation movement; and the decay of the family together with the rise of moral anarchism. Dealing with these challenges clearly indicates that social thought and action are permanent aspects of the church's mission,[55], and that their effective solution demands a cooperative approach among Lutherans, indeed across the entire Christian community. It is also clear that effective social action demands the full involvement of the "priesthood of all believers;" it cannot be left to the clergy or to other church professionals.[56]

Just what role does the CA play in all these developments? A sampling of the massive literature in the field shows little direct allusion to it. It may seem that the vast changes between the 16th and the late 20th centuries render the Lutheran confessions totally irrelevant for our social task today. An expression of Leonhard Goppelt, however, is applicable here: the confessions do not give us the specific *forms* for modern interpretation, but they still provide a useful point of *departure,* namely, the gracious initiative of God in Jesus Christ. Though the CA was not written to expound a social ethic, "we may cite four articles," as William Lazareth observes, "in which Luther's restatement of the central thrust of Paul's ethic is afforded normative authority by the Lutheran Church."

On the personal level, Article 4 rejects ethical activism by grounding man's salvation solely in his being justified before God for Christ's sake through faith alone.

Then Article 6 militates against ethical quietism by affirming that this Christian faith is bound to bring forth good fruits, and that it is also necessary for Christians to do those good works which are commanded by God for the neighbors' benefit.

On the social level, Article 16 guards against secularism by insisting that Christians are not to espouse any dualism between the two realms of creation and redemption. Dedicated churchmen are rather to permeate all of society with personal love and social justice in the exercise of their Christian social responsibility. Finally Article 28 complements this stress with a rejection of clericalism by sharply distinguishing the valid functions of the church and the state under God. On the one side, the church should not impose its will on the civil community by usurping the power of enforcement that rightly falls within the domain of government. On the other side, the state ought not interfere with the church's prophetic role in holding public life accountable to the sovereign law of God.

We conclude both biblically and theologically that Christian social ministry is an essential part of the total mission of the Church of Jesus Christ . . .[57]

From this foundation Lutheran theologians and church people are critically reexamining the traditional concepts of Lutheran theology and practice.

In this century, for example, there has been a move by Lutherans to overcome the rigidly dualistic understanding of the two kingdoms which was characteristic of the 19th century, and to reaffirm the "secular" as a legitimate part of creation and the realm of Christian life. Leadership was provided by the ULCA with its *Christian Social Responsiblity* published in 1957. In the 1960s both The ALC and the LCA began issuing statements about specific issues in American life. Studies of these statements[58] indicate that both bodies are careful not to confuse law and gospel and to recognize that society cannot be governed by the Gospel nor can any social order be identified with the Kingdom of God. Both do, however, recognize that all people have been endowed with reason and are capable of civil or active righteousness (CA 18), and that Christians and non-Christians can work together to achieve a more just society. These statements have regained the secular realm as a part of God's Kingdom. Several of them recognize more clearly than previously the right and duty of Christians to change laws and not just obey them. The statements are not as clear on how the Gospel shapes the Christian's social involvement.

Criticisms of the concept of the two kingdoms have been made both by Lutherans and non-Lutherans. Karl Barth and H. Richard Niebuhr have been the major non-Lutheran critics, with Barth noting especially the "soft under-belly of Lutheran social ethics." Major Lutheran criticisms have come from Philip Hefner and Carl Braaten. Hefner notes the negativity of calling the secular realm the "left hand" (which is obviously less than the "right hand"), and the tendency to identify law in the secular realm with coercion and obedience.[59] Braaten attacks the two kingdoms because it fails to have an eschatological dynamic, because it tends to separate the realms of creation and redemption, and because it limits

the revolutionary thrust of Christianity to the individual. 'The problem of the two-kingdom doctrine is that the revolutionary dynamic discharged by the kingdom on the right hand did not set off any explosions in the kingdom on the left hand.''[60]

While these criticisms make their impact felt, they have not changed the place of the two kingdoms in Lutheran thought. One may be sure that a two kingdoms hermeneutic will continue to be a part of the Lutheran theological tradition and remain the framework for Lutheran social ethics. The concept is too rooted in the Scriptures, in Luther, and in the Lutheran confessions for it simply to be dismissed. But the issue in the future will be how it is used. Emphasis should be placed on avoiding what the two kingdoms guarded against in the confusion of law and gospel, the confusion of justification by grace through faith and works' righteousness, and the two untenable positions of ''Christianizing society'' and secularizing the Church.

Lutherans in American presently face a different agenda of such ethical issues as the right to life and abortion, apartheid, world hunger, corporate investments, and human rights. The CA, of course, does not address such issues directly, but it does provide Lutherans with an orientation from which to do their work.

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[1] Jaroslav Pelikan, **The Christian Tradition,** Vol. 2: **The Spirit of Eastern Christendom** (600-1700) (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 6.

[2] Edmund Schlink, **Theology of the Lutheran Confessions,** trans. Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J.A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), pp. xv-xxiii.

[3] Theodore G. Tappert (ed.), **The Book of Concord** (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. 95. Hans Lietzmann *et al.* (eds.), **Die Bekenntnisschriften der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche** (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), p. 134. Cf. the summary statement in CA 11, 1 which adds "the church of Rome." This is similar to the ancient dictum of Vincent of Lerins concerning doctrinal universality, antiquity, and consensus. Thus Lutherans also tried to avoid doctrinal novelty by seeking that continuity and consensus of *everything everywhere* believed *always* by *all* the faithful *(ubique, semper, ab omnibus).* Cf. Jaroslav Pelikan, **The Christian Tradition,** Vol. 1: **The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition** (100-600) (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 333, citing Vincent of Lerins, Commentary, ed. R.S. Moxon (Cambridge, 1915), 2.3. Cf. Also Boethius, **On the Catholic Faith** (Loeb Classical Library 70): "This catholic church, then, spread throughout the world is known by three particular marks: whatever is believed and taught in it has the authority of the Scriptures, or of universal tradition, or at least of its own and proper usage." It was stated at the ILCW Hymn Test Committee (Minutes 71-4) that a basic purpose for a hymnal in a church body is to express its doctrine. The ALC review group (Minutes 76-11) had another view. It criticized the hymns for being "overburdened by doctrinal statements" and trying to tell the "whole story of salvation."

[4] Clifford J. Swanson, "Progress Report of the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship (by the ILCW Chair)," November, 1974.

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] Gilbert E. Doan, Jr., "American Lutherans," **Liturgy** 20 (June-July 1975), 179. The danger here is that *vox populi* is confused with *vox dei.* While being attentive to the preferences and protests of the people of God, all issues cannot be resolved by voting. There are times when a solitary prophetic voice is virtually alone against a majority of Christian opinion. We cannot rule out lonely witnesses like Maximus Confessor or Martin Luther.

[7] James Haney, remarks to the ALC review committee meeting, February 25-27, 1976.

[8] Minutes of the Inter-Lutheran Consultation (sic) on Worship, February 10, 1966, p. 1.

[9] *Ibid.,* p. 3. Cf. Walter E. Buszin, "Tradition and Meaning in our Worship Today:

The Synodical Conference," **Liturgical Reconnaissance,** ed. Edgar S. Brown, Jr. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), pp. 85-87.

[10] Press Release of the Inter-Lutheran Consultation on Worship, February 10-11, 1966; Minutes, p. 7.

[11] In its statement of purpose, adopted February 6-7, 1967, the ILCW notes the Lutheran churches' involvement in the "rapidly accelerating ecumenical movement" as well as the "numerous new and exciting insights in liturgy, Christian history, and theology." Besides preparing a "new common liturgy and hymnal," the ILCW was "to re-evaluate and to continue the church's rich tradition of worship and music." (Minutes, Appendix A, 67-1). Cf. Edward A. Hansen, "Hymn Texts: Languages, Images, and Forms for Today," address presented to the ILCW, April, 1969, pp. 3 and 5, citing A.R. Kretzmann, "The Definition of the Task Before Us," **Liturgical Reconnaissance,** pp. 131 and 133: "This, then, must be a book of confessional principle, as well as a cultural sampling — a book of quality, as well as a treasury of favorite hymns — a book of sound theology, as well as a social instrument." Again: "Our work is an attempt, once more, on the basis of the best in the old and in the new, to take a world, far from God, to beauty and truth also by means of the Scripture and the confessional character of our liturgy and hymnody."

[12] Minutes of the ILCW Executive Committee, February 1-2, 1972, Exhibit B.

[13] See "Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship Essays," **The Lutheran Quarterly,** 26 (1974), pp. 110-224.

[14] See Oliver K. Olson, "Luther's Catholic Minimum," **Response** 11 (1970), p. 17ff.

[15] News Release of the ALC Convention, October 1974.

[16] Clifford J. Swanson, "Progress Report of the ILCW," November, 1974, p. 11. Cf. ILCW Agenda, Exhibit I, 74-1.

[17] ILCW Memorandum from Eugene L. Brand, July 25, 1977. Swanson had astutely observed that "the theology of most church members is determined far more powerfully by the hymnal than by sermons or by the lessons of the church school or the catechetical class." On pp. 2-3 of the same report, in "The Rationale for the Proposed Service Book," Swanson noted the ILCW's priorities: (1) the primacy of baptism in the life of the church; (2) an emphasis on the involvement of the laity in the leading of worship, growing out of a new appreciation of the biblical concept of the people of God; and (3) the centrality of the Holy Communion in the worship of the church. The reference to laity "leading" worship did not mean ILCW supported lay persons "presiding" in sacramental actions or preaching, but rather serving as "assistant ministers" in the Holy Communion or "leading" in the various services of daily prayer.

[18] Only the daily and private masses had been discontinued (see CA 24).

[19] Cf. Swanson Progress Report, p. 3.

[20] Cf. Philip Melanchthon, **Loci Communes Theologici** (1521), in **Melanchthon and Bucer,** Vol. 19, **The Library of Christian Classics,** ed. Wilhelm Pauck (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), p. 21: "to know Christ means to know his benefits" is the soteriological theme of this early dogmatics.

[21] LBW, p. 56. See "ILCW Approved Changes in the Liturgical Materials (April 1977 edition)," May 20, 1977, p. 3. A change at this point was suggested by the review committees.

[22] It is interesting to note that Melanchthon's doctrine of baptism is spread around various articles in the CA, much as Luther's doctrine of justification is in the **Small Catechism.** These benefits include: regeneration (CA 2, 2), forgiveness and righteousness (CA 4, 1), the Holy Spirit (CA 5, 2), incorporation into the one holy Christian Church (CA 7, 1 & 4), and salvation (CA 9, 1) — all grasped by faith awakened by the sacramental "signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us" (CA 13, 1) and worked by the Spirit (CA 5, 2).

[23] A study report at the Hymn Text Committee meeting, April 15-17, 1970, stated that the number of baptismal hymns had been steadily decreasing during this century. Of the eight new hymns on baptism in **Contemporary Worship 4** (1972), six mention the Holy Spirit. Two of these are primarily about the Spirit's work in baptism. "Regeneration" is celebrated in LBW 189, st. 2; 193; 195, st. 2.

[24] Critique submitted by Walter R. Wietzke, ALC Division for Theological Education and Ministry, November 26, 1973.

[25] A complex tension is seen here in the (anachronistic) confessional literalism which argues that what the Apostles' Creed *meant* is what the **Book of Concord** says it *means.* This would imply that the **Book of**

Concord's translations of the received texts of the creeds are authoritative and definitive.

[26] See Paul Rorem, "Luther's Objection to a Eucharistic Prayer," **The Cresset** 38 (March 1975), 12-16.

[27] See Gerhard O. Forde, **Where God Meets Man** (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), pp. 10, 34, 41-44; *idem.*, **The Law-Gospel Debate** (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), pp. 36-38.

[28] See Eugene L. Brand, "Luther's Liturgical Surgery," in **Interpreting Luther's Legacy,** ed. Fred W. Meuser and Stanley D. Schneider (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), pp. 108-119. Cf. Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue III, **The Eucharistic Sacrifice,** pp. 7-26, 187-99.

[29] Apol. 24; 25-30, 38-49, 68-77. On the distinction Melanchthon makes between sacrament and sacrifice see Yngve Brilioth, **Eucharistic Faith and Practice,** trans. A.G. Hebert (London: S.P.C.K., 1965), p. 131; Paul Zeller Strodach, **A Manual on Worship,** rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1946), pp. 205 and 356; and Luther D. Reed, **The Lutheran Liturgy** (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), pp. 21, 69, and 772. For the exclusivist application of this distinction by ILCW critics see Arnold F. Krugler, "The Words of Institution: Proclamation or Prayer?" **Concordia Journal 2** (March, 1976), p. 56: "For Lutherans, prayer is a sacrifice that we as Christians offer. Hence it is our work. To imbed Christ's Words of Promise into the Eucharistic Prayer is to destroy their character as Gospel to the congregation." Cf. Rorem, "Luther's Objection," pp. 12-16; Gerhand Forde, in an ILCW pamphlet, "A 'Great Thanksgiving' for Lutherans?" and Oliver K. Olson in "The Mix Makes the Muddle," **Lutheran Standard** 12 (June 20, 1972), p. 11, cite Luther's "Babylonian Captivity," **Luther's Works** 36, p. 52: "The same thing cannot be received and offered at the same time . . ." But Luther goes on to say: "For the bread and wine are offered beforehand for blessing in order that they may be sanctified by the word and by the prayer (1 Tim. 4:5), but after they have been blessed and consecrated they are no longer offered, but received as a gift from God." (p. 54).

[30] Wolf, **Documents,** #27. An important older collection of documents is C.O. Kraushaar, **Verfassungsformen der luth. Kirche Amerikas** (Bertelsmann Verlag, 1911). For an overview and analysis of Lutheran ecclesiology in America, see C. Bergendoff, **Doctrine of the Church in American Lutheranism** (Philadelphia: Board of Publication, ULCA, 1956).

[31] The key Missouri documents: "Church and Ministry" (1852) and "The Proper Form of the Ev. Luth. Congregation" (1863) by C.F.W. Walther, and the 1854 Missouri Synod Constitution, are in C.S. Meyer (ed.), **Moving Frontiers** (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964). For the Iowa position, see F.W. Meuser, **Formation of the American Lutheran Church** (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1958), and the symposium, **Distinctive Doctrines and Usages,** 1st edition, pp. 74f. An excellent collection of sources for this period is T.G. Tappert (ed.), **Lutheran Confessional Theology in America, 1840-1880** (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

[32] Wolf, **Documents** #63. The document quotes Melanchthon's "Power and Primacy of the Pope," p. 56.

[33] C.S. Meyer, *op. cit.,* 167ff.

[34] Walther, **Amerikanisch-lutherische Pastoraltheologie** (1872), quoted in Tappert, **Lutheran Confessional Theology,** p. 286.

[35] Report of the Commission on Function and Structure (LCA, 1972), p. 15f.

[36] **LCA Minutes 1978,** p. 314.

[37] 'Report of the Commission on the Comprehensive Study of the Doctrine of the Ministry," **LCA Minutes 1970,** p. 430.

[38] *Ibid.,* pp. 441-443.

[39] See the study book by Frank Klos, **Confirmation and First Communion** (Augsburg, Concordia, and LCA Board of Publication, 1968) and the official **Report of the Joint Commission on the Theology and Practice of Confirmation** (same publishers, 1970).

[40] In **Yearbooks for Christian Education, III,** Ed. C. Richard Evenson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971): a joint revision of W. Kent Gilbert's "Objective for Christian Education."

[41] "Evangelical Outreach," Gilbert reported (**LCA Minutes 1978,** p. 407), aimed to develop "sound principles consistent with our Lutheran heritage."

[42] E.g. Charles S. Anderson, **Faith and Freedom. The Christian Faith according to the Lutheran Confessions** (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1977).

M. Heinecken, **Christian Teachings** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967).

W. Lazareth and R. Hjelm, **Helping Youth**

and Adults Know Doctrine (Philadelphia: Lutheran Church Press, 1963).

Bruce Weaver, **Belonging to the People of God** (Philadelphia: Lutheran Church Press, 1966). Instruction for membership classes.

[43] G.W. Forell, **The Augsburg Confession: A Contemporary Commentary** (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1968).

See also M. Marty, **The Hidden Discipline** (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962); Commentary on the **Large Catechism.**

[44] See for example James Scherer, **Mission and Unity in Lutheranism** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969).

[45] **Readiness for Ministry,** 2 vols. (ATS, 1975-6) Cf. Vol. 2, p. 4: "Utilizing the insights of the behavioral sciences and business management, this approach has sought to define ministers as professionals among other professionals." Cf. Nelson, **Lutheranism,** pp. 216ff. On the Lutheran Seminarian Project see M.L. Bakke, M. Strommen, and Dorothy Williams, **Ten Faces of Ministry: Perspectives on Pastoral and Congregational Effectiveness** (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979).

[46] pp. 286-304. Cf. E.C. Nelson, *op. cit.,* 273-294.

[47] The social-ethical history of American Lutheranism has not yet been written. A useful historical sketch, including America, of **The Lutheran Heritage** constitutes volume 2 of H.C. Letts (ed.), **Christian Social Responsibility,** 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957). The ALC picture can be pieced together from Nelson, **Lutherans,** and his earlier volume, **Lutheranism.** Dissertations, monographs and articles are now accumulating, however, which will make it possible to write a comprehensive interpretation.

[48] Karl H. Hertz (ed.), **Two Kingdoms and One World: A Sourcebook in Christian Social Ethics** (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), p. 113.

[49] *Ibid.,* p. 114.

[50] *Ibid.,* p. 128.

[51] *Ibid.,* p. 140.

[52] Resolution of the clergy of the Norwegian Synod (1861); in E. Clifford Nelson and Eugene L. Fevold, **The Lutheran Church Among Norwegian Americans,** Vol. I (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1960), p. 175.

[53] **Proceedings of the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States, 1862,** p. 30.

[54] **Journal of the Franckean Synod, 1844,** p. 18; cited in W.D. Weatherford, **American Churches and the Negro: An Historical Study from Early Slave Days to the Present** (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1957), pp. 157-158.

[55] **The Lutheran Churches Speak, 1960-1974** is a 56-page bibliography of statements by American Lutheran church bodies on a vast range of current social issues. R.J. Niebanck, **By Whose Authority?** (Division of Mission in North America, LCA, 1977), is excellent on "the making and use of Social Statements."

[56] Examples are the ongoing Lutheran Social Ethics Seminar at Valparaiso University: see, for instance, its symposium edited by W.A. Quanbeck, **God and Caeser. A Christian Approach to Social Ethics** (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959); the LCA's Faith and Life Institutes and the analogous ALC operations under the leadership of Loren Halvorsen, both of which have tried to adapt to America the original thrust of the German Evangelical Academies; independent Lutheran groups pressing for special causes such as racial justice in South Africa and international peace; high-ranking scientists and Lutheran theologians together exploring such topics as medical ethics, or science and the Christian faith. These activities, of course, are often carried out in cooperation with other Christians, especially under ecumenical auspices.

[57] "Biblical and Theological Perspectives," a statement for the Board of Social Ministry, LCA (1966), pp. 10f. Cf. *idem,* **The Left Hand of God** (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 136, and references to CA 7 on pp. 138, 143, 147.

Cf. Letts, **Life in Community** (Vol. 3 of **Christian Social Responsibility)** esp. ch. 2 (Lazareth) and ch. 6 (Letts).

[58] Robert E. Mansbach, "Church and State: A Critical Evaluation of the Official Social Statements and Study Reports (1962-1972) of the Lutheran Church in America in Light of the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Thought" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1977), and Edward D. Schneider, "An Examination of the Social Statements of the American Lutheran Church from 1961 to 1972 from the Perspective of the Theology of Luther and the Augsburg Confession" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1978).

[59] Philip Hefner, "Theological Reflections (1), Passion for Things of the Earth: The Two Kingdoms Doctrine," **Una Sancta,** XXIV, 2 (Pentecost, 1976), pp. 41-51.

[60] Carl E. Braaten, **The Future of God: The Revolutionary Dynamics of Hope** (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 147.



Chapter 3
The Augsburg Confession and Ecumenical Relations

Past

The shaping of Lutheran theological identity in the American context was broadly sketched in Chapter one. Now we must examine Lutheran inter-church relations more carefully. In the process we shall find ourselves inspecting some questions of Lutheran identity more closely.

As America launched its experiment of denominational pluralism in the 19th century, Lutherans had to clarify their sense of identity in relation to their ecclesiastical neighbors. The Augsburg Confession occupied a central place amid the bitter clashes of Lutheran groups.

One purpose of the General Synod (1820) was "to promote general concord and unity" in the church of Christ.[1] S.S. Schmucker took the lead in advocating a positive relationship with "evangelical" denominations. By zealous advocacy of that purpose through many writings, through leadership in cooperative Protestant agencies, and through the Evangelical Alliance which he helped to found in 1846, Schmucker earned lasting recognition as a "pioneer in Christian unity."[2]

As many have supposed, Schmucker by no means intended to melt down Lutheranism into generic Protestantism. Nor was he interested in an amalgamation of Lutheran and Reformed forces after the pattern of the Evangelical Church-Union of the West of 1840, the American counterpart of the Prussian Union church. He was rather a forerunner of church federation among autonomous churches. The "Christian union" he advocated was "not organic but fraternal and moral," a "purely advisory council" of "evangelical" or "orthodox" churches (these were the churches centered in "the inspired spiritual gospel" of justification through faith alone in Christ; excluded were the "fundamental errorists" — "Romanists" on the one side, "Deists, Unitarians, Pelagians" *et al.* on the other side). In the spirit of George Calixtus and Richard Baxter, Schmucker proposed to found evangelical church cooperation entirely of "fundamental doctrines" (viz. doctrines "unitedly believed by all the orthodox churches and regarded as essential by them"); in non-essentials diversity should be acceptable. His confession was clearly modeled on the CA.

According to Schmucker's concept the Lutheran Church is a branch of the one true church of Christ. Its duty is to cooperate with the other orthodox churches in united witness for the conversion of the world. The sharing of holy communion is a mark of mutual recognition among these churches.[3]

Frederick Wentz, writing from the viewpoint of 20th century ecumenism, aptly notes two serious limitations in Schmucker's ecumenical principles: a somewhat narrow view of the church (lack of sympathy with other more churchly movements of his day) and a

somewhat shallow assessment of tradition (failure to see that tradition cannot be reduced to least-common-denominator doctrinal statements and that "a creed is an organic whole with its own integrity as a witness to the past").[4]

In Schmucker's own day, as we have seen, his ecumenical principles and confessional hermeneutic were virtually engulfed by the rising tide of confessionalism. The General Synod itself rejected the thought of revising the CA; finally in 1913 it constitutionally declared its allegiance to "the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a correct exhibition of the faith and doctrine of our Church as founded upon the Word" and recognized the other symbols as "expositions of Lutheran doctrine of great historical and interpretative value."[5] It still refused, however, to be bound to the hermeneutic and exclusivism of the "Old Lutherans." Throughout its history the General Synod maintained fraternal, cooperative relationships with other evangelical churches. A judicious *apologia* declared: "These practices are not to be construed as 'unionistic' in the offensive sense of that term, but as an acknowledgement that the Good Shepherd has other sheep which are not of our fold."[6]

Meanwhile, however, the large majority of Lutherans in America followed the "Old Lutheran" approach, a repristination[7] of the doctrine of Lutheran Orthodoxy. The Missouri Synod worked out this hermeneutic in its most rigorous consequences. C.F.W. Walther acknowledged that there are Christians outside the Lutheran church, that even unorthodox groups may in a sense be called churches, and that one can be a Lutheran without the CA, but not in opposition to it. In *The Evangelical Lutheran Church, the True Visible Church of God upon Earth* (1866), however, Walther spelled out his position on Lutheran identity: "The Ev. Luth. Church is the sum total of all who without reservation profess the doctrine which was summarily submitted in writing at Augsburg in 1530 . . . , and was treated and expounded in the other so-called Lutheran symbols, as the pure doctrine of the divine Word" (Thesis 10); ". . . The doctrine set forth in its Confessions is the pure divine truth, because it agrees with the written Word of God on all points" (Thesis 21-A); ". . . The Ev. Luth. Church has all the essential marks of the true visible church of God on earth, as they are found in no other denomination of another name; it is therefore in no need of any doctrinal reformation" (Thesis 25).[8]

Underlying this outlook are several presuppositions: "Purity and unity of doctrine" are the first duty of the orthodox church.[9] Pure Lutheran doctrine is a homogeneous whole; the later symbols only clarify what was enunciated in the CA. Thus the Formula of Concord is the necessary interpreter of the CA. Since the Lutheran system is permanently fixed and irreformable because it agrees perfectly with the changeless divine Word, it follows that there is nothing negotiable in the realm of doctrine left to explore among Christians.

Missouri drew the ecumenical conclusion: "The Ev. Luth. Church rejects every fraternal or ecclesiastical fellowship with such as reject its Confession, either in whole or in part" (Thesis 21-C). To proclaim the gospel in its purity required avoidance of adulterated doctrine as well as hostile doctrine. Since Missouri felt obliged to avoid unorthodox Lutherans, there was even less need to consider non-Lutherans at all, except for the Synod's duty to bear them charitable witness to

its own pure truth.

"Unionism" was the term (imported from the experience with the Prussian Union of 1817 in Germany, where Calvinism was the chief *bête noire* for orthodox Lutherans) used to label the sharing of any churchly activities with the unorthodox, whether "Lutheran" or non-Lutheran. It remains a distinctively Lutheran term,[10] applied chiefly to "pulpit and altar fellowship" with the unorthodox, i.e., to the admitting of unorthodox pastors to orthodox pulpits and the sharing of communion with the unorthodox. Missouri extended the term, however, to every detail of the doctrinal system and to church practice as well (even refusing to pray with heterodox Christians), since it insisted that failure in practice to exercise careful discipline was proof of adulterated allegiance to pure doctrine.

That Missouri was eager to work toward "one single Ev. Lutheran Church of America," meanwhile, is indicatd both by Walther's proposal (1856) that Lutherans unreservedly committed to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession should meet in "free conferences" to seek unanimity in doctrine and by subsequent official doctrinal colloquies with several synods. By these methods the Synodical Conference was founded in 1872.

Some other "conservative" Lutheran bodies, equally committed to an Old Lutheran doctrinal stance, took a different hermeneutical approach and drew different conclusions for church relations. The General Council attempted to guarantee orthodox doctrinal unity but to follow a slightly more flexible policy in church practice. Its *Fundamental Principles of Faith and Polity* (1866) stated: "VIII. We accept and acknowledge the doctrines of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession in its original sense as throughout in conformity with the pure truth of which God's Word is the only rule . . . IX. . . . The other Confessions . . . inasmuch as they set forth none other than its [the UAC] system of doctrine and articles of faith, are of necessity pure and scriptural."[11] The Council's *Galesburg Rule* (1875) decreed: "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran ministers only — Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only;" in subsequent debate on whether exceptions are permissible, Charles Porterfield Krauth, the author of the rule, declared that it was meant to be "educational, not coercive." The German Iowa Synod similarly emphasized *ex animo* allegiance to the entire *Book of Concord,* but argued, against Walther, that the binding force of the Lutheran confessions does not extend to non-fundamental points and casual individual opinions of the authors, and that there are some "open questions" in the Scriptures which dare not be dogmatically fixed or declared divisive of church fellowship.[12]

On the "orthodox" doctrinal basis, however, as we have indicated, most of the conservative synods did not succeed in reaching permanent unity. Missouri charged all the other bodies with unionism; Ohio leveled the same charge at Iowa, and Iowa accused the General Council (especially for cooperation with the General Synod and the United Synod South).

When eastern Lutherans resumed conversations across synodical lines at the First Lutheran Diet (1877), Charles Porterfield Krauth delivered an elaborate paper, "The Relations of the Lutheran Church to the Denominations Around Us." It was a judicious statement of Lutheran "strict confessionalism" within the American context and emphasized

"close communion" as the guardian of confessional purity. Krauth's General Synod adversary, James A. Brown of Gettysburg, responded: "Have we a right to say that other denominations are not part of the true Church of Christ, and to be treated by us as such? . . . Against this spirit of exclusivism we ask, . . . Can any man forbid the administration of the Sacraments to those who 'have received the Holy Ghost as well as we'?"[13] The conservative midwestern bodies, meanwhile, were criticizing the General Council for being too flexible in church practice and discipline.

Some of the deeply pietistic Scandinavian immigrant Lutherans took a somewhat different position on church relations. First, with their great concern for their ethnic identity, they generally shunned churchly contact with non-Lutherans during the 19th century and they resented efforts at proselytism by Americanized churches. Second, most of the Scandinavian pietists were rather conservative doctrinally, but since their primary concern was for "living piety," they harbored a distaste for finely drawn doctrinal distinctions and felt a certain sense of affinity with other pietistic Christians.

In the 20th century great changes have taken place in Lutheran church relations. At times they have resulted from altering the conclusions drawn from the varieties of confessional hermeneutic, at times from a shift in the hermeneutical approach itself. Some examples:

(1) The National Lutheran Council (1918), the first agency of practical cooperation established by several bodies not in formal church fellowship, decreed that cooperation in "internal (church) matters" was to be avoided. Nevertheless, as the Norwegian Lutheran, Lars W. Boe, remarked in 1942, "Time and again we re-wrote the constitution and regulations . . . but the Lord . . . pushed us across the line every time."[14] As Lutherans worked together, particularly in crises of human need, they also learned to trust one another and to reexamine their sense of the mission of the church. More than theological discussion, it was practical work that built up the National Lutheran Council. The Council, in turn, paved the way for the post-war changes in Lutheran alignments and activities.

(2) The United Lutheran Church in America (1918) not only offered fellowship or merger to other Lutheran bodies without further ado; it also announced in its Washington Declaration (1920) a comprehensive statement on "the Church and its External Relationships" which emphasized "the catholic spirit in the church." The concern for catholicity and for proper cooperation with other church bodies was positive rather than defensive, although it also was affirmed that "until a more complete unity of confession is obtained . . . the ULCA is bound in duty and in conscience to maintain its separate identity as a witness to the truth which it knows; and its members, its ministers, its pulpits, its fonts and its altars must testify only to that truth." The last clause was clearly reminiscent of the Galesburg Rule but not identical with it. The so-called Erlangen theology had begun to reshape the confessional hermeneutic of the ULCA. The same body in the 1920s and 30s worked out ecumenical guidelines which led it into membership in the Lutheran World Federation (1947), the World Council of Churches (1948), and the National Council of Churches of Christ (1950): "the evangelical principle" (that church councils must be composed of avowedly Trinitarian churches)

and "the representative principle" (that church councils must be made up of churches, not merely churchmen, and must be officially accountable to the churches). The Augustana Synod, from the 1930s on, moved strongly in the same direction.[15]

The Lutheran Church in America (1962), successor to these two bodies and two others, rewrote its Ecumenical Guidelines in 1974 to emphasize with whom the church should cooperate, rather than with whom it may not.[16] In 1978 The ALC and the LCA adopted a joint statement on communion practices which also breathes a more open and (these bodies would say) a more evangelical spirit.[17]

(3) The American Lutheran Church (1960) formally espoused the "exclusive confessionalism" of the Galesburg Rule and the Minneapolis Theses, both of which had been reaffirmed in The ALC's *Articles of Agreement* (1958). The assumption was that additional doctrinal agreements would be needed in order to attain Lutheran unity. Since the 1960s, however, a strong tide within The ALC has moved toward a more flexible exclesiastical position and greater congeniality with the LCA, although The ALC still hopes to bring the LC-MS into unity discussions once more. It has declared "selective fellowship" (left to the judgment of pastors) with both the LCA and the LC-MS.

(4) The recent story of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod was sketched in the first section of Chapter One: broader cooperation in the 1960s, traditionalist retrenchment beginning with 1969, the ensuing schism and the formation of the more "moderate" Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in 1976. The latter body promptly joined the LC/USA and declared fellowship with the LCA and The ALC. The LC-MS, meanwhile, by no means concedes that its exclusivist position on Lutheran identity and church relations is less "evangelical" than that of its sister bodies. On the contrary, it claims that only its orthodox and anti-unionistic position does justice to the gospel.[18]

(5) The formation of the Lutheran Council in the USA (1966) has already been mentioned as a major breakthrough in Lutheran cooperation. The Council numbers the LC-MS among its members. The key to this new development was the adoption of the twin constitutional principles that all participating bodies *shall* take part in discussions seeking "to achieve theological consensus in a systematic and continuing way on the basis of the Scriptures and the witness of the Lutheran Confessions," and that cooperation in other joint activities of the council is optional. Since Missouri has declined to join the Lutheran World Federation, the other members of the council cooperate internationally through the separately organized Lutheran World Ministries.

Bilateral confessional dialogues (to be examined more carefully in the next section) are among the most important recent developments in inter-church relationships. Lutherans in Europe and America, indeed, helped to initiate the "age of dialogue." Begun under the auspices of the National Lutheran Council, the present series of bilateral discussions have become the responsibility of Lutheran World Ministries (with the Roman Catholics) and the LC/USA (with other Protestant churches); Missoui has been an active participant. Beginning in 1963, Lutherans in America have now engaged in dialogues with the

Roman Catholics, Reformed (including Presbyterians), Orthodox, Anglicans, and just recently, with Methodists and Conservative/Evangelicals.[19] It is to this aspect of the current ecumenical scene that we now turn.

Present

Although intended as an ecumenical document and purposely irenic in tone, the Augsburg Confession has served historically more to define Lutheran self-identity than to facilitate ecumenical conversation. Especially in America the CA has been significant mostly in inter-Lutheran discussions. Lutherans have assumed that full fellowship with any group other than Lutheran would require formal subscription to or at least explicit agreement with the CA.

The period immediately following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) opened up exciting new visions of ecumenism. For the first time since the 16th century, Roman Catholics found it possible to engage other Christians in genuine conversation. It is not surprising that the fervor occasioned by the Council and its specific references to ecumenism ushered in a period of ecumenical activity unprecedented in church history.

The new phase of ecumenism did not originate entirely with the Roman Catholics. The Presbyterian, Eugene Carson Black, had preached a sermon in Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, in December, 1960, pleading for the full merger of several mainline American Protestant denominations. Eventually this led to creation of the Consultation on Church Union, in which six denominations (eventually ten) joined. Lutherans decided not to participate, not simply because they were not included in the original invitation, but mainly for reasons explicitly associated with the teaching of the CA. Even the LCA, the most latitudinarian of the Lutheran bodies, could not reconcile COCU with Lutheranism. The CA insists that it is theological reflection on the Gospel that is of primary significance for Christian unity; on matters of ceremony and polity there can be diversity. The Blake proposals, on the other hand, emphasized polity because of the assumption that sufficient doctrinal agreement among participating denominations already existed. Thus the Lutherans rejected COCU precisely in order, from their point of view, to remain open to authentic ecumenism.

Meanwhile dialogue with the Reformed tradition was in fact under way; Lutherans were engaged from 1962 to 1966 with the Presbyterian bodies and the Christian Reformed Church and, in a second round, from 1972 to 1974, with inclusion of the United Church of Christ. Response to the new Roman Catholic situation was perhaps more enthusiastic, even though the barriers to be overcome appeared greater. The Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue, involving only professional theologians on both sides, began in 1965 and still continues. The third of the dialogues of sufficiently long standing for evaluation, that with the Episcopal Church, USA, began in 1969. The first round lasted until 1972; a second began in 1976 and is still in progress.

In both the Lutheran-Reformed and the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues, the use and understanding of authoritative statements, such as the CA, have been fairly traditional. Full establishment of fellowship has been supposed to depend on full agreement in those matters about which such documents speak. Thus, for example, in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic discussion of the

eucharistic sacrifice, the tools of theological scholarship were used to discover ways in which traditional Lutheran and Roman Catholic positions could be so interpreted as to agree. But in their estimate of the extent of needed agreement, the two dialogues differ.

Lutheran-Reformed. The report of the first Lutheran-Reformed round of conversations, widely circulated as *Marburg Revisited,*[20] recommended: ". . . we see no insuperable obstacles to pulpit and altar fellowship and, therefore, we recommend to our parent bodies that they encourage their constituent churches to enter into discussions looking forward to intercommunion and the fuller recognition of one another's ministries."[21] This result was achieved by a method which had basically two steps: the discovery and deepening of consensus at what may be called the level of standard Reformation belief, and the examination of the old disputes within that consensus to see whether they should still be regarded as church-divisive. The examination invariably produced negative results. Thus, for example, it was agreed that the Lord's Supper is a "means of grace" which brings the presence of Christ and "arouses faith;" the ancient struggles were adjudged matters of "different terms and concepts" and of "onesided . . . teaching and practice."[22]

Probably the majority of Lutherans in America agree with such judgments. Nevertheless, this method from the first round may have contributed to the disaster of the second. In any case, the second round, mandated to carry out the recommendations of the first, ended with a confession of having reached a stalemate, and with the refusal of the representatives of the LC-MS to sign even that. It is instructive that the difficulty lay in disagreement *inside* the Lutheran delegation over the very nature of ecumenical agreements and their practical consequences.

Lutheran-Roman Catholic. The Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue has taken a more rigorous view of the theological agreement and disagreement. Within the favorable climate created by the Second Vatican Council, this has resulted in the production of a great deal of fine scholarship and reflection; the conversation with Roman Catholics is the most impressive in-depth effort in which Lutherans in America have participated. The purpose of the Lutherans has been precisely to take the CA seriously. Beginning with a study of the Nicene Creed as dogma, the dialogue moved to more traditionally divisive topics, achieving notable theological rapprochement on several that had before seemed intractable; the eucharistic sacrifice, the validity of Lutheran ordination, and the Petrine office.[24] For the Lutherans, the CA has served both as the mandate for participation and as a safeguard against too easy acceptance of positions inconsistent with the Lutheran understanding of the Gospel.

The Lutheran-Catholic dialogue is still in progress and still committed to important theological work. Its successive reports have been widely discussed. Whether they will receive any official response from the churches or lead to any action remains, of course, to be seen.

Lutheran-Episcopal. The Lutheran-Episcopal dialogue in its first round was perhaps chiefly notable for three methodological departures, each with some claim to a basis in the CA. First, new denominational arrangements were not envisaged or even regarded as

necessarily desirable. The goal of the dialogues became "intercommunion, or pulpit and altar fellowship,"[25] and the recommendation of the participants was immediate establishment of a very limited form of such fellowship.[26]

Second, an exegesis of Article 7 of the CA different from that recently traditional but claiming textual justification, led to a new statement of the ecumenical question that was accepted by both sides: "Are we able mutually to affirm the presence of the Gospel and apostolicity in our respective communions sufficiently to agree that the renewal of the church is more likely to come in communion with one another than out of communion with one another?"[27] With some struggle, both sides said they could. The formulation shows where the difficulties lay for each side. With respect to the episcopacy, theological rapprochement was based on recognition of the difference between a necessary function and its varying historical actualizations,[28] which is surely a key principle of the CA.

Third, the existence of continued disagreement and its importance were recognized. Lutherans continued to regard Episcopal doctrinal formlessness as an evil and Episcopalians to regard Lutheran attitudes about ministry as subcatholic. But it was held that, at least for these two communions, such things could profitably be discussed further only inside greater fellowship, and provision for such discussion was made a condition of the proposed fellowship.[29] This method reverses the traditional Lutheran order, but it too was based on the exegesis of Articles 5 and 7 of the CA, for it distinguishes church from non-church (rather than dealing with grades of doctrinal purity), and it calls for fellowship wherever the true church is found, whatever else may divide believers.[30]

It is perhaps owing to these methodological innovations that the recommendations of the first round have been ignored by the sending bodies. After several years the very sort of talks the first round called futile were mandated, and these are in progress.

Thus, precisely with respect to the role of the CA, each of the three dialogues has differed methodologically from the others. Perhaps each method has had its virtues. The Lutheran-Reformed dialogue could most easily have led to denominational action had not inter-Lutheran troubles intervened. The Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue has been most notable for its production of new ecumenical theology. The Lutheran-Episcopal dialogue, in its first round, was especially significant in the way it exploited the implications of the CA (Article 7) for ecumenical method.

Two paragraphs from the conclusion of a recent Lutheran survey of the interchurch dialogues are worthy of note:

> *These dialogues have differed with respect to goals, procedures, content, and depth. Yet each has succeeded in removing misleading stereotypes, in promoting the reconsideration of theological traditions, in establishing relationships of warmth and trust, and in encouraging a more realistic consideration of ecumenical objectives*
>
> . . .
>
> *We have a remarkable advantage in that Lutheranism is committed to the principle of being firm where the biblical gospel is concerned and flexible in peripheral matters. While being dogmatic about the gospel, Lutherans have freedom with respect to ecclesiastical forms. Whatever serves the gospel, or does not obscure it,*

can be accommodated within the multiformity of Lutheranism.[31]

Voices are now being heard within the Lutheran church bodies urging ecclesiastical action to implement some of the recommendations attained in the dialogues. It should be recognized, however, that a certain tension exists between the bilaterals and the "conciliar" approach of the World Council of Churches. A similar tension exists between the world-wide ecumenical commitments of Lutherans in America which are expressed chiefly through the World Council of Churches and their world-wide inter-Lutheran commitments expressed through the Lutheran World Federation.

Prospect

From all that we have noted about the Augsburg Confession, we may expect it to play a crucial role in the ecumenical movement in America and around the world. Increasing attention will be given to the claim of the CA that there is nothing in its doctrine "that departs from the Scriptures or the catholic church or the church of Rome, insofar as the ancient church is known to us from its writers" (Conclusion of the First Part). One consequence of this is that Lutherans will tend to see themselves less as "Protestants" and "Lutherans," terms foreign to the CA, and more as evangelical and catholic Christians, terms congenial both to the spirit and the letter of the CA. As such, the adherents of the CA will, even in respect to nomenclature, find themselves closer to the increasing number of Roman Catholics, Reformed, Anglicans, Orthodox, and others who consider themselves also to be evangelical and catholic Christians.

It is well known that, although the CA is the central Lutheran confession of faith, it still stands subordinate to Scripture as the supreme norm, of which it is an historical interpretation. The subsequent parts of the *Book of Concord* make it evident that the CA itself requires interpretation and, at least in this sense, development. Moreover, even though the CA clearly implies that it is a sufficient statement of Christian faith, it makes no claim to be a full, perfect, final, or exhaustive statement. New theological and exegetical insights and new developments in the life of the church do not require that it be amended in substance; rather, they but supplement it, allowing the CA to be preached and heard anew. Without forgetting the fact that there are debates among Lutherans concerning the nature and the extent of the interpretive development that is required to transmit the CA today and tomorrow, the necessity of such interpretation unavoidably raises the question: by whom?

This question, of course, poses the broader question of inner-Lutheran unity. It has already been pointed out in chapter one that the CA simply does not envision an American-style denominational Lutheranism. Of itself, therefore, the CA cannot overcome divisions among those churches which profess it. If there is to be a "union of all Lutherans in North America,"[32] this means at the very least that the Lutheran bodies which belong to the Lutheran Council in the USA must continue to see themselves as "obligated to participate in discussions to bring about full doctrinal unity among Lutherans."[33] Such unity will then provide the basis for the kind of unified church structure that is necessary for Lutherans in America to express the faith they share with a single clear voice

when the situation requires it.

Historical experience suggests that such a unified Lutheran church in America may also offer a more effective means of restoring or promoting concord where there is schism or threat of schism. For where the existence of two or more Lutheran bodies not in full communion with each other is regarded as normal, further division into three or more divided churches or synods would seem to be less deplorable than would the rupture of a single communion.

A further benefit of a doctrinally and structurally united Lutheranism is that it will, in all likelihood, be much more effective in working for unity with other Christian churches. Theologians representing the three major Lutheran bodies have contributed to shaping some of the most important consensus statements in recent ecumenical history.[34] Yet the process of receiving, confirming, or correcting those statements is made unnecessarily cumbersome by the fact of several separate national Lutheran churches.

In this connection it is significant that several of the more recent American dialogues involving Lutherans with Episcopalians and Roman Catholics have dealt precisely with such structural questions as the ordained ministry, episcopacy, papal primacy, and teaching authority and infallibility in the church. With Christians in all churches, Lutherans will be challenged to resist the lures of ecclesiological docetism, that is, an overly spiritualized view of the church, and to see these structural and institutional questions as important and as worthy of attention. Lutherans in America are in fact being challenged by some of their most distinguished theologians not only to look "forward to intercommunion and the fuller recognition" of ministries with American Reformed churches,[35] but also to create "structures as will enable Episcopalians and Lutherans . . . to assume joint responsibility for the proclamation of the Gospel with one accord and for an appropriate ministration of the Sacraments . . ."[36] Such structures would possibly include "future common forms of ordered ministry and *episkope.*"[37]

Lutherans in America will even have to respond to the question proposed to them by another group of leading Lutheran scholars concerning "the possibility and the desirability of the papal Ministry, renewed under the gospel and committed to Christian freedom, in a larger communion which would include the Lutheran churches."[38] It should be noted here that there is nothing in the CA or in the Scriptures[39] that precludes an affirmative answer to that question. In fact, in terms of the catholic intent of the CA discussed in the first paragraph of this section, it is the negative answer that would require justification.

In drawing closer to and being approached by other Christian churches with more integrated structures, Lutherans will find that a critical stance concerning the claims for and the exercise of episcopal and primatial pastoral authority is by no means incompatible with recognition of such authority. That episcopal and primatial authority can be and has been abused is denied by no one who supports that authority. The same is true of synodical and conciliar authority. Nonetheless, without undercutting the critical vigilance that is required to safeguard the gospel and Christian liberty, the momentum of ecumenical discussions involving Lutherans will lead them to focus on the long-overlooked benefits of ministries and structures that have served historically to relate local churches

"to the church universal, so that pluralism and pluriformity do not undermine oneness, and unity and uniformity do not destroy a desirable diversity."[40]

A more concrete challenge to American Lutheran bodies has been made by another group of representative Lutheran theologians who see no incompatibility between their commitment to the CA and the following recommendations to their churches:

a) that they officially declare that the Lutheran commitment to the (Lutheran) Confessions does not involve the assertion that the pope or the papacy in our day is the antichrist; in this way our churches would publicly affirm that antipapal polemics should be replaced by an attitude of respect and love;

b) that they undertake an examination, with the participation of Catholics, of catechetical and other teaching materials, in order to identify and eliminate distorted accounts of historic and contemporary Roman Catholicism;

c) that in the presentation of our common Christian faith they encourage greater use of Roman Catholic doctrinal, theological, catechetical, pastoral, and liturgical materials;

d) that they facilitate Catholic contributions to the process of formulating Lutheran positions on doctrinal and ethical issues; this might include Catholic participation in Lutheran conventions and assemblies;[41]

e) that they develop structures for regular consultation with Catholic bishops on the local and national levels regarding matters of mutual concern;

f) that they declare their willingness to participate in a world-wide and ecumenically based magisterium; this participation might take many forms, from representation in synods of bishops or joining in a fully ecumenical council.[42]

Only by taking concrete steps such as these, conclude the Lutheran drafters of the above recommendations, "can Lutheranism become what it originally claimed to be: a reformation movement under the gospel within the Church catholic."[43] Those who confessed their faith at Augsburg in 1530 had hope that they might have been able to do so at an ecumenical council. After 450 years such a hope suddenly has become bright. As Lutherans draw nearer to each other and to all those who believe the gospel, they are laying the foundations for a free and genuinely ecumenical council in which reconciliation with other parts of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church can solemnly and publicly be manifested "so that the world might believe" that Jesus Christ has been sent by his Father for the salvation of all.

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[1] General Synod Constitution (1820), III, I, Wolf, **Documents.**

[2] This is the title of the definitive biography by A.R. Wentz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967). See esp. Chh. 15-16. See also the 1965 reprint of the **Fraternal Appeal to the American Churches,** 2nd ed. 1839, ed. F.K. Wentz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965).

[3] See **Fraternal Appeal,** esp. pp. 176ff, 187ff; also F.K. Wentz, *op. cit.,* pp. 32, 27, 56, and A.R. Wentz, **Pioneer,** pp. 273, 276, etc.

[4] F.K. Wentz, Introduction to **Fraternal Appeal,** pp. 34f.

[5] With this action the General Synod repudiated the extreme view of Gettysburg professor Richard, who had declared that "the Formula of Concord has done more

harm than it has good ..." James W. Richard, **Confessional History of the Evang. Lutheran Church,** 1909, p. 518; cf. p. 617.

[6] Gettysburg president J.A. Singmaster, in **Distinctive Doctrines and Usages,** 4th ed. (1914), pp. 64-67; quotation on p. 66.

[7] The term "repristination" is meant descriptively here, without evaluative overtones. In his **Dogmatics** F. Pieper accepted the term as appropriate for the Missouri position. Vol. I, p. ix (English tr. 1950) from the 1917 German edition (Cited in E.C. Nelson, **Lutherans in North America,** p. 461). Tappert applies the term also to the General Council theologians C.P. Krauth, Jr. and H.E. Jacobs. T.E. Tappert, **History of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia** (Philadelphia: Lutheran Theological Seminary, 1964), p. 74 (Cited by Nelson, **Lutheranism,** pp. 290, 433).

[8] J.T. Mueller, ed., **The True Visible Church** (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961).

[9] Missouri Synod Constitution (1854), Ch. 4, A, 1. See C.S. Meyer, **Moving Frontiers** (1964), p. 151.

[10] **Library of Congress Subject Headings,** Vol. II, 8th ed., (1975), p. 1896:

> "Unionism (Religion)
> Here are entered works — from or descriptive of a Lutheran point of view — dealing with joint worship and work among adherents of church bodies not united in doctrine. Works dealing with the same problem but from or descriptive of a Catholic point of view are entered under the heading Communicatio in sacris."

[11] This document, and hereafter also others not otherwise identified, can be found in Wolf, **Documents.**

[12] S. Fritschel, "Doctrinal Agreement Essential to Church Unity," 1868, Tappert, **Lutheran Confessional Theology in America, 1840-1880,** pp. 79ff. Two important later criticisms of the use of the term: a) In a 1938 essay on Unionism read to Missourians, Michael Reu of the (former) ALC hewed to a very conservative confessional line, but protested the remote conclusions drawn from the concept by Missouri; **In the Interest of Lutheran Unity. Two Lectures** (1940). b) H.J.A. Bouman's "Synodical Essay" at the LC-MS 1962 Convention pointed out grave difficulties in reaching an unambiguous understanding and application of the non-biblical term "unionism." (LC-MS **Proceedings,** 1962, pp. 30-33); cf. reference in Meyer, **Moving Frontiers,** p. 433).

[13] H.E. Jacobs (ed.), **First Free Lutheran Diet 1877** (1878) — See Krauth's essay, *ibid.,* pp. 27ff (abridged in Tappert, **Lutheran Confessional Theology),** and Brown's remarks, *ibid.,* pp. 74, 76. Cf. two articles on "Altar-Fellowship" in H.E. Jacobs and J.A.W. Haas (eds.), **Lutheran Cyclopedia,** (1899), pp. 8f — S. Fritschel (Iowa Synod) declared close communion a "self-evident" Lutheran principle; M. Valentine (General Synod) wrote: "The use of the sacrament as a means of testifying against the distinctive teachings in which the different branches of the church disagree, instead of as a witness of their spiritual oneness, seems rather an abuse than its true use — a self-excluding separation from the common fellowship or communion of the Church universal, that manifestly approaches the character of a schism."

[14] Quoted in Nelson, **Lutheranism,** p. 126.

[15] Lecturing in 1939 to a predominantly ULCA audience on "The True Unity of the Church" (CA 7), Conrad Bergendoff (Augustana College & Seminary president) urged greater participation in the struggles of the ecumenical movement: "In the doctrine of the Trinity and in the doctrine of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ there is, as Lausanne and Edinburgh and Utrecht have revealed, a unity which calls for fellowship as strongly as our differences call for division."**Lutheran Church Quarterly** (1939), p. 274.

[16] **LCA Minutes,** 1974, p. 309.

[17] **LCA Minutes,** 1978, pp. 209-214 (joint ALC/LCA report), pp. 332-336 (Recommendations for Practice, as adopted).

[18] **A Lutheran Stance Toward Ecumenism,** 1974 Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, LC-MS (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.).

[19] **Lutherans in Ecumenical Dialogue: An Interpretive Guide** (Lutheran Council in the USA, 1977), p. 30.

[20] Paul C. Empie and James I. McCord (eds.), **Marburg Revisited** (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966).

[21] *Ibid.,* p. 191.

[22] *Ibid.,* pp. 103f.

[23] Minutes of the Division of Theological Studies, LC/USA, 10/10 - 11/74, pp. 2-4.

[24] Paul C. Empie and T. Austin Murphy (eds.), **Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue,** successive volumes since 1965.

[25] **Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue: A Pro-**

gress Report (Cincinnati: Forward Movement Publications, 1973) p. 13.

[26] *Ibid.*, pp. 23f, 32, 43.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[28] *Ibid*, pp. 20-22.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 127-138.

[31] **Lutherans in Ecumenical Dialogue,** p. 30.

[32] From the "Principles Governing External Relationships of the LCA," in **LCA Minutes,** 1974, p. 309.

[33] Fischer, "Lutheranism in North America," p. 298. Cf. LC/USA Constitution, Article 4.

[34] Internal Lutheran disagreements have, at times, however, impeded deeper agreement with other Christians, most notably in the second series of conversations with the Reformed churches. See **Lutherans in Ecumenical Dialogue,** pp. 5 and 11.

[35] **Marburg Revisited,** p. 191.

[36] **Lutheran-Episcopal Dialogue: A Progress Report,** p. 24.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] Paul C. Empie and T. Austin Murphy (eds.), **Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue V: Papal Primacy and the Universal Church** (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974), p. 23.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 22: A special responsibility entrusted to one Minister "for the universal church cannot be ruled out on the basis of the biblical evidence."

[40] *Ibid*, p. 10.

[41] The appointment of a Roman Catholic theologian as an equal partner in the present study, including the drafting process, may be seen as an early implementation of this recommendation.

[42] "Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue: Teaching Authority and Infallibility in the Church," **Theological Studies,** 40 (1979), pp. 165 and 166.

[43] *Ibid.*, p. 166.

THE ROLE OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION
Catholic and Lutheran Views

JOSEPH A. BURGESS, editor
in collaboration with
GEORGE LINDBECK, HARRY McSORLEY, HARDING MEYER, and HEINZ SCHÜTTE

The Augsburg Confession was intended to be a statement of common faith but its recognition throughout Christendom has not become a reality in four hundred fifty years of experience. Along with a new appreciation of the Confession by Lutherans, Catholic recognition is being debated now. As the Confession's four hundred fiftieth anniversary is marked, interest focuses upon its role in an ecumenical age. Here are new understandings of the Confession for all Christians.

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JOHN REUMANN, editor
in collaboration with
SAMUEL H. NAFZGER and HAROLD H. DITMANSON

Preface by Paul Opsahl

This study in Lutheran hermeneutics emphasizes the diversity of perspectives embodied in the scholarship of the LCA, ALC, and Missouri Synod authors and teachers contributing to the volume. The book's three sections are I. *Lectionary as Hermeneutic,* II. *Confessional Propria as Hermeneutic,* III. *Methods of Interpretation—The Historical-Critical Method as Hermeneutic?*

The contributors in addition to the editors are **Karlfried Froehlich, Arland J. Hultgren, Warren A. Quanbeck, Ralph A. Bohlmann, Horace D. Hummel, Foster R. McCurley, Joseph A. Burgess, Ronald M. Hals, David L. Tiede, Duane A. Priebe, Kurt E. Marquart, Martin H. Scharlemann,** and **Donald H. Juel.**

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Chapter 4
The Augsburg Confession and the Act of Confession

Lutherans in America have often claimed, over against the generality of American Christianity, to be a *confessional* church in some special sense. It is not immediately clear what the import of this claim can be. Every American denomination has documents Lutherans would call confessions — even if some denominations do not call them that. Doubtless we Lutherans have a larger stock of documents than most other groups and may be more fervid in our attachment to them, though even this varies among Lutheran groups. But such distinctions are quantitative, and the Lutheran claim interpreted in such terms would become an odious comparison.

Clarifying the notion of Lutheran confessionalism depends, we suggest, on an analysis of the act of confession. Perhaps also the act will be somewhat differently analyzed from an American perspective than from some other. If so, the analysis is the final contribution of this study.

The church has used the word *confession — homologein* and its successive translations — for a great variety of acts. Through much of the New Testament, it can be used of any decisive theological or religious verbal commitment and is still sometimes used in this way; here we are concerned with a smaller class of uses.

Baptism was called a confession in the ancient church, probably already in 1 Tim. 6:12. In the persecuted church, a "confessor" was a martyr who survived, probably reflecting 1 Tim.'s use of the word for Jesus' confrontation with Pilate. At the beginning of their doctrinal decrees the fathers of the great councils used "We believe" and "We confess" as synonomous formulae. When a creed is used at our Sunday services, it is often introduced by: "Les us confess . . ." The document submitted to Charles V at the Diet of Augsburg, in hope of surmounting the religious division of the Empire, was entitled, *Confessio oder Bekenntnis des Glaubens etlicher Fuersten und Staedte . . .* One group that opposed Hitler's control of the German church was called "The confessing (or earlier, "confessional"!) church." We could go on. The church has doubtless used the same word for all these different acts from a perception of structural similarities among them, but it may well be that the similarities even between acts called "confession" in a narrower sense than the general New Testament use are not sufficient to make investigation of a supposed common hermeneutical structure a profitable enterprise. What follows, then, has the nature of an experiment.

Even if not all proclamation is confession in the sense here intended, all confession is proclamation. Thus there is at least this much common to all confessions: they are proclamations of the Gospel or are intended to be so, and therefore share the hermeneutical structure of all Gospel-proclamation. The Gospel occurs when the claim that Jesus

is risen and the hopes and fears of a community or individual are brought to mutual interpretation. In other words, the Gospel occurs when someone proclaims the difference it makes that Jesus, this particular person, identified by the name and by narrative and reminiscence of his historic particularity, now lives with death behind him so that he must finally triumph. To proclaim this difference, the Gospel must of course speak to the hopes and fears of those actually there to hear, in the particularities of *their* histories and places in history.

Precisely in order to be itself, therefore, the Gospel-proclamation changes, for it must address the hindrances and possibilities of each historical time and place. Thus the Gospel spoke to the declining ancient world of the possibility created by worship in the name of Jesus, of worshipping only one God (as antiquity had always longed to do) without lapsing into empty abstractions. Or it spoke, to use another example, of a coming *ecumene* in which the universality of the imperial community and the direct mutuality of the lost community of the polis, would be joined under the rule of the universal Friend.

Quite differently, the Gospel should speak to late-capitalist America of a liberty which is not liberty *from* the community, because Jesus, who is no one's competitor, will be the common bond; or it should speak of the possiblity of religion that is neither legalistic or world-denying because that religion follows an historical figure who nevertheless lives beyond history. Many other examples could be cited. Strictly speaking the Gospel is never told the same way twice. Every act of proclaiming it brings new reality to expression. *Theology* is the intellectual labor involved in that act of creation.

Yet the Gospel is not a series of free inventions. It is always about the one Jesus in his personal self-identity established between Bethlehem and Golgotha and known to us only by historical memory, i.e., in the continuity of the tradition about him. Nor do the hopes and fears of any time or place spring into being then and there from nothing. They are rather determined by the whole of previous history and are possible only within the continuing tradition in which history is present to us. Thus the speaking of the Gospel is always a meditation of tradition, and theological creativity is always intervention in an ongoing discussion.

That completes a sketch of the hermeneutic structure in which all sorts of Gospel-proclamations share, confession included. The sketch is woefully inadequate, yet the description does enable us to say the following about confession: it is always of Jesus; at its heart will always be some such utterance as "Jesus lives" or "Jesus is the Christ;" it is always an interpretation of the hopes and fears inherent in a particular historical situation; it always intends to create possibility for an historical situation; it is always an act of loyalty to tradition.

We must next ask if there are any characteristics *not* possessed by all acts of Gospel-proclamation that determine a class of proclamatory acts plausibly called *confession* in a more special sense. Five such characteristics are proposed:

1) Confession is proclamation in crisis; it is proclamation over against a challenge to the message so great that it threatens the faithfulness of the messenger. The confessor or confessors may say "Jesus is Lord" to those who with authority and power insist he is not. Or the confessors may be confronted by an urgent situation in which a new inter-

pretation of Jesus' resurrection capable of speaking to people's actual hopes has been delayed so long that manifestly incompatible religious groups both claim to speak the Gospel. Making that necessary new interpretation by which the Gospel lives becomes their confession. Or a confessor speaks while standing at the edge of the baptismal water, after which there will be no turning back.

2) Confession, then, is proclamation in a context where the unity of creative new interpretation and fidelity to tradition is itself threatened. Confession is distinguished by the fact that it is reflexively concerned for this unity: *that* the new and liberating promise and the old, old message are one and the same, is now itself part of the good news to be proclaimed. When this is not so, we should not speak of "confession."

Theologically creative groups and individuals may well also be confessors; many of the greatest have been. But the act of confession is not where they will test their innovations. A necessary component of theological reflection is brainstorming; proposing interpretations of Christ and the world to see whether they may prove indeed to be the gospel. That will be known only at the End, and we must all expect part of our work to be burned away by God's refining. But confession is not the occasion for such experiments. The theologian convinced that a better anthropology eliminates all need for "born of the *Virgin* Mary" nevertheless quite rightly adheres to the old phrase when a creed is needed.

Sometimes, as at Nicea or Augsburg, the overdue need for new interpretation is itself the occasion of confession. Then it is an essential part of the act of confession that the confessors labor to show how the new understanding they proposed is necessitated precisely by Scripture and the tradition of the church. The CA provides classic examples of this labor.

3) Precisely because confession occurs in moments of crisis where the unity of old and new Gospel-proclamation is being challenged, confession often establishes norms for subsequent Gospel-proclamation. Confessors say to prospective proclaimers: if you want to speak the gospel, say such-and-such rather than such-and-such. If their instructions are in fact obeyed and if they remain relevant beyond the immediate occasion — in traditional language, if they are "received" by the catholic church — their record henceforth functions as "dogma" (as "confession(s)" in the sense of "the [Lutheran] confessions").

Affirming or reciting confessions in this sense may then itself be an act of confession: examples are the liturgical recitation of a creed or formal subscription to the CA. Problems of such magnitude that they result in dogma-producing crises rarely go away after the dogma is proclaimed; instead they tend to leave their mark on the subsequent history of the church. Thus there is still urgent occasion for believers to reject the God of Arius by saying that Jesus is ". . . of one Being with the Father . . ."; Arius' God is still the God of popular religion, both within and outside the church. That is why the liturgical use of a creed can be called an act of confession.

4) Confession is always *over against* those from whom the challenge comes. Matthew 10:32 (and parallels) has shaped Christian usage: "Whoever confesses me before men . . ." Often "men" are the larger society over against

which the Christian is called to account. The confessors of the persecuted church did their confession in police courts. Baptism is confession because the neophyte renounces the "works and ways" of the old age. The confession of Sunday morning, however innocuous, is nevertheless a declaration which draws the line between those gathered and those outside. And the CA was submitted to an emperor, by a group of princes suspected of civil unreliability because of their religious dissent.

Sometimes, however, confession is made by a group within the church over against the rest of the church; in such cases the "men" are presumed fellow Christians. Both the ancient conciliar creeds and the CA are confessions of this sort. In such cases, we speak of confession because there is the possibility that "the rest of the church" or part of it may prove not to be church at all. Only where the outcome of theological or other churchly disputes may be the dissolution of fellowship is it legitimate to speak of "confession." When the confrontation is inside the existing church, to confess is to maintain that the issue is potentially "church-divisive" and not a matter of legitimate diversity.

5) Confession is always on behalf of the whole Christian community, the one holy, catholic and apostolic church. The solitary confessor before a Roman magistrate spoke on behalf of all his fellows; as a confessor, if he returned to them, he had teaching and disciplinary power as an organ of their common Spirit. The fathers of an ancient council did not speak *to* the church *on behalf of* a theological party; they claimed to speak *on behalf of* the catholic faith *to* the parties. And when what they had to say proved offensive to many believers, the offense had to be fought out. Even casual church-goers who recite the Apostles' Creed on Sunday morning do not do so because they have taken inventory of their individual religious opinions of the moment and, by some miracle, have discovered exactly these creedal items; rather by their recitation they commit themselves to the community that has identified itself by these clauses, and *with* that community speaks *its* faith to the world. Most remarkable in this connection is the CA in which the point most at issue between the parties, the doctrine of justification, is nevertheless located among the matters of "common Christian" teaching with which the confessors claim to expect the Roman delegates to agree.

Lutherans should join *Lutheran* and *confessional,* and apply the resultant phrase in some special sense to themselves only if they are convinced that the above five marks apply. Otherwise, the claim to be "confessional Lutheran" or that "Lutherans are a confessional church" is an invidious and unjustified comparison.

Lutherans can *confess* the CA only if they are convinced that the crises in which those "several princes and cities" made their confession has endured within the catholic church, or that an analogous crisis has developed so that we are again called to submit the polemic and irenic of Augsburg to the church and the religiously concerned civil community, as something urgently needed for the church's health and authenticity. They can, that is, confess the CA only if they think there is something *wrong* with the proclamation of the church, against which the arguments summarized by "We are justified by faith alone" still need to be directed. In the United

States, at least, many think this is indeed the case, not least *inside* the Lutheran church bodies.

Lutherans can *confess* the CA only if they are convinced that teaching and practice which stress a righteousness of works instead of faith, threaten the self-identity of the Gospel. If, inside or outside the Lutheran bodies, members can live with a bit of churchly works-righteousness, they should not claim to be "confessional" over against the CA.

Lutherans can *confess* the CA only if their act of "confession" acknowledges the CA's dogmatic status, its normative role over against their own inspirations and predilections. A denomination in which significant matters of teaching or practice are decided by considerations of organizational efficiency, or of affection for prevailing practice, or of party alignment, or of suitability to the climate of society, or even of "pastoral" advisability, thus relegating "theology" to the seminaries or to another day, cannot claim to be "confessional" over against the CA, no matter what statements appear in its constitution.

Lutherans can *confess* the CA only if they can and will risk something for it. If there are no adversaries over against whom our affirmation sets us, we may be glad for this peace, but we should not speak of "confession." Conversely, if an affirming relation to the world and harmony in the church are the final considerations, no confession can occur. Despite all ecumenical commitment, a denomination that confesses the CA must think, and act upon the thought, that division in the church can sometimes be necessary. Despite all openness to the world, a denomination that confesses the CA — or anything else! — must be prepared sometimes to stand against what all the rest of society takes to be self-evident truth and virtue.

Finally, Lutherans can *confess* the CA only *inside* the one catholic church. Confession may divide the church and confessors must accept that possibility. But until they must judge that, for example, those obedient to the See of Rome are simply outside the church, Lutherans may not of their own choice effect a separation. It is not to those who already see the point of "justification by faith" that the CA can be confessed, but to those who do not. And as long as Lutherans continue such witness, they thereby refrain from judging that those to whom they witness are outside the church. A denomination that claims to be "confessional" over against the CA cannot evade taking action on negotiated ecumenical openings or assume other denominations heretical until proven innocent.

There is never a lack of opportunity to confess the faith; the Lord sees to that. Whether we are now or in the future to confess the faith *by* confessing the CA, is also in the Lord's hands. "Lutherans," in any vital sense, are those who read the signs of the times in such a way that they think the Lord indeed desires them so to confess.

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THE EARLY HISTORY OF ISRAEL. By Roland de Vaux. Translated by David Smith. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978. xxvii and 886 pages. Cloth. $30.00.

Father de Vaux, long-time professor at the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem, archaeological excavator of Qumran and other sites, contributor to the Jerusalem Bible, author of *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (an authoritative guide to what we know of almost every aspect of Israelite culture), spirited lecturer and churchman, died suddenly on September 10, 1971. At that time he had published only volume one of his eagerly-awaited history of Israel. Volumes two and three, which would have taken the story down to Alexander the Great, died with him — except for five chapters on the period of the judges which were found among his papers — and edited — by his colleagues.

What made de Vaux unique was not only his amazing control of the secondary literature, and an ability to lay out the options and his own choice among them with fairness and clarity, but his uniqueness lay also in his careful literary-critical and tradition-critical handling of the biblical text (he could rival any German!) and his knowledge and critical sense of archaeological materials (he could rival the best of the "American" school!).

In a lengthy prologue to this history he studies the land from every possible perspective — geography, climate, prehistoric inhabitants, and the Canaanite people and their religion. Part I covers the patriarchal period; Part II the sojourn in Egypt, the Exodus, and the events at Sinai; Part III the settlement in Canaan; Part IV (incomplete) the period of the judges.

A few of his opinions: The Habiru were an ethnic group which moved about the fringes of the desert and took on whatever employment was available to them (a decidedly minority view today); Shaddai ("Almighty" in most English versions) was the name of the "God of our father" which Israel brought from Mesopotamia; Yahweh meant originally "he is" — for Israel Yahweh was the only existing one; some Israelites were expelled from Egypt and entered Canaan from the south while others fled Egypt under Rameses II and entered Canaan from the East; Sinai should be located in the traditional area rather than in the Arabian peninsula; there were many entries into Palestine, some peaceful, some warlike.

Pick almost any topic in Israel's early history and you can find an authoritative opinion, the evidence, and the history of research — up to 1971 — in this volume. There are 24 columns of names, with 30 or more names per column, in the index of authors. De Vaux was a giant in our time.

Ralph W. Klein
Christ Seminary — Seminex

THE EXTENSION MOVEMENT IN THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION. By F. Ross Kinsler. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1978. xv and 288 pages. Paper. $6.95.

Third World traditional ministry and its attendant theological training are bankrupt, though injections of funds from Europe and America have kept them marginally alive. Ross Kinsler is a leader and spokesman for a movement that changes that tradition. In 1963, the Presbyterian Seminary in Guatemala changed from residential to extension training. Pastoral leaders, chosen by their communities, were trained for their leadership without being uprooted from their homes and occupations. This book outlines the story of how this movement has spread to all parts of the Third World and enables ministry closely connected to the roots of the people.

Kinsler presents "Fundamental Concepts and Vision of the Extension Movement" in Part I, traces the development in Part II, and provides

"Tools for Change and Development in the Extension Movement" in Part III. His references to Britain's Open Education and to the problems on the American scene make this book timely for the U.S. situation.

> About two years ago a church executive from New York City told a Presbytery that only congregations of 300 members or more would be able to support a pastor and program in the near future. At the present time more than half of the 8686 United Presbyterian congregations have less than 200 members; two-thirds of all United Presbyterian congregations have less than 300 members. The other Protestant denominations probably show similar statistics.
>
> What is going to happen to (these) congregations? Will they continue to serve the rural communities spread across the country? Will there continue to be . . . congregations in Alaska, in Appalachia, and in the inner city? How can the churches maintain all their small congregations and start new ones, even in major towns and suburbs, if they are unable to support fulltime professional pastors?

Theological educators, mission staff persons and strategists, and parish pastors in or near marginal parishes and unchurched sparsely settled areas need to listen to Kinsler's theses now, when we still have the resources for imaginative change.

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STEVE BIKO — I WRITE WHAT I LIKE. Edited by Aelred Stubbs, C.R. New York: Harper & Row, 1978. viii and 216 pages. Cloth. $8.95.

If reading Steve Biko's writings can teach us to listen to the oppressed and to try to act according to their stated needs, rather than to decide for them what they need, this book, the efforts of the editor, and even Biko's death in prison have shown their value. A casual visitor, news reporter, research scholar or long-term resident in South Africa should be reduced to saying, "Listen to those who suffer, not to me! All I can say is that they do suffer and that I do not really understand."

Steve Biko died in detention at the hands of South African police on September 11, 1978. He had led the efforts at establishing a black identity in South Africa and had maintained a nonviolent stance in the freedom struggle. He was shrewd enough to see that armed revolution was a strong probability. This man, subjected to an inadequate education by the white-dominated policy of his country, wrote and spoke effectively and eloquently in the cause of liberation. Some genius of perception enabled him to cut through the fog of misread history, theology, economics, and politics.

Read the book, beginning at the end with editor Stubbs's memoir. Chapter 14, "The Quest for a True Humanity" and a brief section in chapter 15, pp. 115-119, "The Importance of Language," are most effective and disturbing. Reflecting on them helps one to affirm the apparent anomalies in Biko's life: a Christian severely critical of all the churches, a person full of hope in a hopeless situation, a prisoner who must have terrified his captors because he had made his peace with death. See especially chapter 19 "On Death."

The skill and tenacity of the editor in gathering this material and the persistence of his contact, David Mesenbring, in seeing to it that materials reached Stubbs in the neighboring Lesotho after he was expelled from South Africa are another story that needs to be heard. In the meantime, read the "story" in Biko's words; you probably won't "like" it, but it will force a new perspective on you.

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VARIETIES OF CHRISTIAN-MARXIST DIALOGUE. Edited by Paul Mojzes. Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press, 1978. 210 pages. Paper. $3.95.

The appearance of Roger Garaudy's *From Anathema to Dialogue* in 1966 opened the way for a stream of books in English treating the Christian-Marxist dialogue. To date, however, we have lacked an English equivalent of the German volumes produced by the Paulusgesellschaft, which present a variety of viewpoints by serious scholars. This volume, originally published as a special issue of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* takes a long step toward meeting that need.

The writers of the essays are diverse in background: Christians and Marxists, clergy and laity, academics, parish pastors, and politicians. A conscious effort has been made to include authors from many countries, some officially Communist and others not. The editor notes, however, that despite the influence of Marxist thought on liberation theology in Latin America, no essays are included from this source because of the lack of any public dialogue. (Interestingly, no essay by a woman is to be found in the volume.)

The editor's introductory essay provides a succinct and encyclopedic survey of the history of the dialogue and its current status. The guidelines for effective dialogue are presented briefly in the same essay, and developed in great detail by the report of the Aarhaus workshop sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation. Together these two essays outline a paradigm for dialogue between any two differing groups seeking to understand one another. All the writers in this work live up to the high standards of such a dialogue.

One body of essays examines topics such as freedom and necessity, religion, and secularization from both Christian and Marxist perspectives. Andreija Kresic, a Yugoslavian Marxist, discusses the implications of a Christian understanding of the kingdom of God for communism. And James Will, an American theologian, demonstrates the place of ideology in theology. Will's essay, however, conceives ideology in a somewhat neutral sense, in the fashion of a Marxist such as Georg Lukacs, rather than in the pejorative sense of the tradition of ideology-critique begun by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology.*

Another selection of essays considers how Christians and Marxists can cooperate on the political level. And the two ways of thought are synthesized by Gerhard Melzer, a West German theologian, who shows how dialectical materialism might be employed as a method for Christian thought and action.

Finally, two professors who have team-taught a course on the Christian-Marxist dialogue at Wright State University for several years outline what is done in such a course. In methodical and lucid fashion, they outline the essential steps which lead to an understanding of Marxist thought and how to establish meaningful dialogue with the Christian tradition.

These essays, all of which are completely and concisely written, can serve a variety of readers. A parish pastor might discover quickly how the dialogue opens up new insights into the implications of the Christian faith. The volume could serve as a particularly useful resource for a college student who has had his first encounter with Marxist thought and wants to understand how Christians can relate to it, both theoretically and practically. And clearly it can serve as an excellent resource volume for anyone about to teach a course on the subject.

Dale G. Lasky
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