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THE CONFESSIONAL HISTORY OF THE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
IN THE UNITED STATES

THE CONFESSIONAL HISTORY OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES.

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1. *The Planting of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America.*

To the earliest Protestant communions which found a home upon the hospitable shores of North America belongs the Evangelical Lutheran Church. As early as 1638 a colony, professing the Lutheran faith, arrived from Sweden. They purchased from the Indians a tract of land, lying in Eastern Pennsylvania and in the present State of Delaware, established a number of churches, built houses of worship, and were served by devout and liberally educated ministers.

But even before the settlement of New Sweden, as this colony was called, Lutherans from Holland had come to the New Netherlands, notably to New Amsterdam. They were not allowed, however, to conduct divine service publicly in accordance with their religious convictions. Neither was the presence of a Lutheran clergyman, whose ministrations they could enjoy, permitted in the colony. It was not until 1664, when the English came into possession, that religious liberty was accorded to the Lutherans as well as to all such churches which do not accept the articles of the Synod of Dort. Churches had been organized in New Amsterdam and Beverswycke (Albany), and the Lutheran consistory at Amsterdam sent a pastor, but the dominies of the Dutch congregation, Megapolensis, and his assistant, Drisius, pre-

vailed upon Stuyvesant, the Director-General, to return the Lutheran minister to Holland.

It is somewhat strange that from the land of Luther no Lutheran colonists arrived until toward the close of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century. But when they did come, they came in great numbers. Thousands upon thousands poured into New York and Pennsylvania and spread into adjoining territory. We also find early settlements of German Lutherans in North and South Carolina, and the Ebenezer colony of the persecuted Salzburger in Georgia.

2. The Present Strength of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America and Her Divisions.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in this country now numbers more than 5,000 ministers, 8,700 congregations, and fully 1,300,000 communicant members.¹ For the education of her ministry the Lutheran Church maintains 23 theological seminaries, of which 9 are predominantly German, 8 chiefly English, 3 Norwegian, 2 Danish, and 1 Swedish. Her ministers preach the Gospel not only in German and English and in the five Scandinavian languages (Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian, and Icelandic), but also in French, Bohemian, Slavonian, and Polonaise, as well as in the languages of one or two other nationalities. As the

¹ The report of the United States Census Office shows that in June, 1890, the Lutheran Church had 8,427 church organizations, 6,559 church edifices, with a seating capacity of 2,159,290, and valued at \$34,218,234, and 1,199,514 communicant members. To the General Synod belonged 1,424 churches, 1,322 edifices valued at \$8,919,170, and 164,640 communicants; to the United Synod in the South 414 churches, 379 edifices, valued at \$1,114,065, and 37,457 communicants; to the General Council 1,995 churches, 1,512 edifices, valued at \$10,996,786, and 317,145 communicants; to the Synodical Conference 1,934 churches, 1,531 edifices, valued at \$7,804,313, and 357,153 communicants; and the balance to the twelve independent synods. But this report, we are informed, is not complete and final. Not only have a number of independent churches not yet reported, but the entire Wisconsin district of the German Synod of Iowa has here been omitted. The corrected returns will give the Lutheran Church in the United States, for June, 1890, 8,500 churches, 6,600 church edifices, and 1,210,000 communicants.

composition of the membership of the Lutheran Church is so polyglot, it is but natural to expect that there should be a number of divisions on the ground of language and nationality. As the Lutheran churches are spread over the length and breadth of these United States, it becomes a matter of necessity to have further divisions for geographical reasons. And as the various synods differ in their acceptance of, and in their subscription to the confessions of the church, some holding a more liberal, others a more conservative position, whilst there are still others whose relation to the confessions is most rigid and extreme, it is evident that there must also be divisions on the basis of a greater or less degree of fidelity respecting the confessions.

At the present time the Lutheran Church in this land has sixty-one synodical organizations, forty-nine of which are connected with four general bodies, whilst twelve maintain an independent position.

3. *The Confessions of the Lutheran Church.*

In her Symbolical Books the Lutheran Church assigns the chief place to those confessions which have been generally received by the Christian Church, to-wit: the Apostles', the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan, and the Athanasian creeds. Among the six other confessional writings which she accepts, the Augsburg Confession is accorded the principal place. This confession was prepared in the name of the Protestant princes and theologians, was read at the diet of the empire held at Augsburg in 1530, and was solemnly delivered to the emperor as the creed of Luther and his followers. In it they gave an answer to every man that asked them a reason of the hope that was in them. The Apology of 1530 is a defence of the Augsburg Confession against the attacks made upon the latter by the Roman doctors in their *Confutatio*. The Larger and Smaller Catechisms (1529) were prepared by Luther for the instruction of the young and for the better information of an ignorant clergy. He is also the author of the Smalcald Articles, which were to be laid before a council that the Pope had promised to convene,

and to which the evangelical states had been invited. The Formula of Concord was prepared by several Lutheran theologians for the purpose of adjusting certain differences and misunderstandings that had arisen in the Lutheran Church. It was published in 1577.¹ All of these documents are acknowledged and received as confessional writings and accorded confessional authority in nearly all the countries which accepted the Lutheran Reformation. These nine confessional writings were published in 1580 under the title *Book of Concord*. The preface to this book bore the signatures of fifty-one princes and of the representatives of thirty-five free cities.

"The fundamental doctrine most largely asserted in them is, that we are justified before God not through any merit of our own, but by his tender mercy through faith in his son. The depravity of man is total in its extent, and his will has no positive ability in the work of salvation, but has the negative ability of ceasing its resistance. Jesus Christ offered a proper, vicarious, propitiatory sacrifice. Faith in Christ presupposes a true penitence. The renewed man co-works with the Spirit of God. Sanctification is progressive and never reaches absolute perfection in this life. The Holy Spirit works through the Word and the Sacraments, which only, in the proper sense, are means of grace. Both the Word and the Sacraments bring a positive grace, which is offered to all who receive them outwardly, and which is actually imparted to all who have faith to embrace it."²

The Lutheran Church believes that her confessions are scriptural throughout, and that they do not contain a one-sided or partial statement of the divine truth. Christ, true God and true man, is the centre. He permeates the whole system.

¹ Krauth, *Cons. Ref.*, 129. "As the church did but the more surely abide by the Apostles' Creed in setting forth the Nicene, and did but furnish fresh guarantee of her devotion to the Nicene in adopting the Athanasian, and gave reassurance of her fidelity to the three œcumenical creeds in accepting the Augsburg Confession—so in the body of symbols in the Book of Concord she reset her seal to the one old faith, amplified but not changed in the course of time."

² Krauth, *Cons. Ref.*, 127.

4. *The Relation of the Early Lutheran Church in America to these Confessions.*

a. *The Swedish Lutherans along the Delaware.*—When in realization of the plans conceived by Gustavus Adolphus to plant the Christian religion among the wild inhabitants of this country, and particularly to promote the common interests of the Protestant world, several companies of Swedish Lutherans settled along the Delaware, and John Printz was appointed Governor, the Council of State furnished him with minute instructions, the 26th article of which reads:

“Above all things shall the Governor consider and see to it, that a true and due worship, becoming honor, laud, and praise be paid to the Most High God in all things, and to that end all proper care shall be taken that divine service be zealously performed according to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Council of Upsälä, and the Ceremonies of the Swedish Church.”

And to show the confessional standing of the Swedish pastors subsequently sent out by the authorities to minister to the churches in the New World, we need only refer to the law in ecclesiastical matters promulgated in 1686 by King Charles XI., and which in its essential features is still in force. This church-act begins as follows:

“In our kingdom, and in the countries belonging thereto, all persons shall profess, solely and simply, the Christian doctrine and the Christian faith, which is contained in the Holy Word of God in the prophetic and apostolic scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and which is comprehensively stated in the three chief symbols, the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian, as well as in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession of the year 1530, adopted in 1593 by the Council at Upsälä, and explained in the entire so-called Book of Concord. And all those who assume any office as teachers in the churches, academies, gymnasia, or schools, shall at their ordination, or when they receive a degree, under oath, solemnly subscribe this doctrine and confession.”

b. *The Dutch Lutherans along the Hudson.*—The colony of Dutch Lutherans at New Amsterdam and Beverswycke

(Albany) was in spiritual matters under the care of the Consistory of the Lutheran Church at Amsterdam, in Holland. This body furnished the Dutch churches of the Lutheran faith in the New World with pastors, and the churches were organized upon the basis of the constitution of the parent church. In their constitutions all these churches unequivocally acknowledged the Augsburg Confession, as well as the other Symbolical Books as their faith. Part I., chapter i., of *Doctrine*, declares:

“The pastors of this congregation shall regulate and determine all their teaching and preaching by the rule of the Divine Word, the biblical, prophetic, and apostolical writings, and according to our Symbolical Books, to wit: the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, delivered to Charles V., anno 30 (1530), the Apology of the same, the Smalcald Articles, the Formula of Concord, together with both Catechisms of Luther throughout, and shall not teach or preach anything contrary to the same, be it privately or publicly, nor shall they introduce or use any new phrases which are at variance with the same, or contradict them.”

Similar declarations occur also in other parts of the same constitution.¹

Public divine service was conducted and the pastoral acts were performed in accordance with the Antwerp Agende, prepared by that strict Lutheran divine Cyriacus Spangenberg, adopted by the church at Amsterdam, and used by the Dutch Lutheran churches along the Hudson.

¹ The same chapter continues: “In like manner in all points in dispute between us and others, they (*i. e.* the pastors) shall be governed by the aforesaid Scriptures and also the aforesaid Symbolical Books, and shall decide and judge by these alone.”

Part II., chapter ii., of the *Call*, etc.: “The candidate, if previously a pastor, must present testimonials from his former charge, of his irreproachable life and of his adherence to the pure doctrine of our Confession and our Symbolical Books.” The candidates to be ordained “must subscribe and obey this constitution.”

In the constitution of 1607 this clause is added: “They (*i. e.* the ministers) shall, with good judgment and reasonable prudence, exclude from the use of the Sacraments and of the Ministrations of our Church, Papists, Anabaptists, Schwenkfelders, Calvinists, New Manicheans or Flacians, and all others who not only do not hold our doctrine, but also are an occasion of offence, and lead astray the simple and weak.”

In their petition to the Director-General, dated October 24, 1656, they say:

"We, the united members of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession in the New Netherlands, have faithfully obeyed the law concerning religious meetings. At the same time we have, however, requested our friends in the fatherland to induce the Directors of the West India Company to grant toleration to the doctrines of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession of faith in this land as is the case in Holland."

It is worthy of note that only the strictest adherents to the confessions of the Lutheran Church use the term "Unaltered" when speaking of the Augsburg Confession which they receive.¹

c. The German Lutherans in Pennsylvania and Adjacent Territory.—Important as it is in this connection to consider the relation of the early Dutch and Swedish Lutherans to the confessions of their church, the confessional character of the early German Lutherans is of by far greater importance, inasmuch as their numbers were much larger than the combined strength of both these others, and their influence was correspondingly far-reaching and lasting.

Years before the arrival of Henry Melchior Mühlenberg, who is justly regarded as the organizer of the Lutheran Church in this country, faithful pastors had labored among the German settlers in the colony of New York. These were men eminent in learning and most zealous in their adherence to the pure doctrine of the confessions. They belonged to the Orthodox as over against the Pietists, and regarded with suspicion the Lutheranism of Mühlenberg and his coworkers, because they had come from pietistic Halle. The most efficient of these men was W. C. Berkenmeyer. It is probably due to his influence that in several deeds of church property and other important documents the Augsburg Confession of 1530 is styled "Unalterable." So also in his call to the church at Quassaick (Newburgh) it is

¹ Thus the churches of the Missouri Synod usually have the inscription, Church of the U. A. C.'

made his duty "to minister as well in preaching the Holy Gospel purely according to the Holy Scriptures and the Symbolical Books of our Lutheran Church, as in administering the Holy Sacraments according to Christ's institution, and practicing the usual ceremonies of the fellow-believers of the Unalterable Augsburg Confession."¹

But notwithstanding the suspicion with which the men sent out by the Consistory of Hamburg regarded those coming from Halle, Mühlenberg and his colaborers were no less sincere in their acceptance of the confessional writings of their church. They did not belong to the later Pietists of Halle, but theirs was the pure pietism of the earlier period of Phil. Jacob Spener and August Hermann Francke.

When, in 1748, in connection with some Swedish Lutheran pastors, Mühlenberg and his colaborers organized the first Lutheran Synod in this country, "The Evangelical Lutheran Ministerium of Pennsylvania and adjacent States," it was provided in its constitution that "every minister shall in doctrine and life show himself to be in accord with the Word of God and our Symbolical Books." If any one held or preached doctrines contrary to the confessions he was to be disciplined. Candidates for the Gospel ministry were carefully examined with reference to their knowledge of the contents of the confessions and their fidelity to the same. Both in Pennsylvania and New York² the candidates were required to sign a pledge in which they solemnly promised not to preach or teach anything contrary to the confessions of the church.³

This fidelity to the confessions they likewise implanted into the congregational life. The earliest congregational constitution prepared by the Halle men that has come down to us is that of the Augustus Church at The Trappe in

¹ *Doc. Hist.*, iii., 590.

² Ministerium of New York, organized 1786, by ministers belonging to the Pennsylvania Synod and with the consent of this body.

³ Mühlenberg once complains that some have, indeed, subscribed to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, but that their heart remained unchanged. *Halle Nachr.*, 1214.

Pennsylvania. Mühlenberg himself is its author. Article i., of this constitution, says: "They (*i. e.* the elders and deacons) shall strive, as they hope for their souls' salvation, that the evangelical doctrine, according to the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets and our Symbolical Books, be evermore fully apprehended," and Article iii., "They shall watch carefully that the evangelical doctrine, according to the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets and our Symbolical Books, be perpetuated to our descendants." In the constitution of St. Michael's German Lutheran Church in Philadelphia, drawn up a few years later, and also by Mühlenberg, it is made the duty of the pastors and their successors to "preach the Word of God, as given by the Apostles and Prophets, and in accordance with the Unaltered Augsburg Confession." The same principle was embodied in documents recording the transfer of property for church purposes. It was solemnly proclaimed at the laying of corner-stones of church edifices and at the occasion of the dedication of the same. This fidelity to the confessions of the church was also reflected in the liturgy and service of the congregation, the order for ministerial acts, and in various other ways.¹

Still, it has been claimed, chiefly because of lack of better information, that Mühlenberg and his colaborers were not orthodox but liberal, and that they did not accept *ex animo* the confessions of the Lutheran Church. This claim has been strenuously urged for fifty years during the present century by friends of the liberal *Richtung* in the Lutheran

¹ For further information we refer to *Halle Nachrichten*, new edition, 43, 45, 114, 118, 140, 237, 473, 514, 579, 619, 622, 657; *Hartwick Memorial*, 197, 251 ff., 257, 388: where the Augsburg Confession is especially referred to. *Halle Nachr.* n. e., 40, 83, 85, 122, 135, 136, 138, 151, 210, 215, 236, 271, 275, 304, 353, 387, 393, 496, 514, 581, 622, 625 f. and 646 refer to all of the Symbolical Books. Again, *Halle Nachrichten*, old edition, 849 f., 856, 860, 864, 926, 931 f., 962 ff., 1140, 1182, 1214, 1241 f., 1246, 1287. See also the writers *Geschichte des New York Ministeriums*, 63-76, and *Lutheran Church Review*, *The Organization of the Congregation in the Early Lutheran Churches in America*, by B. M. Schmucker, D.D., July 1887, also *Life and Times of H. M. Mühlenberg*, by W. J. Mann, D.D., 1819, 191 f., 210, 211, 281, 392 f., 469, 504 f.

Church, and it is only within the last few years that, to our knowledge, no public assertion of this myth has been ventured. The evidence which historical research, especially during recent years, has brought to light, has furnished overwhelming proof of the contrary.

We close this part of our investigation by citing what Dr. Mühlenberg himself once stated in answer to a charge of heterodoxy brought against him by certain men of the orthodox school, based upon the general assumption that he, coming from Halle, could not be a true and faithful Lutheran. Dr. Mühlenberg says:

“I defy Satan, and all the lying spirits who serve him, to prove against me anything in conflict with the doctrine of the Apostles and Prophets and of our Symbolical Books. I have often and again said and written that I have found in our Evangelical doctrine, founded on the Apostles and Prophets and set forth in our Symbolical Books, neither error, fault or anything wanting.”

These words are certainly strong and explicit enough to disprove any charge of disloyalty to the confessions.

What is stated here of the early German Lutheran ministers and churches in the North is no less true of the Salzburg refugees and a few other German Lutheran colonies in the South.

5. *The Influence of Rationalism and Infidelity—The Departure from the Faith Confessed by the Fathers.*

The wide and deep ocean which separates America from Europe was not a sufficient protection for the Church of Christ and our free institutions on this side of the Atlantic against the baneful influences of French Atheism, English Deism, and German Rationalism. During the French and Indian war, English officers and soldiers introduced deistic sentiments. In consequence of the noble assistance which the French rendered us in our struggle for independence, the youth of the nation and our statesmen and officers in the army became infatuated with French ideas and the

specious theories of French atheism. Deism, atheism, and infidelity prevailed to an alarming extent. Every part of the land, every condition of human society, and every religious association was involved. Anti-Trinitarian, Arian, and Socinian views spread in all churches. Religion suffered serious decay, and the churches presented a wide scene of desolation. The years following the war were a time of the lowest general morality in American history.¹

The freedom and independence secured upon the political arena asserted itself also in the church, and was misinterpreted to mean license in matters of faith. The broadest toleration and the utmost liberty of thought were advocated. There came a strong revulsion against all systems of faith. Creeds and confessions were abhorred as human fabrications, and freely denounced from the pulpit as time-worn, and as generally laid aside. A few fundamentals were considered sufficient, but just what these few fundamentals were, in that there was little agreement. Doctrines which had always been considered fundamental were ridiculed and rejected.² Some churches renounced all confessions of faith.³

Although this last was not the case in any part of the Lutheran Church in Europe, and can hardly be said to have occurred anywhere in America, still Rationalism made fear-

¹ The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1798 declared: "Formidable innovation and convulsions in Europe threaten destruction to morals and religion; scenes of devastation and bloodshed unexampled in the history of modern nations have convulsed the Old World, and our country is threatened with similar calamities. We perceive with pain and fearful apprehension a general dereliction of religious principles and practice among our fellow-citizens, a visible and prevailing impiety and contempt for the laws and the institution of religion, and an abounding infidelity which, in many instances, tends to atheism itself.

"The profligacy and corruption of the public morals have advanced with a progress proportioned to our declension in religion. Profaneness, pride, luxury, injustice, intemperance, lewdness and every species of debauchery and loose indulgence greatly abound."

² Cf. Wolf, *Lutherans in America*, 1890, 271 ff.

³ Goebel, *Die religiöse Eigenthümlichkeit der luth. und ref. Kirche*, 1837, 123.

ful inroads and wrought terrible havoc also in her domains. Hymn books, church service, and forms for ministerial acts were altered to suit the vitiated taste. The mention of the Symbolical Books, or even of the Augsburg Confession, in church or synodical constitutions was largely omitted. Pledges to preach the Word of God faithfully according to the confessions of the Church were no longer demanded. Luther's Catechism, which the fathers had faithfully used in the instruction of the young, was discovered to be no longer in accord with the spirit of the times, and was, therefore, superseded by other books. One of these catechisms indicates, perhaps, the lowest level reached in this respect during this period in the Lutheran Church; it is the *Evangelical Catechism* of Rev. Dr. F. H. Quitman, published in 1814. The doctrine concerning the Trinity is simply omitted. He states that the great purpose of Christ's suffering and death was to seal with his blood the doctrine which he had preached. "Justifying faith" is defined as "an impressive sense of the glorious perfections of God and of his relation to men, as their creator, preserver, governor, and judge," and as "a corresponding pious disposition arising from it." A similar answer is given to the question, "What is faith in Christ?" It is simply, "A firm belief in the divine authority of Jesus, and of his doctrine and promises." Justification is spoken of as "the reward that God has graciously promised to the true believers in Christ."¹

¹ *Evangelical Catechism: or a Short Exposition of the Principal Doctrines and Precepts of the Christian Religion, for the Use of the Churches, Belonging to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of the State of New York. To Which are added: 1. A Scriptural Advice to the Young; 2. Sir M. Hale's Character of a True Christian; 3. An Address to Those who Wish to be Confirmed; 4. A Sketch of the History of Religion; 5. A Collection of Prayers for Parents and Children.*—By Fred. Henry Quitman, D.D., President of the Synod and Minister of the Gospel at Rhinebeck. With consent and approbation of the Synod, Hudson, Published by W. H. Norman, 1814. There is, however, no record in the minutes that the catechism was ever laid before the Synod for its approval. Notwithstanding the great influence which Dr. Quitman exercised in his day, his catechism did not sell. Several editions of Luther's Catechism were published, and these were in greater demand.

6. *The Reaction.*

About the year 1825 a reaction set in. Men of piety and positive Christian conviction began to make their influence felt. Schools for the training of the future ministry were established and men put in charge who believed in the Holy Trinity, the Godhead of Christ, and in his mediatorial work, and who knew that it is not a mere historic faith which saves, and that justification is not a reward for believing, but the free and gracious act of God.

There was, however, as yet no return to the faith of the fathers. The confessions were not read, not inquired after. The great mass of the ministry were ignorant of the doctrines therein set forth. Many considered the confessions more than superfluous. They claimed that in this enlightened age they understood the Scriptures far better, than it was possible for a Luther and the other authors of the confessions who had lived in the sixteenth century. Fifty years ago it was earnestly argued by some of the most influential men in the Church in the leading periodical of that period, that as a Sunday-School scholar of the present day had more knowledge of the gospel and a better insight into the New Testament dispensation than the Apostle Peter had, so we, at the present day, have a clearer and fuller understanding of the Scriptures than was possible in the days of the reformers. They were the children, children in Christian understanding, but we, living in this age of progress and inventions, are the fathers.¹ What need have we of these confessional documents that have served their purpose and become obsolete!

Such was the cry raised by the two most influential men in the older and English portion of the Lutheran Church. And indeed, these men and their friends went so far as to freely charge the Augsburg Confession with error. The chief professor of theology in the principal Lutheran theological seminary in the church publicly stated that they rejected certain articles in the Augsburg Confession, to wit:

¹ Rev. Dr. B. Kurtz, in *Lutheran Observer* of Nov. 23, 1849.

articles two, nine, ten, eleven, twenty-five, and twenty-eight, or at least portions of them, as contrary to Scripture.¹ Of course, there were on the other side also men who defended the Confessions with great ability.

But the so-called "Definite Synodical Platform" of 1855, an American revision of the Augsburg Confession, proved to be the straw that broke the camel's back. This torso of the confession was sent to all the synods belonging to the General Synod, for their consideration. No minister should be admitted into the synodical body unless he had accepted this revised confession. This bold act called forth a storm of indignation. The synods almost unanimously repudiated it. Able articles and books were written in defence of the confessions.² The Symbolical Books were studied as they had not been since the days of Mühlenberg. And, on the whole, the publication of this Platform had the very opposite effect from that intended by its authors, to wit: earnest study of the Confessions of the Church, and a fuller appreciation of the same.³ The struggle, touching the question of a return to the confessional position held by the fathers, waxed hot in the General Synod for several years, and finally resulted in the disruption of this body at Ft. Wayne, Ind., in 1866. The more conservative elements which separated, united in the formation of the General Council the year following.

¹ Dr. S. S. Schmucker, professor in the theological seminary at Gettysburg, Pa., in *Lutheran Observer*, Oct. 16, and Nov. 9, 1849.

² Rev. Dr. W. J. Mann, in his *Plea for the Augsburg Confession*, thoroughly exposed the utter fallacy of the position taken.

³ It is interesting to note in this connection that one of the three authors of this Platform, and the only one that survives, the Rev. S. Sprecher, D.D., LL.D., has recently publicly declared, that he has been led to a fuller and better understanding and appreciation of the Augsburg Confession, and that he now receives it, every article of it, and without reservation. He continues: "The Church must have a definite doctrinal position, and as all other definitions of our faith as a Church seem to be hopeless (all having thus far been rejected by the Church), and as I feel that personal piety can be as well promoted by the spirit of Lutheran Pietism I feel that there is no alternative but the adoption, without any modification, of the Augsburg Confession."

7. *The Relation of the Various Lutheran Bodies (Which They at Present Sustain) to the Confessions of the Church.*

The Lutheran Church, in this country is, as we have seen, not only divided upon the basis of geographical distance and language, but also, and principally, upon doctrinal grounds. There are at present four general bodies, and twelve independent synods. With reference to their confessional position, these may be arranged into three classes, to wit:

a. *The Synods Maintaining a more Liberal Position over against the Confessions.*—To this class belongs the General Synod, and two or three of the smaller independent synods. The General Synod was organized in 1820, and now numbers 27 synods, scattered all over the country, 1,013 ministers, 1,478 churches, and 165,000 communicants. This body admits only such synods into membership “receiving and holding with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of our fathers, the Word of God as contained in the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and the Augsburg Confession as a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Word.”¹ It is but due to this body to state that a large and increasing majority of ministers and churches seem to have a higher appreciation of the confessions than this basis would indicate.

b. *The Synods Most Rigid in Their Adherence to the Confessions.*—To this class belongs the Synodical Conference, formed in 1872, and composed principally of the very large synod of Missouri. This general body now embraces four synods, 1,426 ministers, 1,962 churches, and 375,000 communicants. The Lutherans, who some fifty years ago, coming from Saxony under the leadership of Walther and Stephan, sought religious freedom in the United States, form the nucleus of this organization. Of the independent synods, the old Norwegian, numbering 60,000 communicants, and the smaller synod of Michigan, are

¹ *Constitution*, Art. ii., Section 3.

to be classed with the Conference. The article of the constitution containing the terms of the subscription is briefly this: "The Synodical Conference acknowledges the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as God's Word, and the Confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of 1580, called The Concordia, as its own."

c. The Synods Holding a Conservative Position.—To these belong (1) the ten synods constituting the General Council. They number 1,260 ministers, 2,151 churches, and 340,000 communicants; (2) the United Synod in the South, with its 8 synods, 201 ministers, 474 churches, and 38,000 communicants; (3) most of the independent synods, having 772 ministers, 1,843 churches, and 275,000 communicants. The articles of subscription in the Constitution of the General Council is quite full, and states in brief, that this body, "accepts and acknowledges the doctrine 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," and that the other confessions "are with the Augsburg Confession in perfect harmony of one and the same scriptural faith."¹

Summary:—To the more *liberal* wing belong at present: 32 synods, 1,192 ministers, 1,866 churches, and 200,000 com-

¹ The full text of the confessional basis of the General Council is: "We accept and acknowledge the doctrine 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. We accept its statements of truth as in perfect accordance with the canonical Scriptures. We reject the errors it condemns, and believe that all which it commits to the liberty of the Church of right belongs to that liberty.

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

municants. Those holding an *extreme* position number: 6 synods, 1,643 ministers, 2,585 churches, and 445,000 communicants. The more *conservative* branch is represented by 24 synods, 2,200 ministers, 4,350 churches, and 655,000 communicants, thus showing that whilst 34 per cent. of the Lutherans in this country hold an extreme position, fully 50 per cent. are conservative, and less than 16 per cent. belong to the liberal side of the house.¹

¹ These figures are based on Bulletin No. 152 of the Eleventh Census of the United States, and are larger and fuller than those usually found in the Almanacs and Annuals of the Church.