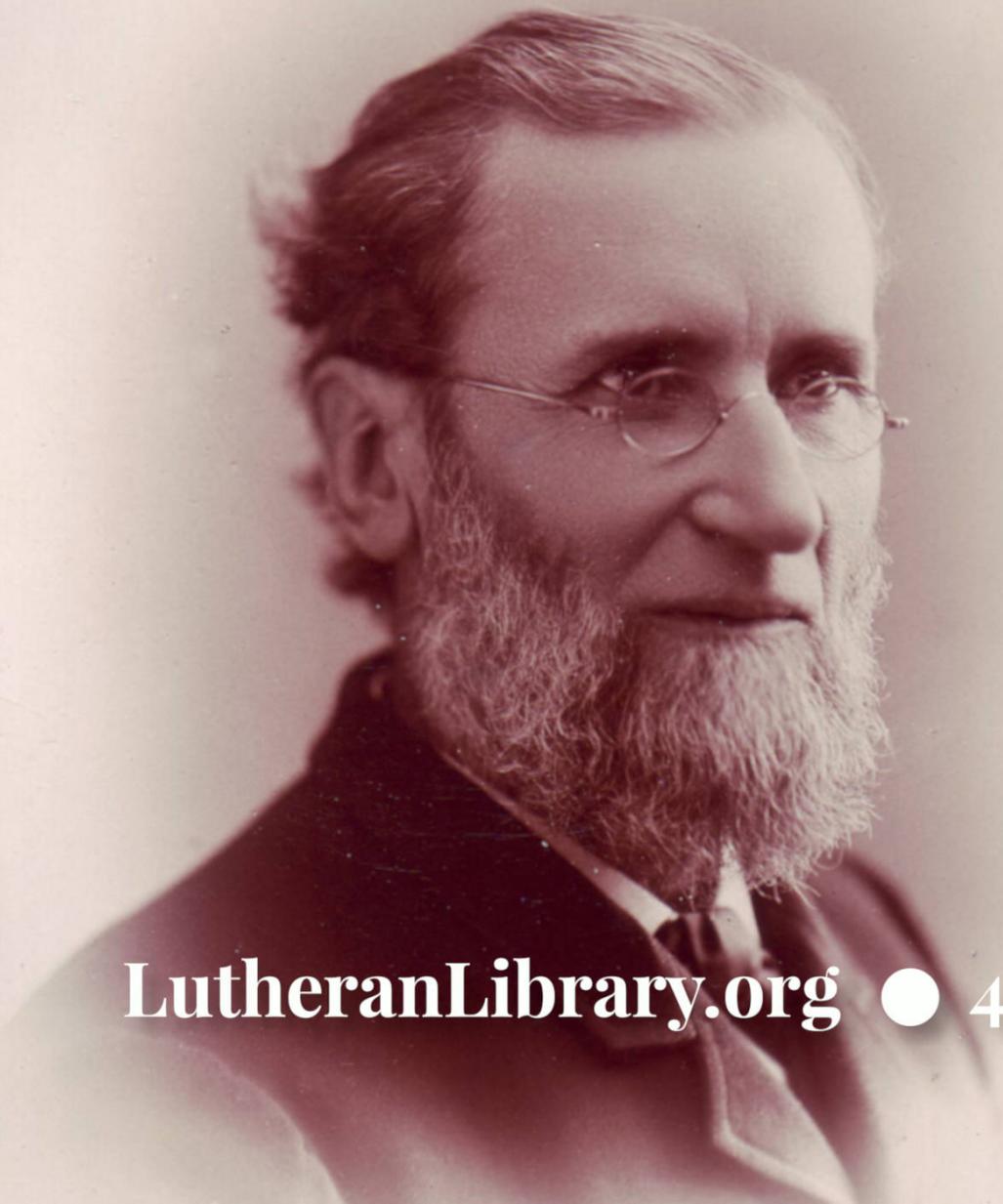


Luther A. Gotwald

**The Wittenberg
Seminary Trial**



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The Trial of L. A. Gotwald, D. D.

Professor Of Practical Theology In Wittenberg Theological Seminary, Springfield, Ohio, April 4th And 5th, 1898

Upon Charges Of Disloyalty To the Doctrinal Basis of Said
Theological Seminary

Published For The Defendant

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Preface by Lutheran Librarian

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Preface.

THE APOLOGY, or Defense, here presented, was almost entirely prepared before my recent "Trial," and was written in order to be read before the Board of Directors of Wittenberg College, as my reply to the "Charges" preferred against me by my accusers. The course, however, taken by the prosecution in refusing to proceed with the trial because of the Board's requirement of a clearer and more specific statement of their charges, rendered, of course, unnecessary the presentation of this response. With the exception of the brief extract presented by my counsel in their reply to the charges, no part of my prepared defense was therefore offered or heard.

Simple justice, however, evidently demands that a full reply to those charges should, in some way, be made public. My character, as an honorable and honest Christian man, worthy of my position and deserving the confidence of the Church, has been openly called in question. Both the *Lutheran Evangelist* and the *Lutheran Observer* published the charges long before the trial, and thus endeavored beforehand to secure, if possible, my condemnation: a course of conduct utterly unworthy even of respectable secular journalism. The charges being thus made so public, my vindication of myself ought also to be made public.

It has appeared to me to be due also to the Board of Directors of Wittenberg College, whose official servant I am, and to whom I am officially responsible, that I should make a full and frank statement of my position and views upon all the points presented against me in the charges. My convictions as here presented in my defense are honestly held, and will also be honestly taught, as long as I am in my present position. If they do not accord with those of the Board, or if the inculcation of such views is deemed, in the judgment of the Board, contrary to a true General Synod Lutheranism, and harmful to the best interests of Wittenberg College and of the churches supporting it, as an honorable man I will, at once, of course, cheerfully feel it my duty to retire from the chair which I now have the honor to occupy.

One other ground of justification for the publication of this Apology lies in the fact that the charges are really an attack, not so much upon me personally, as upon the doctrinal basis of Wittenberg College and of the General Synod of the Lutheran Church. My Defense, therefore, is chiefly in the line of exhibition and defense of the doctrinal basis of the General Synod and of Wittenberg College, and of my full accord with that doctrinal basis.

I trust I have clearly shown that the General Synod's doctrinal basis is soundly Lutheran, that Wittenberg College is upon that sound General Synod Lutheran basis, and that, instead of being disloyal to it, I have in my views and teachings been most truly loyal to that basis, and that, in view of my oath of office, I could not have held and taught otherwise than I have.

I regret the necessity of making the personal element and form so prominent in my reply, but, since the charges were personal in form, my defense necessarily took the same character.

L. A. GOTWALD.

*Wittenberg Ideological Seminary,
Springfield, Ohio, June 21, 1893.*

Charges As Preferred Against Dr. Gotwald By A. Gebhart, Joseph R. Gebhart, And E. E. Baker.

To the Board of Directors of Wittenberg College:

Your honorable body is hereby requested to take the proper steps, in accordance with the Charter and Constitution of Wittenberg College, to investigate the following charges against Professor Luther A. Gotwald, D. D., now holding the Chair of Practical Theology in Wittenberg College, in order that if, upon proper investigation and trial, the Charges be found true, he may be removed from said Chair.

General Charge.

The said Luther A. Gotwald, D. D., is DISQUALIFIED to be a Professor of Theology in Wittenberg College, for the following reasons:

Specific Charges.

First.

His Dominant Attitude has been that of opposition to the Type of Lutheranism that dictated the establishment of Wittenberg College, that animated its founders in undertaking it, and in whose interest the original trust was created.

Second.

He holds to the Type of Lutheranism characteristic of the General Council, which body was formed chiefly by those who seceded from the General Synod and formed another general body, namely, the General Council, on the basis of a Type of Lutheranism antagonistic to that of Wittenberg College and of the General Synod, thereby to supersede the General Synod from which they had withdrawn.

Third.

He holds that all the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession are fundamental, which,

1. is contrary to the historic spirit and practical attitude of Wittenberg College and of the General Synod towards the Augsburg Confession; and (2) does not agree with the statement made by the General Synod herself in her Constitution, and by which she defines the nature of her acceptance of the Augsburg Confession.

Fourth.

He holds that the doctrinal position of the General Synod, when rightly interpreted, is identical with that of the General Council, which,

1. is contrary to the judgment of the General Synod, herself, on this subject:
2. is contrary to the judgment, also, of the General Council, as well as of the other general bodies of the Lutheran Church in this country on the same point: and
3. is, moreover, an unscientific and willful confounding of the two, against their distinct genetic origin and history and their logical difference.

Fifth.

His teaching, as Professor of Practical Theology in Wittenberg College, accords with the Type of Lutheranism of the General Council instead of with that which is the historic Lutheranism of Wittenberg College and of the General Synod.

Sixth.

The influence of his teaching and spirit as a Professor of Theology in Wittenberg College operates to change the historic spirit and doctrinal position of Wittenberg College and of the General Synod, which does not make the Augsburg Confession binding as test of doctrine beyond its “exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Word and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word,” in favor of the exclusive Type of Lutheranism characteristic of the General Council, which makes all the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession fundamental, which holds to private confession and absolution and to other like doctrines never received by the General Synod, and contrary to her whole history and to her original principles.

And the schismatic spirit of Lutheran exclusiveness relative to the so-called true Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, has been exhibited by theological students, now, also, at Wittenberg College, since the said Luther A. Gotwald, D. D., is a Professor of Theology in it.

Moreover, his influence as Professor of Theology in Wittenberg College, was, to his knowledge, expected by parties in sympathy with the General Council’s Type of Lutheranism, to operate towards bringing about the change (or revolution) indicated above.

Seventh.

His continued occupancy of a Professorship of Theology in Wittenberg College and teaching therein, in accordance with the Type of Lutheranism to which he holds, is in violation of the Charter and Constitution of Wittenberg College in this —

Specification One. His teaching operates to defeat the original object for which the trust was created, namely, to establish an institution of learning, (that is, Wittenberg College), therein to educate ministers of the gospel for our churches in accordance with the Evangelical Type of Lutheranism

historically characteristic of the General Synod, and distinct from the sacramental and exclusive Type which at that time set itself against the General Synod; the same Type which afterwards disrupted the General Synod and formed the General Council, and which is now proceeding to revolutionize the doctrine and ritual of the General Synod in the same interests, and has been working to effect its revolutionary end by methods contrary to the principles of the Reformation, and in disregard of the doctrine, practice and spirit of the Fathers of the General Synod, and in despite of its Constitution.

Specification Two. His teaching as Professor operates to divert the institution, and the moneys given it for the use of the Evangelical Type of Lutheranism characteristic of the General Synod, to the use of the sacramental and exclusive Type of Lutheranism which then, and ever since, has denounced the historic Type of Lutheranism that founded Wittenberg College and the General Synod.

Specification Three. His retention as Professor of Theology in Wittenberg College operates to discourage and in many instances to destroy the willingness of our people to give moneys for the building and endowment of any institution, as was done in the case of Wittenberg College, if it may be diverted from its original object with the consent of the very Board of Directors to whom, by Charter and Constitution, it was committed to be sacredly kept in obedience to the original trust.

(Signed)

A. GEBHART,
JOS. R. GEBHART,
E. E. BAKER.

Dayton, O., February 9th, 1893.

Motion By Dr. Gotwald's Counsel With Regard To The Charges Preferred.

IN matters of the trial of charges preferred against L. A. Gotwald, D. D., Professor of Practical Theology:

Comes now L. A. Gotwald, the accused herein, and asks this Board to strike out specific charge marked "First," for the reason the same does not state facts sufficient to constitute any offense.

And accused moves the Board to require the accusers to make more specific specification marked "Second," namely, by stating the facts, if any they know, upon which they base the charge, and not mere conclusions: and to strike out all that part of said specification after and including the word "which" in the second line thereof, for the reason that the same is not material.

Also to require the accusers to make more specific specification marked "Third" by defining the term "fundamental," and to state fully what statements, acts or declarations constitute the facts relied upon as the basis of the charge; and to strike out all that part of said specification after and including the word "which" in the second line thereof, for the reason same is not material.

Also to make more specific specification marked "Four" by stating fully and specifically when, where and what he has taught upon which they base this charge, and to strike out all after and including the word "which" in line three, for reason same is not material.

Also to strike out specification marked "Fifth," for the reason the same does not state facts sufficient to constitute any offense.

Also to strike out specification marked "Sixth" for the reason same does not state facts sufficient to constitute any offense.

Also to strike out all of specification marked “Seventh” and all of so called specifications “One,” “Two,” and “Three” thereunder, for the reason same does not, nor do any of them, state facts material or sufficient to constitute any offense.

Argument Of Counsel For Defendant In Support Of Motion To Amend Specifications.

In support of the foregoing motion, Dr. Grau closed the argument for the defense as follows:

Mr. President, and Gentlemen of the Board of Directors: In answer to the counsel for the prosecution of this case, I desire to call your attention to a brief statement of our side of the case in support of this motion. We are accused of trying to avoid the issue and to delay or defeat the investigation.

This we deny. We desire an investigation, and in support of that we cite you to the fact that Dr. Gotwald waived the right which our Constitution gives him of sixty days’ notice, and demanded an investigation at the earliest possible day, which is thirty days.

It is said that we come now “at this late day.” Why, this is the earliest day, the first opportunity, that we have had to make a motion or file an answer. There is no authority competent to pass upon this matter except this Board. We desired that the President might pass upon this matter, but he recognized the fact that *only* the Board has jurisdiction.

We are here for trial, but we want that this shall be made a triable case, and that after the case is tried a conclusion will have been reached which will be final.

Now as to the charge and the specifications: We might argue that the whole matter should be ruled out of court, and for these reasons, viz.:

This action is brought under our Constitution, which provides that the Board shall have power to remove any of its professors or tutors, who, after

a fair trial shall be found to be guilty of *heresy*, *immorality*, or *unfaithfulness*, or who shall be found to possess a *serious disqualification* for his office. Mark the language. It is a well settled principle that a charge must be of a general character, must be an offense, and the specifications must be in support of the charge. This charge is *disqualification*. There can be no guilt in a disqualification; it is a something physical or mental; but these specifications, if they mean anything, mean that Dr. Gotwald has been unfaithful, has been teaching heretical doctrines. Why don't you charge him with heresy? Then your specifications would be upon all fours with your charge. But this might be regarded as technical, and we will waive this part of our right; but we do insist that these specifications should be made specific. A specification always has the elements of time and place of the offense charged and the language used: it is the facts which are to be proved. You will look in vain in these specifications for these things. They are *general*, and they are not only general but they are general *opinions*, *conclusions* arrived at, presumably, in the minds of the prosecutors, but not *facts*. It is the facts that we want set forth, and then prove them if you can, and this Board will draw its own conclusion.

The prosecution further says that you must not strike out any of these specifications because they are related to one another so as to form a *logical* whole, and that they support one another; i. e. one specification follows as an inference or deduction from a preceding one. This is a vicious and altogether unallowable procedure.

We claim, with all deference to this honorable body, that the *historic* spirit of the General Synod and of Wittenberg College has nothing whatever to do with this case, neither has *Dr. Gotwald's* dominant attitude; not how he voted at Fort Wayne in '66, not what he said or did in Dayton, or in York, Pa., when he was pastor, but what he did and said and taught since he became a professor in this institution. From the day that he took upon himself the oath administered by this Board, he is amenable to this Board, and from that time only. His life and opinions were a proper subject for inquiry by the Board before his election, and might have properly been adduced as reasons why he should or should not be elected to this position; but, I submit, that is not a proper subject at this time.

Then also some of these specifications plead consequences.

They undertake to prophesy as to what people will do or will not do if Dr. Gotwald is retained as a professor in this Seminary.

This is clearly improper.

In the sixth charge we have a moreover. At first I supposed that this was only thrown in as padding, as an addendum, an afterthought; but now we are told that this moreover clause is a very important part of their case. This is amazing. They propose to hold Dr. Gotwald responsible for the *expectations* of other people. Because other people in the General Synod or General Council *expected* that certain results would come to pass, therefore he should be removed.

No, gentlemen, that is not the proper inquiry, but simply this: What has this Board obligated Dr. Gotwald to do? Has he done it? If he has violated his obligation, this Board has a right to know it. We care not what this College obligated the former professors to teach and hold — not what the General Synod was or even is — but what this college is now, and was from the day of Dr. Gotwald's inauguration.

The prosecution desire to make a great show of fairness and honesty, and yet they set forth in their plea "that if these charges be found true" (in any sense, in any degree, then what) "that he may be removed" — no instruction, no admonition, but summary removal.

This Board elects and installs Dr. Gotwald, expects him to teach Lutheran theology, and then these gentlemen make what they call charges, which I submit if proved would not constitute an offense, and then if the charges are true he shall be removed. They want to determine beforehand the penalty, and all this they plead as fairness and honesty. I characterize it as persecution and intolerance, for even Rome gave Luther an opportunity to recant: but that was Rome, these gentlemen represent tolerance — 19th century Lutheranism, Liberal Lutheranism, the Lutheranism of the General Synod and of Wittenberg College forsooth. No, gentlemen, we misrepresent all these.

These self-constituted guardians of the theology of the General Synod and of this college, one would suppose, are profound theologians. They bring these charges against a venerable and honorable servant of the Church — a man who has been a minister for thirty-four years. They say practically that Dr. Gotwald does not know the theology of his Church, or if he does he is dishonest and Jesuitical. But they disavow this latter charge. They say that Dr. Gotwald is a good man, that he is honest, etc. The only inference is, consequently, that he is ignorant of the doctrines of his Church. With all proper deference to the gentlemen prosecutors, I am willing that this Board

shall sit in judgment on the question of capacity as between Dr. Gotwald and these two lay brethren, and our very learned young friend who but recently graduated from this institution.

The Action Of The Board Upon The Defendant's Motion.

The motion was argued on both sides by the respective counsel. At the close of the argument on this motion, the Board adjourned to meet at 8 p. m.

When the Board re-assembled it was decided that upon the call of yeas and nays, any member might employ one minute in asking questions or explaining his vote. The counsel on both sides were excused from voting.

The first item of the defendant's motion was read and adopted by the following vote:

Yeas: Firey, Cochel, Summers, Otis, Becher, Shaffer, Bell, Manss, Bauslin, Gaumer, Harter, Platt, Tedrow, Rockey, Fenner, Waltz, Nusbaum, Bowman — 18.

Nays: Gebhart, A., Gebhart, J., Hosterman — 3.

The second item was passed by the following vote:

Yeas: Firey, Cochel, Summers, Otis, Becher, Shaffer, Bell, Manss, Bauslin, Zimmerman, Gaumer, Harter, Platt, Tedrow, Kuhn, Rockey, Fenner, Waltz, Nusbaum, Bowman — 20.

Nays: Gebhart, A., Gebhart, J., Hosterman — 3.

The third item was passed by the following vote:

Yeas: Firey, Otis, Becher, Shaffer, Bell, Manss, Bausliu, Gaumer, Harter, Platt, Kuhn, Rockey, Kain, Fenner, Waltz, Nusbaum, Bowman — 17.

Nays: Gebhart, A., Gebhart, J., Schwann, Tedrow, Hosterman — 5.

The fourth item was passed by the following vote:

Yeas: Firey, Cochel, Summers, Otis, Becher, Shaffer, Bell, Manss, Bauslin, Zimmerman, Gaumer, Harter, Platt, Tedrow, Kuhn, Rockey, Kain, Fenner, Waltz, Nusbamn, Bowman — 21.

Nays: Gebhart, A., Gebhart, J., Hosterman — 3.

The fifth item was passed by the following vote.

Yeas: Otis, Becher, Shaffer, Bell, Manss, Schwarm, Bauslin, Zimmerman, Gaumer, Harter, Kuhn, Kain, Fenner, Waltz, Nusbaum,

Bowman — 16.

Nays: Firey, Cochel, Summers, Gebhart, A., Gebhart, J., Platt, Tedrow, Rockey, Hosterman — 9.

A motion to reconsider was passed, and counsel for defendant moved to amend by substituting for the fifth item of the motion, the following: “Also to strike out the word ‘historic’ in the third line of specification marked ‘Fifth,’ and that the prosecution be required to make more definite and certain, by setting forth the facts, if any they know, upon which they rely to prove this charge.”

This amendment was carried by the following vote:

Yeas: Firey, Summers, Otis, Becher, Shaffer, Bell, Manss, Schwann, Bauslin, Zimmerman, Gaumer, Harter, Platt, Kuhn, Rockey, Fenner, Waltz, Nusbaum, Bowman — 19.

Nays: Cochel, Gebhart, A., Gebhart, J., Tedrow, Kain, Hosterman — 6.

The sixth item was passed by the following vote:

Yeas: Firey, Cochel, Summers, Otis, Becher, Shaffer, Bell, Manss, Bauslin, Zimmerman, Gaumer, Harter, Platt, Kuhn, Rockey, Kain, Fenner, Waltz, Nusbaum, Bowman — 20.

Nays: Gebhart, A., Gebhart, J., Schwarm, Tedrow, Hosterman — 5.

The seventh item was passed by the following vote:

Yeas: Otis, Shaffer, Bell, Manss, Zimmerman, Gaumer, Harter, Platt, Tedrow, Kuhn, Rockey, Kain, Fenner, Waltz, Nusbaum, Bowman — 16.

Nays: Firey, Cochel, Summers, Becher, Gebhart, A., Gebhart, J., Schwarm, Hosterman — 8.

The prosecution took exception to all the decisions of the Board. The complainants were given until 9 o’clock on the following morning to conform their charges and specifications to the motion passed. Whereupon the Board adjourned to meet at that hour the next morning.

In the morning, the prosecution having declared their inability and unwillingness to comply with the instructions of the Board, a committee was appointed to revise the charges as indicated. This committee consisted of Drs. E. D. Smith and S. Schwarm, and E. P. Otis, Esq., and after Dr. Smith declined to serve, Dr. M. J. Firey was appointed in his stead.

The Charges As “Made More Specific,” Upon Which Dr. Gotwald Was Tried.

To the Board of Directors of Wittenberg College:

YOUR honorable body is hereby requested to take the proper steps, in accordance with the Charter and Constitution of Wittenberg College, to investigate the following Charges against Prof. Luther A. Gotwald, D. D., now holding the chair of Practical Theology in Wittenberg College, in order that if, upon proper investigation and trial, the charges be found true, he may be removed from said chair.

General Charge.

The said Luther A. Gotwald, D. D., is disqualified to be a Professor in Wittenberg College, for the following reasons:

Specific Charges.

First,

Contrary to the Oath and Obligation administered to him at the time of his installation as Professor of Theology in Wittenberg College, his dominant attitude as professor in said College has been, and now is, that of opposition to the type of Lutheranism of the General Synod, which is the type of Lutheranism that dictated the establishment of Wittenberg College, that animated its founders in undertaking it, and in whose interests the original trust was created, in this, to wit:

First, That he stated before the Board of Directors of Wittenberg College, at its annual session at the College in June, 1892, that the Symbolical Books were the logical development of the Augsburg Confession; that he conscientiously believed, that, and what he conscientiously believed, that he would teach whenever he had an opportunity.

Second, That he believes in baptismal regeneration independent of the faith of the subject; that it is so stated in a sketch of his life in Jenssen's *Biography of Lutheran Ministers*. Also, he so stated the same to Prof. H. R. Geiger, at Springfield, Ohio, in the summer of 1892, and that he taught the same in a lecture dictated to his class in theology in Wittenberg College.

Second.

He holds to the type of Lutheranism characteristic of the General Council and opposed to the Lutheranism of Wittenberg College and of the General Synod, in this, to wit: That he stated before the Board of Directors, at its annual session in June, 1892, that he could endorse the General Council except in the matter of pulpit and altar fellowship or the "Galesburg Rule."

Address before the Board of Directors of Wittenberg College, at the annual meeting in 1892.

Third.

He holds that all the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession are fundamental, to-wit: Address before the Board at its June meeting.

(Before the vote was taken this charge was made more specific, and then read, "fundamental to salvation.")

Fourth.

He holds that the doctrinal position of the General Synod, when rightly interpreted, is identical with that of the General Council. And this Charge is made upon the statement of Professor Geiger in an address made before the Wittenberg Synod at its annual meeting in 1892; the time and place of the making of these declarations by Dr. Gotwald to Professor Geiger and others, this committee is unable to state.

Fifth.

Contrary to the Oath and Obligation administered to him at the time of his installation as Professor of Theology in Wittenberg College, his teaching accords with the type of Lutheranism of the General Council, instead of that which is the Lutheranism of Wittenberg College and of the General Synod, in this, to-wit: That he teaches in Wittenberg College what we have already stated to be his dominant attitude under Charge First; that he further teaches the exclusive type of Lutheranism characteristic of the General Council, namely, that all the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession are fundamental; and that he teaches private confession and absolution and other like doctrines, never received by the General Synod and contrary to her whole history and her original principles. And that he teaches the schismatic spirit of Lutheran exclusiveness relative to the so-called true Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord's Supper. And he teaches that type of Lutheranism which disrupted the General Synod at Ft. Wayne, Ind., in 1866, and which is now threatening to revolutionize the doctrines and ritual of the General Synod in the interest of the General Council. Our authority for this statement is the charge made by Alexander Gebhart, Joseph R. Gebhart and Rev. E. E. Baker, in their charges filed with the President of the Board.

M. J. FIREY,
E. P. OTIS,
SAMUEL SCHWARM.

Response To The Charges By Dr. Gotwald's Counsel.

IN matters of trial of charges against L. A. Gotwald, D. D., Professor of Practical Theology:

Comes now L., A. Gotwald, and for answer to the second specification says that he is not guilty, and does not so hold nor so teach.

And for answer to the third specification he says: The Augsburg Confession is the doctrinal basis of the General Synod, and is by her declared to be “a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the divine Word and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word.”

This doctrinal basis of the General Synod, I come now to declare, I accept, hold and teach, *ex animo*, as my doctrinal basis. With all that is involved and meant by a true acceptance of it, I accept the Augsburg Confession as, in every article, a correct expression or exhibition of fundamental divine truth.

In my acceptance of the Augsburg Confession is embraced the following conviction, namely, that every doctrinal article in it is, in some sense or relation, a fundamental article; that is, expresses an essential or vital truth of the Word of God. By this is not meant that each article of the Confession is of the same doctrinal importance, in either the Christian or distinctively Lutheran system, as every other doctrine in the system is; or that it is essential in the same sense or to the same degree as is every other article in the Confession. The term, “fundamental,” as used in connection with Christian doctrine, is a relative term, and there is no one invariable or standard definition of it which applies to every use we make of it. It receives its signification or value from its connection, or from its relation to that to which it is essential or fundamental: that to which, as a teaching of God's Word, it serves as a foundation, and upon which, as a superstructure, we rear our Christian faith.

But while all the contents of inspired Scripture are truth, all are not fundamental or essential truth. Perceiving and acting upon this fact, the Reformers, in framing our Augsburg Confession, gave expression in it only to what they apprehended as being the essential, vital, fundamental truths of the Word of God. This is evident from their own repeated declarations. They call the doctrinal portion of the Confession: “the principal articles of faith;” and they declare that they therein set forth “the holy Christian faith, the one only true religion.” They declare their Confession to be a “sum of doctrine for making known our Confession and the doctrine of those who teach among us.” And, having concluded the Confession, they say: “These are the chief articles which seem to be in controversy;” “we have set forth the chief points;” “only those things have been recounted whereof we thought it necessary to speak.”

I hold that our General Synod also thus esteems every Article in the Augsburg Confession as an essential or fundamental Article. Already in 1825, she provided that in her Theological Seminary, just then established, should be taught “the fundamental doctrines of the Sacred Scriptures as contained in the Augsburg Confession;” not the fundamental doctrines of the Augsburg Confession, but the fundamental doctrines of the Sacred Scriptures as they are contained in the Augsburg Confession. In the Oath administered in that same year to her first Theological Professor, she bound him to the Augsburg Confession and to the Catechisms of Luther “as a summary and just exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God.” In the year 1829 she makes this official utterance: “The General Synod only requires of those attached to her connection that they hold the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel as taught in the Augsburg Confession, and in all minor points leaves them unrestricted.” In the Minutes of 1833, in replying to a resolution adopted by the Synod of Ohio expressive of its intention “to remain immutably pure Evangelical Lutherans in faith, form and discipline, according to the Bible and the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church,” she says, “Your committee are happy in learning from the latter clause of this resolution that our brethren in Ohio are determined to remain faithful to the ancient and fundamental land marks of Lutheranism.” In 1835 she amended her Constitution so as to read: “All regularly constituted Lutheran Synods holding the fundamental doctrines of the Bible as taught by our Church, not now in connection with the General Synod, may, at any time, become associated with it, by adopting this

constitution.” Even the old form of subscription to the Confession, required in the licensure and ordination of candidates for the Ministry, recognized this fundamental character of all its articles.

I hold that the General Synod’s present form of subscription declares each Article to be fundamental, which says, “The Augsburg Confession is a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Word, and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word.” I believe that the General Synod in this statement of her doctrinal basis means to say, and does say, that the whole of the Augsburg Confession, the Confession in its integrity or totality, is fundamental, and that every article correctly exhibits a fundamental doctrine of the Word of God. By the Augsburg Confession in this connection, I mean the twenty-one doctrinal articles.

But the question now recurs: “Fundamental” in what sense? Are all the doctrinal articles of the Confession essential, vital, important, necessary, “fundamental” in the *same* sense? Are they all fundamental to the same degree, that is, equally fundamental? I answer in the negative. I do not hold all to be fundamental in the same sense; all are not equally fundamental. To say that each one of the Articles of the Confession is fundamental in the sense that no man can be saved who does not accept it, I do not think of asserting. I hold that the soul that, with a sense of its guilt and danger of eternal death, trusts itself, as the Gospel invites it, to Jesus Christ as its Divine and Only Saviour, is a saved soul, whether its knowledge and faith correspond in all minute points with our Confession or not. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,” even if he never saw the Augsburg Confession or does not know that such a Confession exists. I hold that in some sense, however, all the Articles of the Confession are fundamental. Some of them, I may say, are essential or fundamental, first of all, to the integrity of the Christian system, so that by denying them the system ceases to be Christian distinctively, and becomes Jewish or Mohammedan or Pagan. Some of them, again, are essential or fundamental to the Protestant system, so that by denying them the system is no longer Protestant, but is the doctrinal system of the Roman Catholic or Greek Catholic Church. Some of them are essential or fundamental to the Lutheran doctrinal system, so that by denying them the doctrinal system ceases to be distinctively Lutheran, and becomes Zwinglian, or Calvinistic, or something else in its character. And I hold some of them fundamental to the good order and development of the Lutheran Church.

As to the fourth specification I answer: That in so far as the General Council accepts as its basis the same Confession which the General Synod accepts, their doctrinal bases are identical; but because the General Synod does not give confessional authority to anything except the Augsburg Confession, while the General Council adopts the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Schmalkald Articles, Luther's Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, and these in what it calls their true and only sense, as well as other particularistic doctrines, I hold that the doctrinal bases of the two bodies are *not* identical.

I hold that the doctrinal basis of the General Synod is broader than that of the General Council, and that the General Synod stands upon the true historic and universally accepted basis of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and hence represents genuine Lutheranism, in contrast with the more specific or particularistic Type of the General Council.

In answer to the second specification of the first charge, namely, that I hold or teach Baptismal Regeneration without qualification, I deny: but that my position is that of the General Synod as set forth in the II. and IX. Articles of the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism, published by authority and approved by the General Synod, that is to say, that Baptism is not unconditionally necessary *per se*, but as a means through which the grace of God is offered; that it is conditioned upon the possibility of receiving it; that it is not necessary absolutely, but ordinarily, as a moral obligation imposed by the word and institution of Christ; that not the absence of Baptism, but the contempt of it, condemns — this I believe and hold.

In answer to specification fifth, namely, that I hold or teach the carnal or physical presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, I deny, and reject with the whole Lutheran Church of every age and country; and declare that this charge is a misrepresentation not only of myself, but of the Lutheran Church. I hold and teach with the Tenth Article of the Augsburg Confession, that the true body and blood of Christ are in the sacrament and communicated to those who eat and drink in the Holy Supper, whether worthy or unworthy, the reality of this presence being objective and not dependent upon the faith of the communicant, but inhering, by virtue of the divine institution, in the sacrament itself.

In answer to specification fifth, namely, that I hold and teach private confession and absolution, "a doctrine never received by the General

Synod,” I hold and teach that I receive with the General Synod the Eleventh Article of the Augsburg Confession, and that I receive it in the sense in which it is so received by the General Synod. That is to say, that it is a Church doctrine and usage, and is given as an opportunity by which burdened souls may make confession, and by which also there is given the opportunity of declaring to such souls the divine promise and assurance of their forgiveness for Christ’s sake, upon condition of evangelical repentance and faith; that it is the personal preaching of the gospel to souls convicted of sin and seeking pardon and assurance of reconciliation with God; further, that this private absolution is of the same declarative conditional character as that public absolution authorized by the General Synod in her liturgy in the Preparatory Service.

L. A. GOTWALD.

“Official Statement” Concerning The Trial By Officers Of The Board.

AT the adjournment of the special meeting of the Board of Directors of Wittenberg College, held April 4th and 5th, 1893, the President and Secretary were instructed to publish to the Church an Official Statement regarding the case of the charges preferred against Rev. Luther A. Gotwald, D. D., Professor of Practical Theology in Wittenberg Seminary, by Alexander Gebhart, Joseph R. Gebhart and Rev. E. E. Baker, of Dayton, Ohio.

The prosecutors in the case were represented for counsel by Rev. E. E. Baker and Rev. Dr. E. D. Smith, the defense by Rev. Dr. G. M. Grau and Judge J. W. Adair. At the opening of the trial the counsel for the defense moved that the charges, which have already been published to the Church, should be made more specific. This was ordered by the Board sitting as a Court of Inquiry, and the prosecutors requested to conform their charges to the instructions given. At the convening of the Board at 9 o'clock on Wednesday morning, the counsel for the prosecutors, Rev. E. E. Baker and Dr. Smith, reported their inability and unwillingness to comply with the instructions of the Board. A committee, consisting of Rev. Dr. E. D. Smith, Rev. Dr. Schwarm and E. P. Otis, Esq., was then appointed to carry out the instructions of the Board in the matter of making the charges more specific. Dr. Smith declined to serve, and Rev. Dr. Firey was named in his place. The charges were then conformed to the expressed judgment of the Board, by a few changes and omissions in the original draft of the same as presented by the accusers. Rev. E. E. Baker and Rev. Dr. Smith were then requested to act as the prosecutors. This they refused to do. The Board then proceeded to investigate the charges upon such testimony as was available. The gentlemen preferring the charges were requested through their counsel to

testify, and present to the Board and allow the use of any documentary or other evidence which they might have in their possession, assurance being given them by Dr. Firey, who conducted the investigation, that they would be allowed all the latitude they might desire. They refused to comply with the request. Drs. C. L., Ehrenfeld and H. R. Geiger were cited to appear before the Board and furnish it with all the evidence they might have of the truthfulness of the charges. This they refused to do. The Board then proceeded to an investigation. Dr. Gotwald, through his attorneys, presented a written rejoinder, covering all the points at issue in the original and revised charges. Further testimony was taken from Dr. Gotwald, his colleagues, Drs. Ort and Breckenridge, and the students, as to the character of his teaching, and from others covering other points.

The finding of the court was taken by a yea and nay vote on sustaining each of the five charges, with the same result in each case: 25 nays, and the three gentlemen preferring the charges declining to vote. Several members present had been obliged to leave, but the vote, when taken in detail, was as follows:

Declined to vote: Alexander Gebhart, Joseph R. Gebhart, Rev. E. E. Baker.

Nays:

East Ohio Synod — Rev. M. J. Firey, D. D., Rev. G. Z. Cochel, Rev. N. H. Weaver, Rev. J. H. Summers, E. P. Otis, Esq., Mr. William Becher.

Wittenberg Synod — Rev. G. M. Grau, D. D., Rev. D. H. Bauslin, D. D., Rev. E. D. Smith, D. D., Rev. Samuel Schwarm, Ph. D., John L. Zimmerman, Esq., Hon. C. N. Gaumer, Mr. W. T. Platt.

Miami Synod — Rev. J. F. Shaffer, D. D., Rev. E. K. Bell, D. D., Mr. Louis Manss.

Northern Indiana Synod — Rev. D. F. Kain, Rev. W. h. Tedrow, Rev. C. H. Rockey, Rev. D. A. Kuhn, Judge J. W. Adair.

Olive Branch Synod — Rev. H. K. Fenner, D. D., Rev. S. S. Waltz, D. D., Mr. L. W. Nusbaum, Mr. B. C. Bowman.

The Board ordered 1500 copies of the stenographic report of the evidence taken in the case to be printed and distributed through the Church.

DAVID H. BAUSLIN, *SECRETARY*.

JOHN L. ZIMMERMAN, *PRESIDENT*.

Lutheran Confessionalism In The General Synod: A Reply To The Charges Of My Assailants.

Prof. L. A. Gotwald, D. D.,

Wittenberg Theological Seminary, Springfield, Ohio.

THE General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States of America dates from the year 1820. In that year, at a Convention assembled at Hagerstown, Maryland, composed of deputies from the several Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in our country, a Constitution for the government of the prospective body “was, in all its parts, unanimously agreed to, and resolved to be laid before the several Synods in the United States for consideration, adoption and confirmation.”

The First Convention of the General Synod, as an organized and regularly constituted body, was held in Fredericktown, Maryland, in October, 21st to 23rd, in the year 1821. The General Synod has now, therefore, as an organized body, a history extending over a period of fully seventy years. During these years, under the determining force of certain inherent and formative principles by which she has governed and developed herself, she has attained to a distinct, positive and well defined Lutheran faith and life, and has come to the consciousness of the richness and blessedness of her heritage in the possibilities which God has set before her for His glory.

A careful study of this history of our General Synod, and especially of the principles which have governed her, reveals much that is instructive, and much especially which bears, in the most helpful manner, upon many questions which are now agitating, and greatly disturbing the harmony, and endangering the unity and integrity of the General Synod.

There are, as is well known to us all, different views of doctrine and of Church usages, different apprehensions of the entire genius of our Lutheran faith and practice, among us who are within the pale of the General Synod. In name we are one, but in the faith which we hold, and which we all alike designate as pure General Synod Lutheranism, we are sadly divided and are far separated from each other. These differences in regard to our Lutheran faith and Church life, must, however, if we are to dwell together as brethren in the same Lutheran fold, in some way be reconciled and satisfactorily and permanently settled; and to be thus satisfactorily and permanently settled, there is but one way, namely, by the hearty and honest acceptance by us all of the General Synod's doctrinal basis which we all, by our very membership in her, profess to accept. For, "how can two walk together except they be agreed?"

This line of remark holds true with regard to the questions involved in the "Charges" preferred against me, by brethren of this Board, and upon which I am here cited for trial. Being a minister of the General Synod, this institution being a recognized institution of the General Synod, and my oath of office as Professor of Theology solemnly binding me to teach only in accordance with the doctrinal basis of the General Synod, our appeal for the settlement of our differences may justly be brought for trial and decision to the bar of the General Synod herself. To that tribunal I, today, make my appeal and cheerfully submit my case.

I am charged, in substance, with disloyalty to the General Synod, and am hence declared disqualified for my position in this Theological Seminary. If I am, as charged, disloyal to the General Synod, then certainly I am, I freely admit, disqualified to teach in one of her institutions. Grant the premise, and I would be the first also to grant and declare the conclusion. If I believed that I was not loyal, in every fiber and pulsation of my being, to the deepest spirit and life of the General Synod, to her doctrinal basis and her practical Christian activities, I would scorn to abide an hour in my present position as one of her accredited teachers.

But I *am* loyal to her, and stand ready to be tested, at every point of the attack made in the "Charges" upon me, by the doctrinal basis, the governing principles, the history, spirit and life of the General Synod herself. By this test I will gladly stand or fall. If, measured by this test, I am not worthy of my Chair, I will cheerfully vacate it at once. If, on the other hand, tried by this just test, I am found worthy, and true to my oath of office and to the

trust reposed by the Church in me, this Board is, before God, and by all that is sacred and just, morally obligated to declare me innocent in respect to these "Charges," and to rebuke and silence those who have preferred them against me.

I. Lutheran Confessionalism In The General Synod In Regard To The Augsburg Confession.

As an historical fact it is undeniably true that the General Synod has steadily, during her whole past existence, ever moved forward toward a better defined, a truer and more positive Lutheran confessionalism. This has been her invariable trend. Without one single exception, her doctrinal advances have all been in the direction of the historic Lutheran faith, and all her confessional movements have resulted in bringing her into nearer and more vital union with the distinctive Lutheranism of Luther and of the Lutheran Reformation.

In the beginning of her history, her confessional attitude, as is well known, was unexpressed or neutral. She declared for herself no confessional basis. As an organic body she had then no such unanimously accepted confessional basis; and had the attempt then been made to bind all composing the body to a recognition even of the Augsburg Confession, and even with the largest liberty in its subscription, an organization could probably not have been effected; or, if effected, would probably soon have been disrupted. Even the venerable Synod of Pennsylvania had, at that time, and during years afterward, in her liturgical forms for licensure and ordination, no pledge of acceptance of the Augsburg Confession as a basis of doctrine. The same was true of other synods composing the body.

But, while all this is true, it must be well noted that, even then, while thus un-confessional, our General Synod was not anti-confessional. Not one intimation even of opposition to any of our Lutheran Symbols can anywhere be found in all her proceedings and declarations.

"Because of the prevalent rationalistic spirit in one or two of the older and larger district Synods uniting in the organization, it was not found practicable to place in the Constitution even the name of any one of the above-mentioned Lutheran Confessional writings. But when, three years after the organization, the Pennsylvania Synod withdrew, not for *doctrinal*, but *wholly* for *practical* reasons, the General Synod soon after took the Augsburg Confession as its doctrinal basis, and declared: 'The fundamental doctrines of the Word of God are taught in a manner substantially correct in the doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession.'

"This qualified subscription to the Augsburg Confession was doubtless all that could be attained at that time, yet really it marks an epoch in the confessional life and history of the Lutheran Church in America. But in the year 1864 the General Synod made its confessional basis more clear and distinct by accepting 'the Augsburg Confession as a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Word, and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word.'" (Prof. J. W. Richard, D. D., *Magazine of Christian Literature*, April, 1892).

It is interesting to trace these successive steps in the onward confessional movement of our General Synod, and to note how steadily she advanced to the attainment of the positive doctrinal basis which she now occupies. Want of time, however, forbids our doing so.

The one important fact which here needs to be noted is that the General Synod has, even from the beginning of her history until now, been a Lutheran body; that she has regarded herself as an integral and living part of the historic Lutheran Church; and that the only confessional basis which she has ever held, and which in her present form of subscription she holds more clearly and positively than ever, is the Augsburg Confession, the one universally accepted Symbol of Lutheranism throughout the world.

[Dr. E. J. Wolf](#), of our Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, says:

"From its organization to the present hour, the General Synod has never denied or rejected or modified a single article or tenet of the Lutheran faith; nor can it be shown that it ever took one step to develop or maintain a peculiar type of Lutheranism. Persons may speak of General Synod Lutheranism, or of General Synod doctrines, or of General Synod Lutherans, as if here we had something distinct from the Lutheran Church at large. But they have no warrant whatever for such language. The General Synod is no Lutheran sect, cut off from the great Lutheran communion." (Lutheran Quarterly, April, 1801).

A writer in the *Lutheran World*, Feb. 9th, 1893, has, in an admirable manner, traced the confessional history of our General Synod and has shown clearly the Augsburg Confession, in its entirety, to be her Doctrinal Basis. He writes as follows:

"The General Synod, in her official capacity and in her ecclesiastical history, has never rejected any article of the Augsburg Confession. She started in her career with a modified acceptance of the Augustana. This was her official declaration. Her avowed position during forty years was that the Augsburg Confession states in a manner substantially correct the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Word. This, of course, was indefinite. From this indefinite standpoint there must be movement toward definiteness in one of two directions. There must be either an exact statement of how much of the Confession is taken without qualification, and how much is qualified and to what extent, and what is entirely rejected, or a positive declaration of an acceptance of the Confession as it is. In getting to a definite position there would necessarily be agitation, fierce debate and bitter controversy. And this occurred. For twenty years the General Synod was in an unsettled state, earnestly seeking the true point from which to direct her future course.

"In the midst of this effort the Definite Platform was devised and circulated throughout the territory of the General Synod. It was a recension of the Augustana, an eclectic confession, containing what was judged by some to be true in the two confessions, Lutheran and Reformed. The merits of this new confession were vigorously advocated in the paper of the General Synod. Criticisms of it were likewise presented in the same journal. This was in 1855 and 1856. Only three Synods approved the Platform. In 1864 the General Synod expressed herself adversely to the proposed constitution. In 1866, at Fort Wayne, she appointed a committee to revise her constitution. This committee reported in 1868 at Harrisburg. In this report the basis was changed. The report was adopted. The General Synod's basis was now definite. Instead of saying 'substantially correct,' she said, 'correct exhibition.' Instead of ignoring connection with the historic faith of the Lutheran Church, she added: 'and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word.' The basis of the General Synod adopted in 1868 is her basis today. She does not fasten herself to the scholastic theology of the seventeenth century. She plants herself on the great principles of the Reformation, which principles she knows are embodied in the Confession of Protestantism — the Augustana. On this ground she abides, and goes forth to develop herself into a great Church of the living Redeemer."

The Augsburg Confession is, then, the doctrinal basis of the General Synod, and is by her declared to be "a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Word, and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word."

This Doctrinal Basis of the General Synod, I come now to declare, I accept, hold and teach, ex amino, as my doctrinal basis. With all that is involved and meant by a true acceptance of it, I accept the Augsburg Confession as, in every article, a correct expression or exhibition of fundamental divine truth.

In my acceptance of the Augsburg Confession are embraced the following convictions, namely:

[a] That every doctrinal article in it is, in some sense or relation, a fundamental article; that is, expresses an essential or vital truth of the Word

of God.

By this is *not* meant that each Article of the Confession is of the *same* doctrinal importance, in either the Christian or distinctively Lutheran System, as every other doctrine in the system is; or that it is essential in the same sense or to the same degree as is every other Article in the Confession. The term, “fundamental,” as used in connection with Christian Doctrine, is a relative term, and there is no one invariable or standard definition of it which applies to every use which we make of it. It receives its signification or value from its connection, or from its relation to that to which it is essential or fundamental: that to which, as a teaching of God’s Word, it serves as a foundation, and upon which, as a superstructure, we rear our Christian faith. Thus the Apology says: “The Christian Church retains the pure Gospel, as Paul says: the foundation (fundamentum), that is, the true knowledge of Christ and faith.”

But while all the contents of inspired Scripture are truth, all are not fundamental or essential truth. “It is evident,” says a recent writer, “that in God’s Word some things are fundamental and some are not; some things are very clear in Scripture and some things are of doubtful interpretation; some, by general consent, are central, vital, essential, indispensable, fundamental, while of other contents of Holy Writ this cannot be affirmed. What belongs to faith and practice is fundamental, and herein the Scriptures offer us the only in fallible rule.”

All this is true. And now, perceiving and acting upon this fact, the Reformers, in framing our Augsburg Confession, gave expression in it only to what they apprehended as being thus the essential, vital, fundamental truths of the Word of God. This is evident from their own repeated declarations. They call the doctrinal portion of the Confession, “the principal articles of faith;” and they declare that they therein set forth “the holy Christian faith, the one only true religion.” They declare their Confession to be a “sum of doctrine for making known our Confession and the doctrine of those who teach among us.” And, having concluded the Confession, they say: “These are the chief articles which seem to be in controversy;” “we have set forth the chief points;” “only those things have been recounted whereof we thought it necessary to speak.”

Surely if language ever clearly and positively expressed anything, this language of the Reformers expresses the fact that they esteemed every article of their Confession as the statement of an essential or fundamental

truth of God's Word, and that they gave it place in the Confession because of its possession of such essential, vital, or fundamental character.

That our General Synod also thus esteems every Article in the Augsburg Confession as an essential or fundamental Article is established, without the shadow of a doubt, by her own repeated official acts and utterances. Already in 1825, she provided that in her Theological Seminary, just then established, should be taught "the fundamental doctrines of the Sacred Scriptures as contained in the Augsburg Confession." Not the fundamental doctrines of the Augsburg Confession, but the fundamental doctrines of the Sacred Scriptures as they are contained in the Augsburg Confession: language which gives not a shadow of room for the claim that some only of its articles are fundamental, but, upon the very face of it, declares that every one of them is thus fundamental. In the oath administered in that same year to her first Theological Professor, she bound him to the Augsburg Confession and to the Catechisms of Luther, "as a summary and just exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God." In the year 1829, she makes this official utterance:

"The General Synod only requires of those who are attached to her connection that they hold the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel as taught in the Augsburg Confession, and in all minor parts leaves them unrestricted."

In the Minutes of 1833, in replying to a resolution "adopted by the Synod of Ohio expressive of its intention to remain immutably pure Evangelical Lutherans in faith, form and discipline, according to the Bible and the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church," she says:

"Your committee are *happy* in learning from the latter clause of this resolution that our brethren in Ohio are determined to remain faithful to the ancient and *fundamental* landmarks of Lutheranism, for we are convinced that fidelity to the faith and discipline of our forefathers will not fail, under God, to perpetuate the purity of our doctrines and promote the prosperity of our Church. In this determination we therefore cordially join them and bid them God speed, especially as we believe one of the prominent ends for which the General Synod was established was to preserve the purity and advance the glory of our Zion, aiming accordingly at the very object contemplated in the branch of the resolution alluded to."

In 1835 she amended her Constitution so as to read:

“All regularly constituted Lutheran Synods holding the fundamental doctrines of the Bible as taught by our Church, not now in connection with the General Synod, may, at any time, become associated with it by adopting this Constitution.”

But why multiply proofs? Even the old form of subscription to the confession, required in the licensure and ordination of candidates for the ministry, recognized this fundamental character of all its Articles: the modifying clause, “in a manner substantially correct,” having reference not to the doctrines themselves directly, but to the degree of correctness, or accord with God’s Word, with which, in the Confession’s statement of them, they are there taught.

The General Synod’s *present* form of subscription leaves, however, nothing ambiguous or uncertain upon this point. “The Augsburg Confession,” is now the General Synod’s positive and emphatic declaration, “*is* a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Word.” *What* is a correct exhibition, does she say? The Augsburg Confession. *How much* of it? All of it. *Which* of its Articles? Every one of them. The language is clear, beyond the possibility of honest doubt, that the General Synod in this statement of her doctrinal basis means to say, and does say, that the whole of the Augsburg Confession, the Confession in its integrity or totality, is fundamental, or does in every Article correctly exhibit a fundamental doctrine of the Word of God.

But now the question recurs: “fundamental” in what *sense*? Are all the doctrinal Articles of the Confession essential, vital, important, necessary, “fundamental,” in the same sense? Are they all fundamental in the same degree, that is, equally fundamental? I answer in the negative. All cannot be said to be fundamental in the same sense; all are not equally fundamental. To say that each of the Articles of the Confession is fundamental in the sense that no man can be saved who does not accept it, no Lutheran thinks of asserting. The soul, that, with a sense of its guilt and danger of eternal death, trusts itself, as the Gospel invites it, to Jesus Christ, as its Divine and Only Saviour, is a saved soul, whether its knowledge and faith correspond in all minute points with our Confession or not. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,” even if he never saw the Augsburg Confession, or does not know that such a Confession exists. In some sense, however, all the Articles of the Confession *are* fundamental. Some of them, we may say, are essential or fundamental, first of all, to the integrity of the *Christian* system, so that, by denying them, the system ceases to be Christian

distinctively, and becomes Jewish or Mohammedan or Pagan. Some of them, again, are essential or fundamental to the *Protestant* system, so that by denying them the system is no longer Protestant, but is the doctrinal system of the Roman Catholic or Greek Catholic Church. Some of them are essential or fundamental to the *Lutheran* doctrinal system, so that by denying them the doctrinal system ceases to be distinctively Lutheran, and becomes Zwinglian, or Calvinistic, or something else in its character.

Dr. Charles P. Krauth, in his "*Conservative Reformation*" (page 254,) makes this classification of them:

"(1) The Confessedly Catholic, or Universal Christian Articles, namely, those which Christendom, Greek and Roman, have confessed, especially in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds; (2) The Protestant Articles, namely, those opposed to the errors in doctrine, and the abuses in usage, of the papal part of the Church in the West; (3) The Evangelical Articles, or parts of Articles, namely, those which especially assert the doctrines which are connected most directly with the Gospel in its essential character as tidings of redemption to lost man, the great doctrines of grace; and (4) The Conservative Articles, or those Articles which set forth distinctive Biblical doctrines which the Lutheran Church holds in peculiar purity, over against the corruptions of Romanism, the extravagance of Radicalism, the perversions of Rationalism, or the imperfect development of theology."

And again he says:

"What is and what is not fundamental has been the subject of very extensive discussion. There may be a comparative importance or fundamentalness in proportion as they stand connected with the grand foundation of our faith, Christ Jesus. The Confessions of the Church regard any doctrine connected with the integrity of the Christian faith as fundamental. Certain things are considered non-fundamental by all writers. Liberty of judgment is allowed each particular person on what are non-fundamental matters." (*C. P. Krauth, Allentown Church Case, p. 147*).

The Rev. Dr. J. A. Brown, Professor of Theology in the General Synod's Seminary at Gettysburg, Pa., is quoted in an editorial in the *Lutheran Observer* of May 13th, 1887, as testifying in the Allentown Church Case, in 1875, as follows, in answer to the question: What are the Fundamental Doctrines of the Augsburg Confession?

"A full and definite answer to this question is hardly possible, or even practicable, as the Confession embraces twenty-eight distinct articles, . . . but the central doctrine is that of justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ, and all doctrines centering around this one are regarded as fundamental.

“I answer that I consider that the First Article contains a fundamental doctrine on the Godhead; the Second Article is fundamental on Sin; the Third Article is fundamental on the person and work of the Son of God; the Fourth Article is fundamental; Fifth Article, of the Ministry, containing a fundamental doctrine; Sixth Article, on New Obedience, fundamental; Seventh Article, of the Church, containing fundamental doctrines; Eighth Article, containing fundamental doctrines; Ninth Article, on Baptism, containing fundamental doctrines; Tenth Article, containing fundamental doctrines; Eleventh Article, of Confession, not fundamental so far as confession and private absolution are concerned; Article Twelfth, of Repentance, contains a fundamental doctrine; Article Thirteenth, of the Use of the Sacraments, contains a fundamental doctrine; Article Fourteenth, of Church Government, fundamental so far as Good Order in the Church is concerned; Article Fifteenth, of Church Rites and Ordinances, contains fundamental truths; Article Sixteenth, of Civil Polity and Government, contains things fundamental and non-fundamental; Article Seventeenth, fundamental; Article Eighteenth contains fundamental doctrines; Article Nineteenth may be called fundamental; Articles Twentieth and Twenty-first contain fundamental doctrines.”

In reply to the question whether he used the term fundamental in the sense of essential to salvation, he said:

“The word is sometimes used in this sense and sometimes not; in the former including the doctrines necessary to salvation of the individual believer, or to the integrity of the Christian faith; in the other, fundamental to the good order and prosperity of the Church and to Christian life. I understand the term as including both of these senses, as used by the General Synod.”

“The determination of what are fundamental doctrines belongs more *immediately to the preservation and growth of the Church, and only mediately to the question of personal salvation*. And in this respect the distinction is important and should be maintained. Thus those which have an immediate connection with faith in Christ, the foundation and center of the system of Christianity, must be regarded as fundamental. Those, again, which are necessarily presupposed by this foundation, may be called antecedent fundamental doctrines, and those which are derived by necessary inference from it, consequent fundamental articles; while the non-fundamental would be those which may be denied without destroying the historical faith or the doctrinal edifice of the Christian Church. And it is a matter of importance to each Church to decide, as nearly as possible, which are fundamental articles and which are not, in order that she may effectually guide the people in the ways of truth, and ascertain how far the errors of other Churches are fundamental, and how far it is allowable, according to the Sacred Scriptures, to have communion and co operation with them.” (*Dr. Samuel Sprecher, in “Groundwork of Lutheran Theology” p. 23*).

In the General Synod’s Liturgy of 1847, on page 93 in the rubric for Confirmation, among truths declared to be “fundamental,” are the following: “the doctrines respecting Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.”

But I cite here also the judgment, upon this point, of one eminent for his theological scholarship, and who, being associated with another branch of the Christian Church, may be assumed as entirely unbiased in his opinion. In reply to the request asking his interpretation of the phrase: “a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God,” the Rev. B. B. Warfield, D. D., of Princeton Theological Seminary, under date of February 25th, 1893, writes as follows:

“Its obvious meaning is the following: The subscriber asserts that - the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the fathers received and held the Augsburg Confession in all the doctrines which it defines to be Scriptural, and to define fundamentals only; and he covenants to receive and hold along with the Church of the fathers, the said Augsburg Confession as a document which in all its doctrinal definitions is a definition of fundamental doctrines which are, and as they are, contained in the Divine Word. So clearly does this formula seem to me to bind the subscriber to receive and hold the Augsburg Confession as a whole, to be a definition of fundamental doctrines, and to be a correct exhibition of those fundamental doctrines as they are taught in the Scriptures, that I think I should not like to subscribe it, what ever its historical sense might be, or whatever the *animus imponendis* might be, in any other sense. For the individual conscience needs to be considered, as well as the public purpose, in subscription.”

No more, surely, needs upon this point to be said.

One of the “Charges” preferred against me as proof of my disqualification for my Chair in Wittenberg Theological Seminary, reads:

"He holds that all the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession are fundamental, which,

"(1) is contrary to the historic spirit and practical attitude of Wittenberg College and of the General Synod towards the Augsburg Confession; and

"(2) does not agree with the statement made by the General Synod herself in her Constitution, and by which she defines the nature of her acceptance of the Augsburg Confession.”

My answer to this “Charge” is: “Yes, I *do* so hold, but, in view of all the testimony cited, I deny that such reception of the Augsburg Confession is, as alleged, ‘contrary to the historic spirit of the General Synod towards the Augsburg Confession,’ and I deny that it ‘does not agree with the statement made by the General Synod herself in her Constitution, and by which she defines the nature of her acceptance of the Augsburg Confession.’ The

‘Charge,’ in other words, is true in fact, but the fact is utterly irrelevant, is no proof of disqualification, but of qualification, and the ‘Charge,’ therefore, should at once summarily be ruled out as constituting ‘no offense.’”

In my acceptance of the Augsburg Confession as a Doctrinal Basis, I hold also, secondly,

[b] That an honest and real acceptance of it demands that it be interpreted and received in its original and historic confessional sense: that is, in the same doctrinal sense in which the confessors at Augsburg themselves meant and held it, such original historic sense being ascertained from the language employed in the Confession itself, and from the statements of its authors in their other confessional utterances.

Only on this principle can any historic document be justly and correctly interpreted. In Biblical Hermeneutics, the *usus loquendi* is recognized as a primary means by which to ascertain the sense of a writer’s language; and the plain, grammatico-historic meaning is, unless there are invincible reasons for rejecting it, always assumed to be the designed and true meaning. The interpretation of a document on any other principle would manifestly do injustice to its author. It would not be the educing from his language his meaning, but would be the reading into it, by different readers, different meanings, so that, under such arbitrary treatment of it, it would possess no inherent or constant signification, and would be made to mean whatever each reader might wish it to mean.

Another principle of sound interpretation is: that every intelligent and honest writer is supposed to be consistent with himself, and to be at all times his own best interpreter, so that what he says in one part of his production is in harmony with what he says in every other part of it, or that what he expresses in one writing accords with what, upon the same subject, he expresses in another writing. Thus Paul in Romans is assumed to be in accord with Paul in Galatians or Ephesians; and John in his Gospel is assumed at least not to be at variance with John in his Epistles or Apocalypse.

Thus every historic document has its own inherent, original and fixed sense, and that sense is the sense which it had in the mind of its author, and which he wished to express when he penned the document. To attach any other sense to it, either in whole or in part, destroys its true integrity, robs it of its personality or identity, and, even though still called by its old name,

makes it really another and different entity, so that, the thing being changed, common honesty requires that the name also should be changed.

The one true, real and only meaning, therefore, I hold, of the Augsburg Confession, is the meaning originally attached to it by its authors, and which they meant to express by it; and I hold further that common honesty requires, in every acceptance of it, that it should be accepted, in whole and in its every part, not in some sense, or as the subscriber to it may think the sense ought to be, but in that *distinct and precise sense held and meant to be expressed by its authors*. And especially does such subscription become imperative since this distinct and precise sense, expressed originally in the Confession by the Reformers, has also, ever since their day, been the sense attached to it by the entire historic Lutheran Church, so that that Confession has come to have a distinct confessional personality, expressing to the entire Christian world a distinctive system of faith known as the Lutheran system of doctrine or faith.

He, therefore, who subscribes the Augsburg Confession, subscribes no vague, indefinite and ambiguous statement of Christian doctrine, but he subscribes a creed which is as clear as the day, a symbol possessing a distinctiveness so well defined that it cannot honestly be mistaken to teach what it does not teach, or not to teach what it does teach. Men may reject this or that Article of the Augsburg Confession, or even the whole of it for that matter; but no one can, without doing violence to every principle of honest interpretation, put into its words any other meaning than their true, original, historic Lutheran meaning.

This being so, there is but one honest and true subscription which any one can make to the Augsburg Confession; but one honest and true interpretation of it which any one can give. He alone subscribes it honestly and truly, who does so with the full assurance, in his innermost conviction and faith, that it is, in its successive statements or Articles, as with his words he declares it to be, “a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Word, and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word.” He must really believe what he says he believes, and he must believe it in that sense which the Church, whose Confession it is, attaches to it, and which, by his subscribing it, she assumes that he, as an honest man, also attaches to it. Subscription to it is, of course, on the part of every one, entirely voluntary. He knows what, as a doctrinal system, it is, what each Article teaches, what he will profess to hold and acknowledge as his own, if

he subscribes it. If he cannot honestly, or in good and true faith, subscribe it, he does wrong to subscribe it at all. If he has subscribed it, and has come to see that he does not believe what it teaches, he owes it to himself, as an honest man, and he owes it also to the Church which has entrusted to him the defense of her faith, at once to disavow allegiance to it. He ought to be thoroughly sincere and honest in the whole matter. Professing to accept the Augsburg Confession as his exhibition of Christian faith, he ought also really accept it. Calling himself a Lutheran, he ought also be a Lutheran.

Dr. W. G. T. Shedd, of Union Theological Seminary, writes admirably upon this matter of confessional or denominational honesty:

“Honesty is as important in theology as in trade and commerce, in a religious denomination as in a political party. Denominational honesty consists, first, in a clear, unambiguous statement by a Church of its doctrinal belief, and, second, in an unequivocal and sincere adoption of it by its members. Both are requisite. If a particular denomination makes a loose statement of its belief, which is capable of being construed in more than one sense, it is so far dishonest. If the creed of the denomination is well drawn and plain, but the membership subscribe to it with mental reservation and uncertainty, the denomination is dishonest. Honesty and sincerity are founded in clear conviction, and clear conviction is founded in the knowledge and acknowledgment of the truth. Heresy is a sin, and is classed by St. Paul among ‘the works of the flesh,’ along with ‘adultery, idolatry, murder, envy and hatred.’ which exclude from the kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:19-21). But heresy is not so great a sin as dishonesty. There may be honest heresy, but not honest dishonesty. A heretic who acknowledges that he is such, is a better man than he who pretends to be orthodox while subscribing to a creed which he dislikes, and which he says under pretense of improving it and adapting it to the times. The honest heretic leaves the Church with which he no longer agrees; but the insincere subscriber remains within it in order to carry out his plan of demoralization.” (*Magazine of Christian Literature, September, 1891*)

It is in this spirit alone of downright honesty that any one should subscribe a Christian Confession, and it is in this spirit alone that a professed Lutheran should subscribe the Augsburg Confession. Hence, the answers given in the Allentown Church Case, by the Rev. Dr. J. A. Brown, Professor in the General Synod’s Seminary at Gettysburg, were, upon this point, entirely correct. In answer to the question: “Do you say that Chapter XV. of the Constitution of the East Pennsylvania Synod contains an unequivocal and unconditional acceptance of the Augsburg Confession of Faith?” he replied: “The acceptance is unequivocal and without condition.” And in answer to this question: “What do the words, ‘properly interpreted,’ in this Chapter, refer to?” he gave this testimony: “I understand them to mean the Confession interpreted according to the acknowledged principles of just and

fair interpretation, or what may be called the grammatico-historical interpretation.” (*Report p. 123.*)¹

Right here, however, is, I judge, where the real issue exists between my opponents and myself. I must say to them as Luther said to Zwingli at Marburg, when he righteously refused to take Zwingli’s hand: “*Ihr habt einen anderen Geist als wir.*” “Yours is a different spirit from ours.” In all good faith, without any equivocation or mental reservations, I accept, hold, and teach the Augsburg Confession as “a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Word and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word.” I doubt whether they thus in all good faith, and without any equivocation or mental reservation, accept it.² The General Synod’s basis as expressed in her present form of subscription, is the doctrinal basis upon which, squarely and unflinchingly, I stand. Do they really stand upon that basis? I doubt it. I doubt whether, if pressed for explicit and positive answer, they will say that they do. I make bold to charge that their real doctrinal basis is not the Augsburg Confession, as subscribed by the General Synod, at all, but is the defunct “Definite Platform,” or, worse yet, the individualism which accords to each one liberty to interpret the Augsburg Confession for himself as he will.

The *Lutheran Evangelist* (sad misnomer), is the acknowledged organ of the “brethren” who prefer these “Charges,” and is the organ of all in our Lutheran Church who are in doctrinal sympathy with them. One needs but to examine the columns of this sheet during the past year, or since it has come under its present editorial management, to find abundant confirmation of the pseudo-Lutheranism which inspires and controls it; and which, we may assume, expresses the “Type of Lutheranism” held by those who own the paper and direct its utterances. Confirmation of their un-Lutheranism is afforded also by the very character of these “Charges” which they have preferred against me. Reduced to their last analysis, and fishing out their real essence from the great medley of muddled rhetoric, bad grammar and inconsequent logic in which the author of them has sought to express himself, the sum of my offending, at last, appears to be only this: that I am a Lutheran, that is, that I am what I say I am, and that I teach what, before God, I solemnly, in my Inaugural Obligation, promised to teach.

Not with incompetency, not with unfaithfulness, not with immorality, not with heresy, am I charged, but with an excess, forsooth, of Lutheranism. It is indeed a strange condition of things to which we have come when a man

in the General Synod, whose symbol is the Augsburg Confession, can be arraigned before the Board of Directors of a Theological Seminary of the General Synod, for holding in good faith the Symbol or Confession of the General Synod. In other denominations men, in our day, are being called to account on the charge of disloyalty to their denominational Confession — I, for loyalty to mine; they, for holding and teaching too little of the faith of their Church — I, for holding and teaching too much of the faith of mine.

There is certainly a very large measure of intolerance in this entire assault which is here made upon me. Practically it means about this: For ourselves we claim large confessional liberty; but we allow no such liberty to you. We subscribe the Augsburg Confession conditionally; but we forbid you to subscribe it unconditionally. We take some of its articles to be fundamental; but we cannot permit you to regard them all as fundamental. We claim the right to interpret each article as we think it ought to be interpreted; but we condemn you for holding the interpretation which the Reformers themselves put upon it and which the Lutheran Church puts upon it. We are Nineteenth Century Lutherans; but we will not allow you to be a Sixteenth Century Lutheran. Think as we think, hold what we hold, teach as we wish you to teach, and you can remain; do otherwise, and your vacated place will be preferable to your presence.

And all this in *Wittenberg* Theological Seminary, of the *General Synod*, of the *Lutheran* Church! “Wittenberg,” “General Synod,” “Lutheran” — names which have the ring of liberty in them, and each one of which is the synonym of intelligent and conscientious Lutheran freedom!

How different from this course pursued against me is the course pursued in the whole history of our General Synod towards her theological professors in all her other institutions. Never before, in any Lutheran Theological Seminary in our land, has a theological professor been thus arraigned for what was deemed extreme devotion to the Lutheran Faith. Nowhere else has there ever been the least endeavor or inclination to repress the teaching of a positive or confessional Lutheranism. The bad notoriety of having attempted this belongs now only, I am sorry to say, to Wittenberg. In our General Synod’s Seminary at Gettysburg, men holding and teaching the most pronounced Lutheranism, accepting as confessional writings, not the Augsburg Confession only, but all the Symbolical Books, have, undisturbed and with largest liberty, been permitted to hold their chairs. Rev. Dr. Henry I. Schmidt, (1839-53), was a Lutheran of the most

positive character. Rev. Dr. C. F. Schaeffer, (1855-64), in his Inaugural Address, openly declared his acceptance of all the Symbolical Books, and that he would teach according to them: a promise which, as many of his students can testify, he faithfully kept as long as he was there. Concerning that Inaugural, Dr. S. S. Schmucker, in "Lutheran Symbols," says: "Even within the last few weeks, the Directors of the Seminary have listened to a vindication of the entire symbolic system, in the Inaugural of their German Theological Professor, and resolved to publish it, although it advocates some views rejected by the majority of the Board and by the other members of the Faculty." And yet, so heartily was this liberty accorded to Dr. Schaeffer of teaching the full historic Lutheran Faith, even though the majority of the Board differed from some of his views, that when, in 1864, he left the Seminary, the Board showed regret over his going away. How completely opposite the present course of my friends (?) in this Board of Directors: they *want* me to go, and the *sooner* the *better*,

"At once, good night: Stand not upon the order of your going, But go at once."

There is another feature in connection with these "Charges" which must, at this point, not be overlooked. It is charged against me that my "dominant attitude has been that of opposition to the type of Lutheranism that dictated the establishment of Wittenberg College, that animated its founders in undertaking it, and in whose interest the original trust was created;" that I hold to "a type of Lutheranism antagonistic to that of Wittenberg College;" that the influence of my teaching and spirit as a Professor of Theology in Wittenberg College "operates to change the historic spirit and doctrinal position of Wittenberg College;" and that my teaching "operates to defeat the original object for which the trust was created, namely, to establish an institution of learning, that is, Wittenberg College." These, and similar statements, appear frequently in the document filed by my accusers. They talk in high-flowing language, also, about the "genetic origin" of the General Synod, as though anything could have an "origin" which was not "genetic," or be "genetic" without "also having an origin."

In response to all such allegations, I deny, of course, *in toto*, their truthfulness. That there has been a departure in the life of Wittenberg College from the Evangelical spirit and earnest practical and living piety which have characterized her, not only in her beginning but during all her

long history of almost half a century, every one acquainted with her past history, and acquainted also with her present spiritual and religious life, knows is not true. A deeper, more earnest, more consistent, more holy spiritual life has never existed in Wittenberg College than exists there today; and my earnest prayer is that it may yet more deepen and may continue as long as Wittenberg stands.

Whether or not there has been a departure, or “revolution,” as the paper loves to word it, from the original confessional position of Wittenberg College, it does not devolve upon me either to affirm or deny. I rather think, however, there has been, and believe that Wittenberg College, today, is planted upon more advanced and positive Lutheran confessional ground than she was in the earlier period of her history. I hold that Wittenberg College is a true and loyal institution of the General Synod, and that any change in the doctrinal basis of the General Synod, such as was made in 1868, by virtue of her very integrity with the General Synod, necessitates a change also, and the same change, in her doctrinal posture or basis. Any advanced confessional movement by the General Synod sweeps Wittenberg College with her in the movement, and places her where confessionally the General Synod has placed herself. This Wittenberg College has herself recognized in the changed form of subscription to her doctrinal basis required from her Theological Professors. That form of subscription is no longer what it once was, but is that form which expresses the present doctrinal basis of the General Synod.

When the Rev. Dr. J. W. Richard was inaugurated, a few years ago, as Professor of Theology in Wittenberg Seminary, he positively declined to subscribe to the old, “in a manner substantially correct,” form of subscription, and demanded that in the Oath of Inauguration he be bound to teach in accordance with the present doctrinal basis of the General Synod. This demand was readily and unanimously granted by the Board of Directors.

When, on June 26th, 1889, the Rev. Dr. S. F. Breckenridge and I were inaugurated as Professors of Theology, the Board, through its President and Secretary, administered to us the following oath of office, which is the present doctrinal basis of the General Synod:

“Do you solemnly declare, in the presence of God and this Board, that you do sincerely believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice? Do you believe and declare the Augsburg Confession to be a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of that Word, and of the Faith of our Church founded upon that Word? And do you promise to teach and vindicate these doctrines and principles, in opposition to the views of Atheists, Deists, Socinians, Unitarians, Arians, Universalists, Antinomians, Pelagians, Anabaptists, Papists, and all other errorists, as long as you remain Professors in this Theological Seminary?”

As yet further proof of a changed confessional attitude on the part of Wittenberg College, I here quote the recent published statement of one, who, above all others, is, perhaps, the best living witness of this fact. He speaks here, of course, only for himself; but while thus speaking for himself, he voices also the sentiments of hundreds of Wittenberg’s thoughtful sons all over the land. In the *Lutheran Evangelist* of May 1st, 1891, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Sprecher writes as follows:

“It is true that I did once think ‘the Definite Platform’ — that modification of Lutheranism which has perhaps been properly called the culmination of Melanchthonianism — desirable and practicable, and that I now regard all such modifications of our creed as hopeless. In the meantime, an increased knowledge of the spirit, methods and literature of the Missouri Synod has convinced me that such alterations are undesirable — that the elements of a true Pietism, that a sense of the necessity of personal religion and of the importance of personal assurance of salvation, can be maintained in connection with a Lutheranism unmodified by the Puritan element. These are the interests which have been, and I trust will ever be, the motives of the General Synod and its institutions, especially of Wittenberg College, which was founded expressly for the promotion of them.”

In a second letter, published soon after the one of May 1st, Dr. Sprecher, in explanation of his exact confessional position, uses this language:

“When I wrote the ‘Groundwork’ I said, on page 454, ‘We consider our creed, just as it is, the best in Christendom. There is no other Confession to which we could, with as little difficulty, subscribe unconditionally; and while we think that the forms of some of our doctrines need explanation anew, in the light of the Scriptures and the past experience of the Church — and even modification — we do believe them to be capable of such Evangelical interpretation, with out affecting the substance of them, or destroying the integrity of the system to which they belong.’ Now I would erase the phrase, ‘and even modification,’ and would only say that they needed ‘explanation,’ and that they ‘were capable of such Evangelical interpretation’ without modification. And the Evangelical spirit and successful operations of our Missouri brethren have led me to dismiss my doubts respecting the practicability of the unconditional adoption of them consistently with all the great spiritual interests which the General Synod has always had in view.”

And once more, in a third letter, in the same paper of May 22nd, 1891, Dr. Sprecher, that his former utterances may not be misapprehended, yet adds:

“When I say that I give up a modified Lutheranism, I do not mean by it that I adopt an exclusive Lutheranism. . . . While, therefore, I would repudiate a modified Lutheranism, I would not thereby un-Lutheranize the doctrinal position of the General Synod, and I would hope that if she should ever adopt more fully the symbols of the Church, it will be the result of a free development and with the rejection of all exclusivism.”

I take the position, therefore, that all these “Charges” of disloyalty on my part to the original confessional basis of Wittenberg College, even if true, are utterly irrelevant to the real matter at issue. The question is not what the doctrinal basis of Wittenberg College was in the past, but what her doctrinal position, as expressed in her own official utterances, is in the present. Is the present doctrinal basis of the General Synod the present doctrinal basis of Wittenberg College? That, so far as the College is concerned, is the one only vital question in this difficulty. And the one only vital question, so far as I personally am concerned, is whether I have been true to my oath of office taken at my inauguration into the position which I now hold. All other questions are the merest side issues. By my oath of office I stand.

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1. These two words, “properly interpreted,” as applied to the interpretation of the Augsburg Confession, have been, indeed, strangely perverted from their original use and intent. They occur in the well known Resolution adopted by the General Synod at York, in 1864, with regard to certain Romish and un-Scriptural errors which the Definite Platform declared were contained in the Augsburg Confession. This charge the Resolution emphatically denies. Its language is: “Before God and His Church we declare that in our judgment, the Augsburg Confession, *properly interpreted*, is in perfect consistence with this our testimony and with the Holy Scriptures as regards the errors specified.”

The point to be noted is that the expression, as thus used in the Resolution, had specific and exclusive reference to the teaching of the Confession concerning these alleged errors.

A very different construction, however, has been put upon this expression, "*properly interpreted*" by some among us. It has been taken as the General Synod's official license to each man in the General Synod to interpret every article of the Confession as he individually pleases. "Properly interpreted?" Certainly. But, who can give to the average liberty loving General Synod Lutheran what in his own estimation is the proper interpretation so well and satisfactorily as he himself? In his interpretation of it, he has only himself to consult. The old Confession is entirely at his mercy. He can make it say for him just what he chooses. Its words are only so many empty forms, and he can fill them up with any doctrinal contents he will, and that then will be what he calls "the General Synod's type of Lutheranism." Poor General Synod! What crimes are committed against thee, and against our pure Lutheran faith in thy name! What a vandal upon our Lutheran heritage this wretched individualism of Nineteenth Century Lutheranism is! ←

2. "The great difficulty with Dr. Stuckenberg and the entire school of professed Lutheran theologians whom he represents, is that they do not hold to the Augsburg Confession. Talk as they may about the injustice of asking a subscription to the other Lutheran Confessions, as though such subscription were derogatory to the Augsburg Confession, it will always be found that their trouble is after all with the Augsburg Confession itself. Dr. Stuckenberg in this pamphlet boasts of the record which he made in this country, at the time of the formation of the General Council. It is, therefore, not unjust to turn to this record in order to determine his standpoint. At the meeting of the General Synod in Harrisburg, in 1868, a revision of the doctrinal basis of the General Synod being under discussion, we were witness to the following discussion, reported in *The Lutheran* of May 21st, 1868:

"Rev. Stuckenberg had a few remarks to make. The third section was not sufficiently clear to him, because it said that "the Augsburg Confession is a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Word, and of the faith of our Church, founded upon that Word;" whereas, if understood aright, it should be: The Augsburg Confession is a correct exhibition of the Divine Word, and *of the fundamental doctrines of the faith of our Church, founded upon that Word.*" He asked the Chair whether this section meant merely that the Augsburg

Confession correctly exhibited the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God, or that it also conveyed the idea that the Confession is a correct exhibition of the faith of our Church.

"The Chair replied that he understood it in the latter sense.

"Rev. Stuckenberg: Then, Mr. President, if we adopt this section, we declare our adherence to the Confession, not only on fundamental, but also on non-fundamental points. I regret very much, Mr. President, that I am therefore compelled to oppose the adoption of this section. *For if the Confession be a correct exhibition of the faith of the Church, we must then receive every article.* I am in favor of the first part, viz., that it correctly exhibits the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God. But, at the same time, while it is certain that the Lutheran Church in Germany adopts this view of the Augsburg Confession, they take the liberty to say that this Confession as a whole is not an exhibition of fundamental doctrine.'" (*Lutheran, August 11, 1892.*)↵

II. Lutheran Confessionalism In The General Synod In Respect To The Lutheran Symbolical Books Other Than The Augsburg Confession.

The General Synod acknowledges as her Confessional Standard only the Augsburg Confession, and this one alone of all the Lutheran symbols has she invested with binding confessional authority. Her present form of subscription to this symbol is, however, clear, unequivocal and unconditional, and is meant to express that he subscribing it does honestly, as he declares, accept it as “a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word.”

Thus fully and honestly accepted, the Augsburg Confession expresses our distinctive Lutheran doctrinal system, so that any one who thus honestly and fully accepts it thereby accepts and confesses our entire Lutheran faith: the Lutheranism of Luther himself.

Says Dr. Charles P. Krauth:

“Any man who receives the Augsburg Confession from the heart, attaching to its words its own meaning, we acknowledge to be a Lutheran. Any man who in 1865 [date of writing], stands in doctrine where he must have stood in 1530 in order to be recognized by our Confessors as one of them, is a consistent Lutheran. Any man who in 1865 rejects the truths which the Confession accepted, and accepts the errors which the Confession rejected in 1530, is not a true adherent to that Confession, nor a consistent Lutheran.” (*Lutheran and Missionary*, July 13th, 1865.)

And Dr. J. W. Richard, Professor in the General Synod’s Seminary at Gettysburg, uses this strong language with regard to what the General Synod’s subscription to the Augsburg Confession implies:

In thus *heartily* and *unqualifiedly* accepting the Augsburg Confession as her doctrinal basis, and in thus throwing the strongest guards around the teaching from her theological chairs and from her pulpits, the General Synod plants herself firmly and squarely on the *original, generic, catholic* Lutheranism, the Lutheranism on which Luther, Melancthon, Brentz, and other great reformers had agreed to stand, and on which they did stand, though, as is well known, they held different *shades* of view in reference to some doctrines embraced in their common Confession. Thus the Augsburg Confession, just that, no more, no less; the creed which gave distinctive life and doctrinal character to the Lutheran Church, is the doctrinal standard of the General Synod." (*Magazine of Christian Literature*, April, 1892.)

In thus accepting the Augsburg Confession only as her doctrinal standard and as the one Lutheran symbol to which alone she demands binding subscription, she, by no means, as some would have us think, has rejected the other Lutheran symbols, or has assumed toward them an attitude of opposition and condemnation. From the spirit and manner in which these other Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church are sometimes alluded to, by some who are most loud-mouthed in their self-constituted championship of what they call "General Synod Lutheranism," one might suppose that they were verily "diabolical" books instead of "symbolical," and that they should at once be treated as were the magical books at Ephesus, or as Luther treated the Pope's bull at the Elster gate of Wittenberg. But in no such adverse spirit or manner has the General Synod ever, in any way, or by slightest intimation, expressed herself, and as long as she is consistent with her own honest acceptance of the Augsburg Confession she never will and never can.¹

Examining the records of her official history, we find repeated expressions by the General Synod of her high esteem for the Symbolical Books other than the Augsburg Confession. The Oath of the first Professor in her Theological Seminary bound him to teach according to the Augsburg Confession *and the Catechisms of Luther*, as a summary and just exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God. In the charge also at his inauguration the Confession was commended to him as a "safe directory to determine upon matters of faith," and he was urged to uphold the individuality and integrity of the Lutheran system. The action also taken by the General Synod in 1833, on the resolution of the Synod of Ohio, declaring its determination to "remain pure Evangelical Lutherans in doctrine, form and discipline, in accordance with the Bible and the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Church," expresses great gratification

“that our brethren in Ohio are determined to remain faithful to the ancient and fundamental landmarks of Lutheranism.” The present oath, also, by which every professor in her Seminary at Gettysburg at his inauguration binds himself, and which he is required to renew every five years, demands subscription *ex animo* not only to the Augsburg Confession but also to the *Small Catechism of Luther*, and binds him not to teach anything either directly or by insinuation which shall appear to him to contradict or to be in any degree more or less remote from these standards. The translation, also, of Schmid’s Doctrinal Theology by Rev. Dr. C. A. Hay, one of the professors in the General Synod’s Seminary at Gettysburg, with the endorsement of its translation and publication by such eminent names in the General Synod as those of Drs. C. P. Krauth, Sr., Baugher, Sr., Morris, Brown, Valentine and Sprecher, shows the high value attached to these symbolical writings by many, at least, in the General Synod. The adoption, also, of this work of Schmid, as a textbook in probably all our General Synod Theological Seminaries, is another indication of the value attached by our theologians to this symbolic literature.

This point, then, I hold, is conclusive beyond all doubt, namely, that while the General Synod has not officially accorded *confessional* authority to the Symbolical Books other than the Augsburg Confession, she has yet in many ways shown her high appreciation of their doctrinal value, and has never intimated that the acceptance of their teachings was in conflict with her own doctrinal basis.

In what light, confessionally, these other Symbolical Writings of the Lutheran Church are regarded by the General Synod, may be readily gathered from the published utterances of many of her leading men. I cite but a few:

DR. F. W. CONRAD: “The Apology of Melancthon, the Catechisms of Luther, the Schmalkald Articles, and the Form of Concord, have received confessional recognition as a development and defense of the Augsburg Confession, by many Lutheran churches. As testimonies of the views of those who accepted them as symbols, they are held in due veneration; and as commentaries they are regarded as the best authorities in expounding Lutheran doctrine, and classed among the Symbolical Books?” (*Luther Memorial Tract.*)

DR. J. W. RICHARD: "The Apology her theologians regard as an exceedingly valuable commentary on the Confession. The Small Catechism is employed in popular instruction. The Large Catechism is esteemed as a good and useful compend of Christian doctrine. The Schmalkald Articles are valued very highly as in part a repetition of several doctrines of the Confession, but more especially as a testimony of our Church against the papal hierarchy. But least of all have the theologians of the General Synod been inclined toward the Form of Concord as a Confession."

What the reasons for this are, he then enumerates,² and adds,

"But while such is the attitude of the General Synod toward the Form of Concord, she is perfectly willing that any person, even one within her own pale, may accept and hold it as his own understanding of all the doctrines it treats; she is not willing that it shall be imposed upon her, or that it shall be exacted as her understanding and explanation of the Augsburg Confession, which she so loyally subscribes, or that it shall be the occasion of driving any one of her children from her bosom." (Magazine of Christian Literature, April, 1892.)

In a most masterly article in the *Quarterly Review*, July, 1887, p. 421, on "Dr. Hodge on the Person of Christ," he writes: "No Lutheran Symbol teaches the absolute *omnipresence* of the human nature of Christ. Baier says: the words which we have just quoted from the Form of Concord 'manifestly describe that omnipresence not as absolute, as an immediate presence with all creatures, without efficacious operation, but as *modified*, or as joined with an efficacious operation and in accordance with the demands of that universal dominion which he exercises according to both natures.' Quenstedt maintains a substantial, efficacious and relative presence, that is, such as the exigencies of His kingdom require, and rejects the notion of a philosophical or abstract presence."

DR. S. A. ORT: "The Form of Concord is a valuable contribution to theological literature, but is not the basis of the General Synod, and never will be. It fixes a certain type of Lutheranism. It expresses the development of the doctrine of the Word of God, exhibited in the Augsburg Confession, wrought out under the conceptions of scholastic philosophy. It is, hence, not a development for all time. The fullness of it is no larger than scholastic philosophy admits. For this reason the General Synod has always maintained that every age must make its own contribution to the development of the Augsburg Confession, and not be bound and limited by any form of development in a particular time and under the influence of a particular philosophy." (*Lutheran Evangelist*, February, 1891.)

DR. SAMUEL, SPRECHER: "I can now say, as I could not formerly, that, like Spener, I can for myself accept the Symbols of the Church without reserve." (*Lutheran Evangelist*, January 15, 1892.)

DR. WILLIAM M. BAUM: (In the "Allentown Case.")

Question: Has the General Synod, or the East Pennsylvania Synod, power to interpret the Augsburg Confession?

Answer: They have.

Question: In making this interpretation, must these Synods have reference to the interpretation contained in the other Symbolical Books, or can they make their own interpretations as they think proper?

Answer: They should have reference to the other Symbolical Books; I think they must have such reference.

Question: If such other Symbolical Books have not been named or recognized in the Constitution of the General Synod, by what authority must they have reference to the interpretations contained in the other Symbolical Books?

Answer: The position of the Symbolical Books in the Lutheran Church gives them that place of authority.

Question: Do you say that the General Synod, or the East Pennsylvania Synod, has no power to adopt an interpretation of the Articles which are at variance with the interpretations contained in the other Books?

Answer: Their Constitution binds them only to the Augsburg Confession; fidelity to the Lutheran Church binds them to make no interpretations contrary to the acknowledged authority of the Symbolical Books.

Question: Has the General Synod constitutional or legal power to interpret the meaning of the Augsburg Confession of Faith, or any of its Articles?

Answer: It has.

Question: In making that interpretation, has it the right to adopt its own sense of the meaning of the Confession, or is it bound in all respects to adhere to the interpretations in the other Symbolical Books?

Answer: It has the right to adopt its own sense of the meaning of the Confession; according to its Constitution it has never adopted all the Symbolical Books, and according to its Constitution it would not be bound in all respects." (*Allentown Church Trial, Defendant's Testimony, pp. 239-240.*)

Other citations might be given, if necessary, in confirmation of the position that while the General Synod gives confessional authority to the Augsburg Confession only, she yet recognizes a very close doctrinal relationship between the Augsburg Confession and all the other Symbolical Books, holding them in high esteem, not as binding Confessions equal in confessional authority with the Augsburg Confession, but as commentaries upon the Augsburg Confession, as re-statements, explanations and defenses of the Augsburg Confession, and as legitimate sources of material for the right or true interpretation of the Augsburg Confession.

This, however, as we all know, is not the sense in which the General Council accepts and holds the Symbolical Books other than the Augsburg Confession. It "receives them all as confessions," as "accordant, pure and Scriptural statements of doctrines," and as "with the unaltered Augsburg Confession in the perfect harmony of one and the same Scriptural faith." It requires subscription also to all these Lutheran confessional writings "in one and the same sense," accepting every statement of doctrine in these Confessions "in their own true, native, original and only sense." (See *Constitution of the General Council.*)

Its doctrinal basis reads as follows:

"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. We accept its statements of truth, as in perfect accordance with the canonical Scriptures. We reject the errors it condemns, and we 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-eminent among such accordant, pure and Scriptural statements of doctrine, by their intrinsic excellence, by the great and necessary ends for which they were prepared, by their historical position, and the general judgment of the Church, are these: the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Schmalkald Articles, the Catechisms of Luther, and the Formula of Concord, all of which are, with the unaltered Augsburg Confession, in the perfect harmony of one and the same Scriptural faith."

The doctrinal basis of the General Synod reads:

“We receive and hold, 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, and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word.”

Any one who will compare those two doctrinal bases, and will, in addition, keep in mind what has been shown to be the attitude of the General Synod towards the Symbolical Books, and the high estimate placed upon them by her representative thinkers and writers, cannot but see that there is very much common doctrinal ground between the General Synod and General Council, or, in other words, that the historic Lutheran faith, as a distinctive doctrinal system, is accepted and held by both bodies. At the same time he must also clearly see that the doctrinal bases of these two bodies are not *identical*, and that there are doctrinal positions and special confessional requirements which are not common.

Turning now to the “Charges” preferred against me, I am said to hold that “the doctrinal position of the General Synod, when rightly interpreted, is identical with that of the General Council.”

This “Charge,” as thus stated, I flatly deny. Even the *Lutheran Evangelist* many and astonishing as have been its accusations against me, has never, I believe, charged me with being an idiot. No one, however, but an idiot would make such a statement as the one contained in this charge. Neither the General Synod, nor the General Council, nor any other body, has ever thought of saying that “the doctrinal position of the General Synod, when rightly interpreted, is identical with that of the General Council.” To say so would, indeed, as the pedantic author of the “Charge” wisely says, be “an unscientific and willful confounding of the two, against their distinct genetic origin and history, and their logical difference;” and who wants to be “unscientific,” or who wishes to confound anything against that mysterious and awe-inspiring something designated a “distinct genetic origin?” I do not, I am sure.

The plain truth is that I am really not very much troubled with the question whether “the doctrinal position of the General Synod, when rightly interpreted, is identical with that of the General Council,” or not. In so far as both are on the doctrinal basis of the Augsburg Confession, which is my

basis, I am with both; and in so far as the General Council is not on that basis, but on a narrower basis, I stand with the General Synod and not with the General Council. Taking the Augsburg Confession, however, as I do, namely, as a Confession whose every article is in some sense fundamental, and interpreting it in its honest, true and original sense, and taking also the other Symbolical Books as I do, namely, as explanations, confirmations and defenses of the Augsburg Confession, and as further exhibitions of the distinctive Lutheran system of faith presented summarily in the Augsburg Confession, the doctrinal bases of these two bodies have, I hold, far more doctrinally in common than they do not thus have, and they agree doctrinally much more than they disagree: a fact in which, I confess, I rejoice with all my heart.

The recalling of a few historic facts will show the truth of this statement.

The General Synod and the Synod of Pennsylvania were a united body for nearly a score of years, and, during all that long period, they were undisturbed by doctrinal differences. Their separation at Fort Wayne, in 1866, was not caused, as can be easily established by testimony from both sides, because of disagreement in doctrine, but wholly and only because of what was deemed by the Synod of Pennsylvania, as an unjust parliamentary ruling. The General Synod, after its organization was effected, most cordially, as is well known, entreated the Synod of Pennsylvania to resume her former relations and continue with the General Synod; and so entirely satisfied, at this time, was the Synod of Pennsylvania with the doctrinal basis of the General Synod, adopted two years before, at York, Penna., that on doctrinal grounds she would never have thought of sundering her relations with the General Synod. This fact must not be forgotten: the dissolution at Fort Wayne was not caused by different doctrinal convictions, and neither body, at that time or since, has held that it was.

Another fact is that both bodies accept the Augsburg Confession as an exhibition of the pure Lutheran Faith, and both also, through representative writers, have declared that a full, honest acceptance, in its true historic sense, of the Augsburg Confession constitutes one a genuine Lutheran. As already quoted, Dr. C. P. Krauth, of the General Council, writes:

“Any man who receives the Augsburg Confession from the heart, attaching to its words its own meaning, we acknowledge to be a Lutheran.”

And Dr. J. A. Brown, of the General Synod, writes,

“If the question were asked of any one of these bodies: ‘What is your Confession of Faith?’ the answer would be — the Augsburg Confession. If the additional question were asked: ‘Nothing more, nothing less than this?’ there would doubtless be explanations to be offered, and some differences of sentiment discovered, just as there would be in regard to the Apostles’ Creed. But the fact still remains, that all agree in receiving and professing this venerable Confession.”

Both bodies, also, as we have seen, although not in the same confessional sense, nor in the same form of subscription, accept the Symbolical Books, other than the Augsburg Confession, as exhibitions of the distinctive faith of the Lutheran Church: the General Council receiving them as confessions and requiring subscription to them, the General Synod attaching no such binding confessional authority to them but receiving them only as valuable commentaries upon the Augsburg Confession and aids to its right interpretation. The general doctrinal basis of the two bodies is, therefore, I hold, the same, and I repeat that that which is doctrinally common to both far exceeds that which is not thus common to them, or in which they differ. Of so much, at least, I am certain: there is infinitely more doctrinally in common, today, between the General Synod and the General Council, than there ever was, or ever will be, between the doctrinal basis of the General Synod, which is the honestly interpreted Augsburg Confession, and the narrow-gauge and utterly un-Lutheran doctrinal basis upon which my assailants stand, which is the old oft-rejected “Definite Platform.”

As further proof of this fact, that the same distinctive system of Lutheran faith is held and taught by both the General Synod and the General Council, we may here, also, appropriately cite the judicial expressions and decisions upon this point given in the celebrated “Allentown Church Case.” That trial was one of great importance in many ways. The question at issue, and upon the decision of which the whole case hinged, was whether the General Synod, and the East Pennsylvania Synod, as an integral part of the General Synod, were genuinely Lutheran bodies. The position taken by the appellant, or the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, was: that the General Synod and the East Pennsylvania Synod, because of so-called “New Measures” which were practiced in some of their churches and which it was claimed were un-Lutheran, and because of the non-acceptance confessionally of the Symbolical Books other than the Augsburg Confession, and because of a

qualified subscription, also, as was claimed, by the General Synod, even to the Augsburg Confession, were not really and truly Lutheran bodies. Most able witnesses, from both bodies, gave testimony under oath, concerning the doctrinal basis of their respective organizations: Drs. Brown, Hay, and Baum from the General Synod, and Drs. C. P. Krauth, B. M. Schmucker, and C. W. Schaeffer from the General Council. The investigation was most minute, searching and thorough. The result of it, bearing upon the matter purely of doctrine, is expressed in the "Master's Report," and in the decision of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, in the following paragraphs, which, although lengthy, I here give in full:

"There are pages of testimony in this case on the Real Presence, transubstantiation, consubstantiation, the mass, the sacraments, confession and absolution, etc., which testimony I do not propose to dwell upon. Its object was to show a doctrinal difference on these points. I have examined it all with care, and find that there is no substantial difference. Section 1 of the doctrinal basis of the East Pennsylvania Synod, (p. 77, Minutes of 1873), is an excellent summary of the views of complainants' witnesses on these points. There was a great battle of words over the Real Presence, and on this question was more delicate hair-splitting than on any other. The truth is, neither party believes Christ is physically present in the elements so as to be the subject of physical mastication. Both believe he is really present; and it is when they attempt to tell you what they mean by "really present" that the trouble begins. One says, there is a sacramental presence of the body and the blood in the bread and wine, and a sacramental union; another says, Christ is present in his glorified body. One thing is settled, the presence of Christ in the elements is a mystery beyond the reach of the finite understanding; and the human mind always runs into desperate confusion when it attempts to solve the infinite. If there is any difference on this point, it is only in explaining a proposition which both parties admit, and the difference is so faint and immaterial, that the Court could not for that reason say one party was not Lutheran, and disturb their title to real estate in consequence." (*Lutheran Quarterly Review*, Vol. VIII., p 21.)

"...The one adopts the Augsburg Confession as a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Word, and of the faith of our church founded upon that Word; while the other declares that the unaltered Augsburg Confession is in all its parts in harmony with the rule of faith and is a correct exhibition of doctrine. Here again is a difference of phraseology without any real difference in substance; as regards the unaltered Augsburg Confession about which so much has been said, it appears that the altered Augsburg Confession has never been extant in this country, and has no standing as a doctrine or faith with any Lutheran congregation here; if it be extant at all, and in use, it must be with European Churches. Again, while the one is silent, the other declares that the Apology, the two Catechisms of Luther, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord, are a faithful development and defense of the doctrines of the Word of God and of the Augsburg Confession. Here again, the Symbolical Books, which have assumed so prominent a place in the complainants' argument, are declared to be only 'a faithful development and a defense of the doctrines of the Word of God and of the Augsburg Confession.' It must be admitted that that which is only a development and defense of the doctrines is surely no part of the doctrine itself. This part of the complainants' argument cannot therefore prevail, because to adopt it, would be to hold, that which is only ancillary, is co-equal with doctrine and faith; the distinction sought to be made does not exist in fact nor substance. The judicial conclusion therefore must be that as regards cardinal doctrines of faith there exists no essential difference between these litigants.

"However astute and elaborate maybe the arguments and opinions of celebrated and learned divines, as to an essential difference between these declarations of faith, it is to be feared that the attempted distinction is so clouded in a haze of subtleties as to be incomprehensible to the judicial mind: for in the Annville church controversy, Judge Pearson did not essay the difficult task, but dismissed the subject with the significant and somewhat provincial remark — "there is scarcely" the Hudibrastic distinction '*twixt tweedle dum and tweedle dee.*'" (*Lutheran Quarterly Review, Vol. viii., pp. 58-59.*)

"All the facts of this separation" — (the separation of the Ministerium of Pennsylvania from the General Synod is referred to) — "will be found in minute detail in a pamphlet entitled 'The Synod of Pennsylvania and the late Convention at Fort Wayne, Ind., 1866,' which is an appendix to the Minutes of the Ministerium for 1866. This book, coming from the Ministerium, would be expected to show the doctrinal character of their withdrawal from the General Synod; but it shows just the contrary. It shows that the dispute was a mixture of parliamentary law and dignity, and to this especial attention is called... On pp. 18 and 19 is 'a clear and succinct statement' of their grievances. This statement comprises nine heads, and there is not in them all a line of complaint on matters of doctrine." (*Lutheran Quarterly Review, Vol. VIII., pp. 14-16.*)

But, with all that is thus doctrinally common between the General Synod and the General Council, no one would say that their doctrinal bases are "identical." There are out-spoken and clearly defined doctrinal differences. These differences have repeatedly been noted and referred to in what has already been said, and it is not necessary to enumerate or to dwell upon them. Briefly, however, it may be said that the doctrinal basis of the General

Council, by virtue especially of its confessional acceptance of all the symbols, and its requirement of subscription to them all, “in every statement of doctrine, in their own true native, original and only sense,” is narrower, more particularistic, and more exclusive than that of the General Synod.

Says Dr. J. W. Richard,

“The General Synod stands on the broad catholic Lutheran basis of the Augsburg Confession, the only generic creed of the Lutheran Church: the General Council has narrowed the generic basis by adding to it the later symbols, and especially the Form of Concord.” (*Magazine of Christian Literature, April, 1886.*)

Recognizing clearly this *difference* in doctrinal basis between the General Synod and the General Council, as well as doctrinal *agreement* between them, I declare now, as I always have declared, that I stand unequivocally upon the doctrinal basis of the General Synod, and hold and teach only what the General Synod herself, in her acceptance of the Augsburg Confession as her symbol of faith, holds and teaches, and what, by her present subscription to that Confession, she not only allows but actually binds me to hold and teach. So firmly do I thus believe myself in heartiest accord with the doctrinal basis of the General Synod, as she has defined and determined it for herself in her acceptance of the Augsburg Confession, that I recognize myself among her truest and most loyal sons, and am astonished that my devotion to her should by any one who is intelligent enough to know what her true doctrinal basis is, and who himself heartily accepts that basis, be called in question.

I cannot better express my doctrinal position, as a loyal General Synod Lutheran, than I have already done in my published statement of October 31st, 1892, addressed to the Hon. J. L. Zimmerman, President of the Board of Directors of Wittenberg College. In that “statement” I declare my position as follows:

HON. JOHN L. ZIMMERMAN, *President of the Board of Directors of Wittenberg College.*

"Dear Brother: Four years ago I was elected by the Board of Directors of Wittenberg College to the Chair of Practical Theology. On the occasion of my inauguration, I solemnly, before God, took upon myself the obligation prescribed by the Board and administered by its President and Secretary. In taking upon myself this obligation I declared my belief in the Augsburg Confession as a correct exhibition of the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God, and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word, and I promised to teach and vindicate these doctrines and principles in opposition to all errorists.

"During the past nine months it has, however, been alleged in public print and by individual assertion that I am unfaithful to the obligations required of professors in Wittenberg Theological Seminary. I am charged, on the ground of private utterances and of public expressions before the Board in June last, with holding opinions inconsistent with and contrary to the doctrinal position of the General Synod, that in those opinions I glory, and that I teach them to the students under my tuition.

"In order that no misapprehension may be entertained on the part of the Board, whose servant I am and to whom alone I am amenable, and to quiet any possible distrust on their part, with regard to myself, which may have been created by these charges against me, I think it proper to make the following declaration:

"1. I stand unequivocally on the doctrinal basis of the General Synod, and hold myself as being faithful to the oath of office assumed at my inauguration.

"2. I reject two extremes:

- a. A doctrinal development for the General Synod based upon special apprehensions of some of the Articles of the Augsburg Confession as expressed in the Form of Concord.
- b. A doctrinal development for the General Synod based on the 'Definite Platform;' and I repudiate all interpretation of the Augsburg Confession which would in any way diminish or destroy its doctrinal integrity.

"The Form of Concord I esteem as a most excellent contribution to theological literature, but I have never attached to it binding confessional authority, neither have I esteemed it word for word, article for article, the only logical sequence of the final development of the Augustana, and do not now. I have never held nor taught that it ought to be received by the General Synod as a binding Confession, and do not now. I glory in my convictions as a distinctive and positive Lutheran, that is, in that distinctive doctrinal system determined by the Confession at Augsburg. These convictions I have always had, and have now. In holding these convictions I have, however, never contemplated, and do not now contemplate, a change in the doctrinal basis of the General Synod, nor do they have their source elsewhere than in the Augsburg Confession, pure and simple, received in good faith.

"My teaching to the theological students of Wittenberg Seminary has been in accordance with these declarations, the students themselves being witnesses.

"In conclusion, I ask you, as President of the Board, that I be given the opportunity, as soon as you may deem best, to make a full declaration to the Board of my position as a teacher in a Theological Seminary of the General Synod, and also that I may obtain from the Board that protection which is due me, as its servant, against the untruthful charges respecting my doctrinal loyalty to the General Synod. – L. A. GOTWALD.

Wittenberg Theological Seminary, Springfield, O., October 31st, 1892."

By this "*Declaration of Loyalty to the General Synod*," I honestly and unflinchingly stand, and the position which I then declared as my doctrinal position I still declare to be my position. There I stand, and there "unless refuted and convicted by testimonies of the Scriptures or by clear arguments," I will also continue to stand all my days. I hold, and will also teach, our pure historic Lutheran Faith as contained and expressed in the Augsburg Confession. This the General Synod gives me full liberty to do,³ and this both my ordination vow and my solemn oath at my inauguration to my professorship bind me to do, and this, therefore, God helping me, I will also faithfully do. If it has come to be a crime for one calling himself a Lutheran, and solemnly swearing to hold and teach our pure or distinctive Lutheran Faith, to be what he thus calls himself and to do what he has thus sworn to do, we are, indeed, fallen upon degenerate times in our Lutheran Church, and our General Synod is in a truly deplorable condition. But no! I wrong our General Synod to intimate such a thing. To be thus a true and positive Lutheran, holding firmly to our distinctive Lutheran faith, is not regarded a crime in our General Synod, but is more and more esteemed the glory of all who compose her ministry and who fill her places of authority and trust. The General Synod is, today, thank God! in her avowed doctrinal basis, thoroughly Lutheran, and those only, therefore, are worthy to be her teachers, either in the pulpit, or editorial room, or professor's chair, who are also thus thoroughly Lutheran and are at heart true as steel to the doctrinal basis which she has entrusted to them to defend for her. To any who, for any reason, cannot or will not thus stand loyally with the General Synod upon the doctrinal basis of the Augsburg Confession, the General Synod says: "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and it opens outward;" and she bids them quietly to follow the example of those of whom John, in his

first epistle, writes: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for, if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

1. The New York *Independent*, of May 4th, 1893, in a discriminating review of “The Distinctive Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States,” says: “The differences which separate the various branches of Lutheranism are understood by but few persons outside that communion. It is a special merit of this book that it presents them clearly. Each writer seems to have taken pains, not only to bring out what is distinctive in his branch, but to state it in plain terms. One does not have to read far nor long to see that confessionalism is the great characteristic of Lutheranism. At a time when the creeds of most other denominations have come to be regarded as more or less antiquated, and therefore to be held less rigidly or else revised, Lutherans manifest an increasing love and enthusiasm for their venerated symbols, particularly the Augsburg Confession. It is true that the differences among them are due to the degree of strictness with which they accept these symbols and enforce particular interpretations of them; but no one of the general bodies regards the Confession as an antiquated, inadequate or incorrect expression of Biblical doctrine. Beginning with the General Synod, which does not require subscription to the Formula of Concord, and which is, perhaps, most American in spirit, friendly in attitude toward orthodox Protestantism, and representative of the evangelistic fervor of Spener and Arndt, the general bodies may be ranged in succession, according to their type of confessionalism. The General Synod accepts the Confession and all that the Confession teaches; as to the particularities of the other symbols it allows full liberty.”↵
2. It is, however, a little difficult to reconcile Dr. Richard as he expresses himself in this magazine article with Dr. Richard as he has expressed himself elsewhere. In this article, speaking of the Form of Concord, he says: “It teaches in the *Epitome* the absolute ubiquity of the human nature of Christ, thus predicating an infinite attribute of a finite nature. This doctrine was disapproved by Melanchthon and denied by

Chemnitz, one of the authors of the Form of Concord, who, with the Saxon Churches generally, acknowledged only a potential presence (*volipresence, multipresence*) of the human nature of Christ as is taught in the Solid Declaration. Thus the Form of Concord is affirmed to be in conflict with itself.”↵

3. “In the adoption of the Augsburg Confession alone as its basis, the General Synod allows full liberty to persons within it to accept for themselves any or all of the special doctrinal views, even down to the minutest particulars, of the rest of the so-called symbols. Its mode and measure of confessional subscription excludes no one, as it oppresses no one. Nothing can exclude him, except his personal unwillingness to hold fellowship and co-operate in church work with brethren who fail to agree exactly with his own accepted explanation of each and every aspect of Lutheran teaching, making fellowship and co-operation dependent on being able, or allowed, to impose his own particular conceptions on all his brethren. The General Synod’s basis is thus wisely and lovingly adapted to unite *all real Lutherans*. They are invited to stand and work together, in the use and concession of liberty, on the common ground of the Church’s great system of doctrine. The only limitation of the liberty of those who believe and accept for themselves even every specification of the Form of Concord, is the disallowance of a sometimes assumed right of imposing their particularity or particularities upon the rest; or the use of the freedom and places of trust of the General Synod to abridge or subvert its liberal, generic, catholic basis and spirit, for a contracted and intolerant one. The exclusion of such intolerent temper and demand is essential at once to the General Synod’s catholic basis itself, and to the permanence of its own existence.” (Dr. M. Valentine, in *Doctrines and Usages of the General Bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States*," pp. 43-44.)↵

III. Lutheran Confessionalism In The General Synod In Respect To The Distinctive Doctrines Of The Lutheran Church.

What the General Synod regards as the doctrinal character and teaching, or the real confessional content, of the Augsburg Confession, she has clearly expressed both negatively and positively, both by declaring what that good symbol does not teach and what it does teach.

Her negative expression, in this respect was given in most emphatic terms when she indignantly repudiated, " as she did, the Definite Platform," in which the Augsburg Confession was charged with teaching a number of alleged errors, and because of which the churches of the General Synod were modestly asked to give up the grand old Confession, and adopt in its stead a mere mutilated caricature of it, called, forsooth, the "American Recension of the Augsburg Confession."

I do not forget the Latin maxim: "*De mortuis nil nisi bonum;*" and yet how severely, even at this late day, it does tax one's equanimity to think and speak kindly of that now happily defunct and buried document. However honestly meant by the great and good men who issued it, its publication was a grave mistake, and inflicted wrong both upon the Augsburg Confession and upon the Lutheran Church.

Its Introduction (pp. 4, 5,) reads as follows:

"The following American Recension of the Augsburg Confession, has been prepared, by consultation and co-operation of a number of Evangelical Lutheran ministers of Eastern and Western Synods be longing to the General Synod, at the special request of Western brethren, whose churches particularly need it, being intermingled with German churches, which avow the whole mass of the former symbols. In this revision, not a single sentence has been added to the Augsburg Confession, whilst those several aspects of doctrine have been omitted, which have long since been regarded by the great mass of our churches as unscriptural, and as remnants of Romish error.

"The only errors contained in the Confession (which are all omitted in this Recension) are:

"I. The Approval of the Ceremonies of the Mass.

"2. Private Confession and Absolution.

"3. Denial of the Divine Obligation of the Christian Sabbath.

"4. Baptismal Regeneration.

"5. The Real Presence of the Body and Blood of the Saviour in the Eucharist.

"With these few exceptions, we retain the entire Augsburg Confession, with all the great doctrines of the Reformation."

This Introduction, among other resolutions, contains also the following, which was recommended to the Synods for adoption:

"*Resolved*, That we will not receive into our Synod any minister who will not adopt this Platform, and faithfully labor to maintain its discipline in his charge." (p. 6.)

There was *liberty* for you, indeed! Talk about "narrowness" and "exclusiveness," and "the *Un-Catholicity of the Galesburg Rule*" after that! This was not shutting ministers of other churches out of Lutheran pulpits, but it was shutting Lutheran Ministers even of the General Synod out of General Synod Lutheran pulpits, and shutting them out only because they were really Lutheran: an experience which some of us, even in this day, and for the same cause, have had from the same class of men.

But, to the credit of the General Synod, let it be always remembered that this proposed "Recension," notwithstanding the high character and great personal influence of its authors, was almost unanimously rejected by her churches and District Synods. Only three Synods, out of the twenty-five then composing the General Synod, adopted it, while many others, in severe terms, condemned and rejected it. Conspicuous among those who thus condemned and rejected it was the East Pennsylvania Synod, by which body, at its meeting at Lebanon, Pa., in 1855, the following resolutions, offered by Rev. Dr. J. A. Brown, afterward Professor in the Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, were unanimously passed:

"WHEREAS, An anonymous pamphlet, entitled "Definite Synodical Platform," has been very widely circulated in the Church, and has been transmitted to the members of this Synod generally; *and*

"WHEREAS, The inevitable tendency of this production is to agitate, distract and divide the Church by the introduction of changes of the gravest character in the confessional position and ecclesiastical and fraternal relations of the various sections of the Lutheran Church towards each other; *and*

"WHEREAS, This Synod most deeply deprecates such an agitation, and recoils with mingled alarm and abhorrence from the intolerant and prescriptive principles here avowed and proposed for introduction into the organic structure of our Church by the adoption of such a creed, and its arbitrary enforcement upon pain of exclusion from church fellowship of all who will not sanction the system thus proposed. Therefore,

“Resolved, That we hereby express our most unqualified disapprobation of this most dangerous attempt to change the doctrinal basis and revolutionize the existing character of the Lutheran Churches now united in the General Synod, and that we hereby most solemnly warn our sister synods against this dangerous proposition, express our most earnest hope that none of them will either engage in or countenance such an agitation, but will use increased diligence ‘to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace’ with their brethren in all parts of the Lutheran Church who hold to the great Evangelical doctrines of the Reformation, that we may, if possible, be daily drawn more closely to each other in faith and love, and thus be prepared to labor more efficiently in all those high and holy enterprises for the edification of the Church and the conversion of the world, to which the providence of God and the plain teachings of the gospel direct us.”

But the General Synod herself also, as her own official act, declared her condemnation of the charge of such errors in the Augsburg Confession, thus made against it by the Definite Platform. At her twenty-fifth Convention, in York, Penna., in May, 1864, immediately after the adoption of an amendment to her Constitution by which her subscription to the Augsburg Confession was changed to its present form, the General Synod adopted " also the following preamble and resolutions in reference to alleged errors in the Augsburg Confession:"

"WHEREAS, The General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States has recognized the Augsburg Confession, both in the Constitution of the Theological Seminary and in the Constitution recommended to District Synods, as well as in her Liturgy, *and*

"WHEREAS, Our Churches have been agitated by the imputation of grave and dangerous errors in this Confession, so that amid conflicting statements many who are sincerely desirous of knowing the truth are distracted, knowing not what to believe, and the danger of internal conflict and schism is greatly increased, *and*

"WHEREAS, The General Synod, according to its Constitution, 'shall apply all their powers, their prayers and their means towards the prevention of schisms among us,' we therefore, in Synod assembled, in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, desire to declare to our churches and before the world, our judgment in regard to the imputation of these errors and the alienation among brethren which may arise from them:

*“Resolved, That while this Synod, resting on the Word of God as the sole authority in matters of faith, on its infallible warrant rejects the Romish doctrine of the Real Presence or Transubstantiation, and with it the doctrine of Consubstantiation, rejects the Romish mass, and all ceremonies distinctive of the mass; denies any power in the Sacraments, as an *opus operatum*, or that the blessings of Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper, can be received without faith; rejects auricular confession and priestly absolution; holds that there is no priesthood on earth but that of all believers, and that God only can forgive sins, and maintains the divine obligations of the Sabbath; and while we would with our whole heart reject any part of any Confession which taught doctrines in conflict with this, our testimony; nevertheless, before God and His Church, we declare, that in our judgment, the Augsburg Confession, properly interpreted, is in perfect consistence with this our testimony and with the Holy Scriptures as regards the errors specified.”* (*Minutes, 1864, pp. 39, 40.*)

In language thus clear and unequivocal has our General Synod defended both herself and the Augsburg Confession against the errors charged by the Definite Platform. She denied that the Augsburg Confession, properly interpreted, contained such errors, and resented the implication that she, by her adoption of it in its unmutilated integrity, and by her reception of it in its original and accepted historic sense, held and taught them.

But the General Synod has also given *positive* expression to her full and true acceptance of the Augsburg Confession. In various ways she has declared that whatever doctrines it holds and teaches she holds and teaches. It is *her* Confession; she has, without change of any kind in its text, *adopted* it; what it confesses, she, therefore, also confesses. She has not, it is true, given officially her specific interpretation of each Article of the Confession, and she has not tabulated and labeled each doctrine contained in it and said to the Churches: “This is what is here meant and taught;” but she has adopted the Confession, has assumed that it speaks for itself, and has taken for granted that no one can mistake its doctrinal teachings who does not, for some reason, *will* to mistake them. Besides, she has also, in various ways, expressed what she does regard the Confession as teaching. By her present and explicit form of subscription to that Confession, by her wise use of the other confessional writings of the Lutheran Church as helpful expositions of it, by the explanations of it given by many of her representative teachers and writers, by her instruction of the young with Luther’s Catechism as her

textbook, by all these different methods of expressing herself, and by yet other methods, the General Synod has clearly and unequivocally borne witness to the fact that she both *knows* what the doctrinal teachings of the Augsburg Confession are, and that she, in good faith, *accepts* and confesses them as her teachings. It is not, therefore, the General Synod that is, at present, perplexed to determine her doctrinal latitude and longitude; it is only a few bewildered spirits *in* the General Synod who are beginning to wonder why, with their utterly un-Lutheran Creed, they are calling themselves Lutherans. The incongruity of their “environment” is forcing itself upon them, and they are seeking to make something give way so as to secure for themselves a more comfortable adjustment of their ecclesiastical and doctrinal surroundings. I do not wonder at their doing so, but would do so myself, if I stood doctrinally where they stand.

In the “Charges” preferred against me, much is said about different “Types of Lutheranism.” We are told about the “Type of Lutheranism that dictated the establishment of Wittenberg College,” about the “Type of Lutheranism which accords with the historic Lutheranism of Wittenberg College and of the General Synod,” and then we are told also of another very dreadful kind of Lutheranism designated as the “Type of Lutheranism characteristic of the General Council.” The assumption, of course, here is that such different “Types of Lutheranism” really exist, and that each can be easily and sharply discriminated from every other, just as one might sort out from a great miscellaneous pile of apples any kind you wish, pippin, bell-flower, sheep-nose, seek-no-farther, or whatever species you want.

It is, however, to be regretted that the good brethren, who have evidently given special thought to this subject of “Types,” were not, in their paper, a little more specific. One cannot but wish that they had told us exactly what all these different “Types” are, wherein exactly they differ from each other or agree with each other, and especially that they had told us, once for all, very specifically, what the Type of Lutheranism is which *they*, and those agreeing with them, hold. A clear answer to this last question would, indeed, throw a flood of light upon many aspects of the dispute between us, and would probably make very clear the real ground of the attack made in the “Charges” against me.

And it is, also, to be regretted that this insistence that I do not accept what the paper calls “the Type of Lutheranism that dictated the establishment of Wittenberg College and the General Synod,” conies so late

in the day. The proper and right time to have talked about such a distinct “Type,” and to have questioned me concerning it, would have been at the time of my election to my Chair. No such question, however, was then even remotely raised. Not a single word even was then breathed about this Lutheran “Type” business. I was not asked by the Board whether I accepted the “Type of Lutheranism that dictated the establishment of Wittenberg College,” nor was I asked to pledge myself to teach only what those most excellent and godly men, Drs. Keller and Sprecher, taught. Nothing whatever was then exacted from me that binds me to teach not only against “the views of Atheists, Deists, Socinians, Unitarians, Arians, Universalists, Antinomians, Pelagians, Anabaptists, and Papists,” but also and especially against General Council Lutherans and the General Council “Type” of Lutheranism.

On the contrary, I was only asked, in my oath of inauguration, to declare my belief and acceptance of “the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and the Augsburg Confession to be a correct exhibition of the fundamental Doctrines of that Word, and of the faith of our Church founded upon that Word.” That was all. Not a word about “Types.”

And thus also, in my Inaugural Address delivered before the Board, two thousand copies of which were published by order of the Board, I declared that I would teach, and would also teach my students to teach. That “Address” gave no uncertain sound as to my positive Lutheranism. Among other things bearing upon this point, I used the following language:

“The training, therefore, of men for the Lutheran ministry, I do not hesitate to say, should be distinctly and positively Lutheran, both in doctrine and ritual; and should be so specifically Lutheran that they will be specifically fitted to occupy Lutheran pulpits, and minister at Lutheran altars, and be able easily and effectively to adapt themselves in all respects to our distinctive Lutheran faith and usages. And hence the one place, also, above all others, best fitted to prepare a candidate for the Lutheran ministry is a distinctively and positively Lutheran Theological Seminary, where he will be thoroughly grounded in our Lutheran dogmatic theology, and will be thrilled with the glory of our Lutheran history, and will be instructed in the use of all our distinctive and precious Lutheran ordinances and worship: Our ‘Infant Baptism’ and ‘Home Religious Culture,’ and ‘Catechisation,’ and ‘Confirmation,’ and ‘Liturgical Services,’ and ‘Holy Church Festivals,’ and quiet ‘Reverence for God’s House,’ and unquestioning ‘Faith in His Word,’ and ‘Joyous Feeding upon Christ in His Sacrament of the Supper,’ and where he will, in his whole being, come under the sway and molding power of the distinctive genius and force of a genuine Lutheran Church life, and from which he will go out to his work with a deep Lutheran self-consciousness and self-respect, and with the moral heroism and devotion of a brave and persistent Lutheran self-assertion! Adaptation of Lutheran ministers for the special work of Lutheran Churches, according to Lutheran doctrine and Lutheran cultus, this, I hold, is the practical result which should ever be aimed at in all our Lutheran Seminaries.” (*Inaugural Address, pp. 34, 35.*)

I confess, therefore, that I know nothing of all these suggested but undefined different “Types of Lutheranism,” of which the paper speaks, and because, as is alleged, of my holding the one “Type,” and not holding the opposite “Type,” I am declared “disqualified” for my position, and asked to resign. The one only Lutheranism of which I know, and which I hold and teach, and of which only the General Synod knows and holds and teaches, is the true, honest, unadulterated, unmutilated and uncurtailed Lutheranism of the Augsburg Confession, not a “Type” of the thing, but the thing *itself*; not “Definite Platform” Lutheranism, or “*Lutheran Evangelist*” Lutheranism, but the Lutheranism of Luther and of the Reformation, the same, today, in 1893, that it was in 1530, when its heroic confession by the noble Reformers before the mightiest potentates of earth broke the shackles with which Rome had enslaved the Christian world, and restored again to the wronged Church of Christ the pure Gospel faith of primitive or apostolic piety.

With the Augsburg Confession, therefore, as the acknowledged doctrinal standard of the General Synod, and as the one only confessional standard in accordance with which I am sacredly pledged, as Professor in this Theological Seminary, to teach, I stand ready to meet and vindicate myself against this entire attack which, because of my “teaching and spirit” has been made against me. I maintain that I hold no other doctrinal position

than the doctrinal position of the General Synod, and that I teach only what the Augsburg Confession, interpreted in its plain, honest sense, teaches, that body of divinity or system of Christian theology known historically as the Lutheran system in distinction from all other systems.

Hence, if charged, as I have been, with holding and teaching certain distinctive Lutheran Doctrines, in their true historic Lutheran sense, I have but one answer to give, namely, I do so hold and teach. Every doctrine contained in the Augsburg Confession I receive as divine truth and teach it as such. The doctrine of the Trinity; the entire corruption of human nature by sin; eternal death as the punishment of the depravity with which we are born, except where God's remedy for this depravity has been applied by divine grace imparting faith in Christ; the helplessness of man in his natural state to do aught to please God or prepare himself for grace; the inseparable union of the human and divine natures in the Person of Christ; the universality and completeness of His work of redemption; justification by faith alone without works; the Word and Sacraments as the means whereby the Holy Spirit imparts saving faith; the new obedience or good works as the necessary and inevitable fruits of faith and justification; the ordinate necessity of baptism to salvation; the regenerating and the renewing influences of the Holy Spirit in baptism, continued, unless repelled by unbelief, throughout the entire life; the presence of the true Body and Blood of Christ, after a supernatural manner, in the Lord's Supper, imparted and received, through the means of the bread and wine, by all communicants, by believing communicants to the strengthening of their faith, and by the unbelieving to their judgment; the Church, as properly so called, the assembly only of believers, although in outward organization with it many unbelievers and hypocrites are mingled; all these are doctrines of God's Word, contained in the Augsburg Confession, and held and taught by the Lutheran Church. (*St. Stephens Tracts, No. 1.*) All these, therefore, and all other doctrines of God's Word contained in that Confession, and embraced in our Lutheran doctrinal system, ought every one who has subscribed the Augsburg Confession, honestly accept and faithfully teach.

Several of these distinctive Lutheran doctrines, thus contained in the Augsburg Confession, seem, however, to be especially offensive to the signers of the paper against me, and my acknowledged acceptance of them is made a special ground of objection to my longer occupancy of the Chair of Practical Theology in Wittenberg Theological Seminary. In view of this,

it will there fore be necessary, I suppose, to state briefly what I really do hold and teach upon these doctrines, and show that my views upon them are in entire accord with our Augsburg Confession, and have in them nothing what ever that is Romish, but only what is thoroughly Protestant, Lutheran and Scriptural.

a. Baptismal Regeneration.

I have been repeatedly charged by those presenting this paper with holding and teaching the Doctrine of *Baptismal Regeneration*. Do I so hold and teach? I answer, understood in the sense understood by the Confessors themselves at Augsburg, and received and held in the sense in which it has always been received and held by the Lutheran Church, I do most heartily hold and teach what may properly be designated as the Doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration.

Baptism is a Sacrament, and a Sacrament is a “religious ordinance instituted by Jesus Christ, in the proper administration of which, through external signs and the words of its institution, God offers and communicates His grace, and seals the promise of the Gospel.” (*Conrad’s Catechism*.) “By the Word and Sacraments,” says the Augsburg Confession, “as by instruments, the Holy Spirit is given, who worketh faith where and when it pleaseth God in those who hear the Gospel.” Gerhard defines a Sacrament to be “a sacred act and solemn action, divinely instituted, by which God, through the ministry of man, dispenses heavenly gifts, under a visible and external element, through a certain word, in order to offer, apply and seal to those using them and believing, the special promise of the Gospel concerning the gratuitous remission of sins.” (*Loci, Vol. VIII, p. 328.*)

Baptism, therefore, according to our Lutheran conception and definition, is not, as the Zwinglian teaches, a mere external sign of an inward grace, but is, by divine appointment, a means of that grace. It not only symbolizes that washing of regeneration which man needs in order to be saved, but is also the instrument by which ordinarily the Holy Spirit produces that blessed effect. In Baptism God gives, and the subject receives, the saving grace which, in His Word, He has connected with it, and has, through it, promised to give.

By “Baptismal Regeneration,” therefore, or, as I would prefer to designate it, by “Baptismal Grace,” I mean those gracious effects, wrought

by the Holy Spirit, through Baptism, as a divinely ordained instrumentality for this purpose, which consist of, or constitute within the one baptized, a new spiritual life, place him in new and saving relation to God, and secure to him the forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal salvation.

Baptismal Regeneration, thus evangelically apprehended, Luther teaches:

“Baptism is not mere water, but it is that water which the ordinance of God enjoins and which is connected with God’s Word; it causes,” (that is, it is one of the appointed means for obtaining) “the forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to those that believe, as the word and promise of God declare.” (*Small Catechism.*)

Thus the Augsburg Confession teaches:

“Original sin is truly sin, and still condemns and causes eternal death to those who are not born again by Baptism and the Holy Spirit.” “Our Churches teach that Baptism is necessary to salvation; that through Baptism the grace of God is offered; and that children are to be baptized, who, being by Baptism offered to God, are received into His favor.” (*Articles II. and IX.*)

And thus, above all, the Word of God teaches:

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;” “he that believeth and is *baptized* shall be saved;” “repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost;” “and now, why tarriest thou? *arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins*, calling on the name of the Lord;” “Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it *with the washing of water* by the word;” “by the *washing of regeneration* and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

It is, indeed, simply wonderful how clearly the Scriptures teach this doctrine of Baptismal Grace, and how closely they connect Baptism, as a means, with salvation. Let any one who doubts this, take his Bible and study honestly the following passages: John 3:3-5; Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:37-39; Acts 22:10, 16; Romans 6:1-4; Colossians 2:12, 13; Ephesians 5:25, 26; Titus 3:5; Galatians 3:26, 27; Hebrews 10:21, 22; 1 Peter 3:21; 1 Corinthians 10:1-11; and 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13.

Our Augsburg Confession, in Article IX, reads: “Of Baptism they teach that it is necessary to salvation.” What precisely is meant by this? The

meaning is that ordinarily, not absolutely, it is necessary.

Says Dr. F. W. Conrad (Holman Lectures, page 300):

“Baptism was not regarded by the Confessors as necessary *per se*, but as a means through which God offers His grace; not necessary unconditionally, but conditioned upon the possibility of receiving it; not necessary absolutely, but ordinarily, as a moral obligation, interposed by the word and institution of Christ.”

Says Dr. Charles P. Krauth:

“The necessity of the outward part of Baptism is not the absolute one of the Holy Spirit, who Himself works regeneration, but is the ordinary necessity of the precept, and of the means. It is necessary because God has enjoined it, and voluntary neglect to do what God has enjoined destroys man. It is necessary because God has connected a promise with it, and he who voluntarily neglects to seek God’s promises in God’s connections will look in vain for them else where. It is necessary because God makes it one of the ordinary channels of His grace, and he who voluntarily turns from the ordinary channel to seek grace elsewhere, will seek it in vain. It is so necessary on our part that we may not, we dare not, neglect it.” (*Conservative Reformation*, pp. 430-431.)

The Lutheran Church, therefore, does *not* teach, as has been charged against her, that all unbaptized infants are lost. On the contrary, she holds that while regeneration is generally wrought in infants by Baptism, it is not necessarily always so, but may be wrought also extraordinarily, by an operation of the Holy Spirit without means. Not the absence of Baptism, but the contempt of it, as an ordinance and command of God, condemns.

How utterly different, therefore, this true Lutheran doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration is from the Romish doctrine concerning it. Rome teaches that Baptism is regeneration: Lutheranism teaches that it is a means of regeneration. Rome teaches that Baptism contains *in itself* the grace of regeneration: the Lutheran Church teaches that it is *the Holy Ghost* who alone regenerates. Rome teaches that Baptism is *absolutely* necessary to regeneration, and that no one unbaptized can be saved: we, as Lutherans, teach that Baptism is God’s *ordinary* means of salvation, but not necessarily His *only* way. Rome teaches that Baptism releases only from the condemnation of *original* sin: we Lutherans, that it instrumentally saves from *all* sin; Rome, that to secure its benefits *faith is unnecessary*, but that it works of its own accord, in a magical way: we, that its benefits are

secured *only through faith*; Rome, that Baptismal Grace *can never be lost*; we, that it may be, and also often is lost.

Those, therefore, who know what “Baptismal Regeneration” is as held by the Lutheran Church, and also what it is as held by the Romish Church, will not, if they are honest, charge those of us who hold the Lutheran view of it, with “going towards Rome.” A charge such as that is born either of ignorance or of malice, or probably of both, and should hush itself into silence from very shame.

And this doctrine of “Baptismal Regeneration,” I yet add, is not only the doctrine of our Lutheran Church generally, but is clearly and emphatically the doctrine also of our General Synod.

In the “Order of Salvation,” in our General Synod’s Catechism, the following questions and answers occur:

“Question 88. ‘How does the Holy Ghost enlighten and sanctify us?’ ‘The Holy Ghost works in us Faith in Christ, and makes us entirely new creatures.’

“Question 92. ‘When did the Holy Ghost begin this sanctification in you?’ ‘In the holy ordinance of Baptism the Holy Ghost began this sanctification in me.’ Titus 3:5, 7.

“Question 93. ‘What did God promise you in holy Baptism?’ God promised, and also bestowed upon me, the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.’ Acts 2:38, 1 Peter 3:21.”

Says Dr. J. A. Brown, of Gettysburg:

“The Lutheran Church holds to the necessity of Baptism and that it is a Means of Grace.”

Dr. S. A. Ort writes:

“The Lutheran view of the Sacraments, as means of grace, repudiates the Romish theory and maintains that it is the Holy Ghost who alone regenerates and sanctifies; and this is the doctrine which our Church has always confessed, in opposition to the Roman view of Baptism and Regeneration.”

Dr. J. W., Richard, of Gettysburg, writes:

“This Article,” [namely, Article IX, of the Augsburg Confession,] “teaches that grace is offered through Baptism, by which is meant that Baptism is a means of grace through which the Holy Ghost offers, conveys and seals salvation; that, in fact, the grace offered in Baptism is conveyed and sealed when there is faith in the recipient. This, at least, is the Lutheran interpretation of the Article; but no Lutheran teaches ‘Baptismal Regeneration’ in the sense, ‘baptized, therefore regenerated.’” (*Concise Dictionary of Religious Knowledge*, p. 521.)

And Dr. M. Valentine, also of Gettysburg, writes:

“Baptism is distinctly the Sacrament of Regeneration and Renewal; that is, it exhibits, applies and administers renewing and sanctifying grace.” (*Outlines of Theology*, p. 232.)

But I will not weary either myself or others by any further citations. Time would fail me to tell of all our General Synod Gideons and Baraks and Samsons and Jephthahs and Davids and Samuels, true Lutheran prophets, every one of them, who hold and teach this good Lutheran doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, and who would not call themselves Lutherans if they did not thus hold and teach it. The amazing feature in connection with this whole matter is that such a statement and defense of the doctrine should at all have been made necessary, and that men who wear the Lutheran name should so dishonor their name and Church as to charge one holding and teaching this doctrine with disloyalty and wrong in so doing.

b. The Real Presence in the Lord’s Supper.

Article X. of the Augsburg Confession, as given in the General Synod’s “Book of Worship,” reads: “In regard to the Lord’s Supper they teach that the Body and Blood of Christ are truly present, and are dispensed to the Communicants in the Lord’s Supper; and they disapprove those who teach otherwise.”

What is the Doctrine taught in this Article? The language is so plain in itself, and the authors of the Confession have, in their other writings, so clearly and fully expressed their sentiments on the subject, that there cannot possibly be any misunderstanding its meaning. The Article teaches clearly the doctrine of the Real Presence: or, in other words, that the Lord’s Supper is not merely a commemorative ordinance, nor is it merely a spiritual feast in which Christians only partake of Christ by faith, but that it

is the eating and drinking of the true glorified body and blood of our Lord under the bread and wine, as it was instituted by Christ Himself.

In Holman Lectures, p. 327, Dr. George Diehl says:

"The Article teaches that the true Body and Blood of Christ are present in a supernatural way, under the forms of bread and wine, and are received by the communicant. By the true body is to be understood, not the material body and blood; — not the earthly, or gross or carnal body; — not such material flesh and blood as ours;— not the material body and blood in the form and state in which Jesus wore His body on the earth before His crucifixion; but that which constitutes His body and blood since His descent into hell, His resurrection, and ascension to heaven, — His glorified human nature, — that body and blood which is spiritual and celestial.

"This stands in opposition and contrast to the Romish theory of Transubstantiation, that the consecration of the elements by the priest changes them into the body and blood of Christ. This is rejected on the ground of reason and Scripture. No change in the properties of the elements can be detected by the senses or by chemical analysis. And Paul calls it after consecration, 'The bread which we break.'

"This doctrine is also opposed to the Zwinglian theory, which makes the Eucharist merely commemorative, and the presence of Christ merely spiritual.

"It is also opposed to the Calvinistic doctrine which, admitting that the believing communicant eats and drinks the true body and blood of Christ, yet contends that the participation is by faith of the body of Christ in heaven, the local presence being only at the right hand of God.

"Distinct from all and each of these views, the Tenth Article of the Augsburg Confession teaches that the true body and blood of Christ are in the sacrament, and communicated to those who eat and drink in the holy supper, whether they have penitence and faith, or are unbelieving and wicked — whether worthy or unworthy — the efficacy of the sacramental presence being objective, and not depending on the spiritual state of the communicant; keeping in view always that the heavenly or true body and blood of Christ impart to the believing or worthy communicant spiritual life and salvation, while to the unbeliever or unworthy communicant they impart judgment and condemnation.

The mode or manner of this Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, we, as Lutherans, do not attempt to define. It is not by *Transubstantiation*, or change of substance. Nor is it by *Consubstantiation*, or a change into one substance. Nor is it by what has been called *Impanation*, or a local presence of Christ in the bread and wine. We know not *how* He is present. We simply, by faith in the Word of God which assures us of His presence,

accept the fact that He is present, and do not seek to explain its nature. We call it a “Real Presence,” in a sacramental manner, which we do not understand.

This doctrine of the Real Presence in the Lord’s Supper, thus taught in the Augsburg Confession, and repeatedly stated and defended in all our other Lutheran Symbols, is an emphatic and distinctive doctrine of the Lutheran Church. Every Lutheran dogmatician, from the days of Luther down to the present hour, has defended it. The doctrinal basis of every Lutheran body in the world today contains it. Every Lutheran theological seminary and teacher throughout all lands today teaches it. Our own General Synod, in all her theological schools, today positively holds and defends it.

Dr. J. W. Richard writes:

“When, during the closing decades of the eighteenth century and the former half of the nineteenth, Rationalism had deeply invaded the Lutheran Church, both in this country and in Germany, the Lutheran doctrine of the Lord’s Supper had but few advocates or confessors. In this country especially, bald Zwinglianism prevailed generally in the Lutheran pulpits. But during the last twenty-five or thirty years there has been a marked return to the historical faith of the Church. Every Lutheran theological professor in the United States is bound by his official oath to conform his teaching to the Augsburg Confession of 1530 as the very least. In some institutions the professor’s oath includes the entire Book of Concord. And, as we have reason to know, the doctrine of the Real Presence is now taught in all Lutheran theological seminaries in this country, and is held by the vast majority of the Lutheran pastors; although it is also true that some of the phraseology peculiar to the controversies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is not now used, and the doctrine is carefully guarded from crass expressions.” (*Bibliotheca Sacra*, January, 1888.)

Thus is the doctrine of the Real Presence one of the fundamental and distinctive doctrines of our Lutheran Theology; and no one, therefore, is a Lutheran, or ought to call himself one, who denies it, and brands those who hold it as “tending toward Romanism.”

I prefer, however, to present the teachings of others upon this doctrine, to saying more upon it myself; and hence add yet the following extracts from writings of some of our representative men who occupy Chairs in the Theological Seminaries of our General Synod.

Dr. J. W. Richard, in the *Concise Dictionary of Religious Knowledge*, says:

“The body is present whenever the sacrament is administered, not because of any absolute ubiquity which the divine nature of Christ has imparted to his human nature, but because Christ has power to fulfill his word and to be present bodily wherever he wills to be thus present. Philosophy cannot explain this presence, because the body of Christ is spiritual, heavenly, and subject to the laws of matter. The real presence must be accepted on the ground of the divine word. In the Small Catechism (1529) Luther states his doctrine didactically thus: ‘*What is the Sacrament of the Altar? Answer: It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under bread and wine, given us Christians to eat and to drink as it was instituted by Christ Himself.*’ In the Augsburg Confession Melanchthon has presented the same doctrine in language substantially identical with that of the Catechism: ‘Concerning the Supper of the Lord it is taught that the true body and blood of Christ are truly present under the form of bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper, and are there distributed and received.’ (Article X.) This is the fundamental confessional article of the Lutheran faith concerning the Lord’s Supper. Analyzed according to Lutheran conceptions, it contains the following elements: (a) A protest against the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation, which the Lutheran Church rejects both in name and reality. This protest is implied in the words ‘form of bread and wine,’ by which is meant that form of bread and wine which exists in connection with the substance and all the qualities of bread and wine; or, as Melanchthon explains, in the Apology; ‘The visible things, to wit, bread and wine.’ (b) The affirmation of the presence of the true, real body and blood of Christ, which now exist in inseparable union with the divine nature of Christ. This presence is in no sense gross, nor carnal, nor material, but spiritual and immaterial; although the word *spiritual* in this connection has no reference to the Holy Spirit, but is used in antithesis to *gross* or *carnal*. Neither is this presence local in the sense that it is circumscribed by space, but illocal and without the occupancy of space. It is a real, true, but supernatural presence of the whole Christ; of the divine nature which is present by virtue of the inherent attribute of omnipresence; of the human nature which is rendered present by the divine with which it is personally united, (c) The bread and the wine are the *media* by which the body and blood are really administered to and received by the communicant. But there is no union of the substances, neither is there the formation of a third substance, which consists partly of the substance of bread and partly of the substance of body. Each substance remains unchanged in the act of communion, which consists of *blessing*, administering, eating, *drinking*... The mode of receiving Christ is mysterious, supernatural, incomprehensible, but not on that account the less true and real. What Lutherans principally contend for is the presence of true and natural bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper as over against the Romish transubstantiation, and the real substantial presence of the whole Christ as over against the merely efficacious or representative presence advocated by the Reformed.” (pp. 513, 514.)

Rev. Dr. M. Valentine teaches:

“That while the elements remain unchanged, the bread and wine really, and without figure, become the communion of the glorified body and blood of Christ, after a supernatural, divine and heavenly mode of presence, union and communication to the communicants.” (See *Valentine’s Lectures*, p. 241.)

Rev. Dr. E. J. Wolf writes:

“The memorial idea is but one element of this sacrament. The apostle speaks of eating and drinking, even as the Lord Himself, according to the evangelists, did not say, ‘Remember, reflect, think about,’ but ‘Take, eat,’ ‘Take, drink.’ There is something to be partaken of, there is something given and received. In 1 Corinthians, 10:16, Paul asks: ‘The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ?’ That is, by the bread there is communicated the body of Christ, by the cup there is communicated the blood of Christ. In receiving the one, we receive the other. The Supper is an ordinance in which we are recipients, we are guests, we are partakers of the body and blood of the Lord. Not only Romanists, but also some others, view the sacrament as a sacrifice, as an act of man, as something that is offered or done to God on the part of man, something at least in the light of a duty discharged. It is an ordinance in which we give nothing, but we receive a transcendent, unspeakable, heavenly gift. But some object that they cannot understand how we receive the body and blood of the glorified Lord. You are not called upon to understand it, but to believe it and to partake. You do not understand the Trinity, nor the union of God and man in one person. Nicodemus did not understand regeneration, and the Greeks mocked at the resurrection. So there are skeptics who mock at this doctrine and who are wont to exclaim: ‘How can these things be?’ Our faith thankfully accepts that at which reason staggers.” (*Augsburg S. S. Teacher, September, 1892.*)

Dr. S. A. Ort, President of Wittenberg College, writes:

"Concerning the Holy Supper, the Confession says that ‘The true body and blood of Christ are truly present under the form of bread and wine in the Lord’s Supper, and are there administered and received.’ By the body and blood of Christ is here meant the human nature of Christ, as it now is in a glorified state. This glorified human nature is present in the Supper in connection with the bread and wine. It is a real presence of the whole Christ, not a part of Him. The meaning is, that Christ is personally present. The Lutheran is, however, careful to say that the bread remains bread and the wine remains wine, but at the same time believes that such is the connection between the human nature of Christ and the bread and wine, that when the latter, that is, the bread and wine, are received, the other, namely, the body and blood of Christ, or, which is the same thing, Christ Himself, is received. The Lutheran at this point is positive in saying that the eating and drinking of the one is not the same as the eating and drinking of the other. The eating the bread and drinking the wine is a natural eating and drinking. The eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ is a supernatural, spiritual eating and drinking. The Lutheran repudiates a gross, carnal, natural eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ. Since His presence is a supernatural presence, the reception of Him in connection with the bread and wine must be likewise supernatural. This is the Lutheran doctrine of the Real Presence, about which so much has been said, and which is charged with Romanism.

“The Romish Church holds a doctrine of Real Presence; but see the difference. It is as wide as day and night. The Romanist says, that the bread and wine are actually changed into the body and blood of Christ. The bread ceases to be bread, the wine ceases to be wine. The Lutheran says that the bread remains bread and the wine remains wine. The Romanist teaches that the eating and drinking in the Lord’s Supper is a natural eating and drinking — it is hence a gross, Capernaitish eating and drinking, that is, an actual eating with the teeth of the flesh of Christ, and actual drinking of His blood. The Lutheran repudiates all this, and maintains that no change whatever takes place in the elements, that these are received naturally. Furthermore, the Lutheran teaches and believes that the efficacy of the Sacrament of the Supper is dependent entirely on faith. The eating and drinking do not give remission of sins, life and salvation. The Sacrament does not produce peace with God. It is only a means of grace through which the Holy Ghost is imparted. Without faith the Sacrament cannot be efficacious, and the communicant cannot enjoy the blessings it conveys. The Romanist denies all this, and says the Sacrament works salvation independent of the faith of the recipient. Faith plays no part whatever in the appropriation of saving grace.”

These are all true and admirable statements of our Lutheran and Scriptural doctrine of the Real Presence. Similar testimonies in its favor might, if necessary, easily be added from the writings of other General Synod Theological Professors. Even Dr. S. S. Schmucker, the father of our modern “Definite Platformism,” in his early ministry held and taught it. In the first edition of his translation of “Biblical Theology by Storr and Flatt,” published at Andover in 1826, he frames this argument in its defense:

“The syllogism, which charges this doctrine with absurdity, there fore, stands thus: a substance which does not possess any greater powers than the powers (or properties) of matter known to us, cannot possibly be present at more than one place at the same time; but the glorified body of Christ is a substance which does possess other and greater powers (or properties) than the known properties of matter (as even the glorified bodies of the saints will; much more that of Christ, whose body is in closest union with the Deity): therefore, the glorified body of Christ cannot, etc. — a conclusion the fallacy of which the weakest mind can perceive.” (p. 338).

But, strange to say, even the holding of this good Lutheran doctrine of the Real Presence in the Lord’s Supper, is, in the “Charges” preferred against me, and more fully in the “*Lutheran Evangelist*,” made a ground of objection to my continuance as Professor of Theology in Wittenberg Theological Seminary. As a friend of Wittenberg College and of our General Synod, one hangs his head with shame over this spectacle of men, calling themselves Lutherans, arraigning a Lutheran professor in a Lutheran theological seminary for holding and teaching distinctive Lutheran theology!

In their “Sixth Specific Charge” against me occurs this astonishing paragraph: “And the schismatic spirit of Lutheran exclusiveness relative to the so-called true Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper has been exhibited by theological students, now, also, at Wittenberg College since the said Luther A. Gotwald, D. D., is a Professor of Theology in it.”

There are several things in this sad, yet funny, paragraph which need to be noted. Something, it declares, has been “exhibited” at Wittenberg College: where, or when, or against whom, or under what circumstances, it does not say. The exhibitors of this something were “theological students.” This something which these theological students thus exhibited was a “schismatic spirit of Lutheran exclusiveness relative to the so-called (*sic*) true Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper.” And all this bad exhibition by these theological students, it is further said, has been made “since the said Luther A. Gotwald, D. D., is a Professor in Wittenberg College;” ergo: the said professor is the cause of all this wicked exhibition by these naughty-students, and he, therefore, ought to go out of his Chair of Theology, and somebody else, of the several who want it, ought to go in: *quod erat demonstrandum et faciendum*.

But I do not quite see the matter in that light. I am, of course, sorry if any of my students have, as they are here charged, exhibited such “schismatic spirit of Lutheran exclusiveness relative to the so-called true Lutheran doctrine of the Lord’s Supper.” They ought not to have done it, nor am I willing to believe that they did do it until proof positive of the fact is presented. But, even if they in this matter should be shown guilty, I cannot quite see how that would be proof of my guilt. Are the young men in our Seminary supposed to have no personal liberty of thought and action? Are they assumed to be mere gilt-edged and polished theological looking-glasses, only reflecting what was thrown upon them in the class-room by their instructors? Besides, am I their only theological instructor? Would I, as Professor of Practical Theology, if such a “spirit of Lutheran exclusiveness” was engendered in them “relative to the so-called true Lutheran doctrine of the Lord’s Supper,” probably be the one who engendered it? Would the exhibition of such a spirit by a few students in Wittenberg Seminary be proof that any one of the professors was responsible for it? By no means.

I, therefore, until proof be given, first of all deny that any such “spirit of exclusiveness relative to the so-called true Lutheran doctrine of the Lord’s

Supper,” has been exhibited by our students. I deny, secondly, that any professor in Wittenberg Seminary has in any way created or encouraged such “schismatic spirit of Lutheran exclusiveness.” And, thirdly, I protest, emphatically and indignantly, against our Lutheran doctrine of the Real Presence of the Saviour in the Holy Supper being derisively designated as the “so-called” true Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. It is not the “so-called” true Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, but it really *is* the true Lutheran Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. And all, I add, who *are* really Lutherans, and who do really, *ex animo*, subscribe the Augsburg Confession as their Symbol of Faith, will also *say* that it is.

c. Private Confession and Absolution.

Article XI. of the Augsburg Confession reads thus: “Concerning Confession they teach that private Absolution ought to be retained in the Churches; although an enumerating of all our offenses is not necessary in confession. For this is impossible, according to the declaration of the Psalmist: Who can understand his errors?”

There is no doctrine, probably, taught in the Confession, against which there is greater prejudice than there is against the doctrine supposed to be taught in this Eleventh Article. The prejudice, however, is really not against what the article, properly interpreted, does teach, but against what it is supposed or assumed to teach. The assumption by many is that this Article is utterly unevangelical and un-Protestant — that it is in accordance with the Romish Doctrine of *Auricular* Confession and *Priestly* Absolution, a doctrine so manifestly un-Scriptural and erroneous that, if here taught, we would all instantly reject it. But such is *not* the doctrine which is taught in this Article of our Confession. On the contrary, what was here taught by the Confessors, and what has always been understood by our Lutheran Church to be here taught, is the very opposite of the Romish teaching upon this subject of confession and absolution, is most thoroughly Protestant and Evangelical, and ought, therefore, as here expressed, be retained as one of the Articles of our Lutheran and Christian faith. This Eleventh Article of our Confession expresses both fundamental Christian doctrine and good Church usage.

Considered, first, as the expression of *Christian doctrine*, it teaches the great and blessed Scriptural truth of the divine forgiveness of sin: the fact of such forgiveness, the conditions of it, the authority of the Church to declare it, the privilege of the penitent and believing to be assured of it — all of which are fundamental truths of God’s Word, the very heart of the Gospel. As an expression of Christian doctrine, it is, therefore, substantially the same as Article XII, “Of Repentance,” which reads: “Concerning repentance they teach that those who have relapsed into sin after Baptism, may at any time obtain pardon, when they repent; and that the Church ought to grant (absolution) to such as return to repentance. But repentance properly consists of two parts. The one is contrition, or terror of conscience, on account of known sin. The other is faith, which is obtained from the

gospel (or absolution), which believes that pardon for sin is bestowed for Christ's sake; and comforts the conscience, and frees it from terrors. Such repentance ought to be succeeded by good works as its fruits."

But, in view of the objections made to it, it is especially as a *Lutheran Church Usage* that this Eleventh Article needs to be considered, explained and defended.

The necessity of confession, as a condition of forgiveness, is already a natural moral instinct. The little child, even where it knows that its offense is unknown to the parent, moved by conscience, voluntarily makes confession *in order* that it may secure pardon. This necessity of confession in order to forgiveness, or as a condition of forgiveness, is clearly and repeatedly also declared in Scripture. (Psalm 32:5; 51:3; Proverbs 2:8, 13; 1 John 1:8, 9.) And this confession is not only to be made directly to God, but is also to be made to the Church, in order that through and from the Church, as the "Body of Christ," the penitent soul may be told of the promised grace of God and be assured of its forgiveness for the sake of Christ. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." The Revised Version correctly reads: "Confess your sins one to another (τὰς ἁμαρτίας)."

There is, then, it is manifest, a divine requirement of the confession of sin in order to obtain absolution, or the forgiveness of sin.

It is in view of this, and as a provision by which to afford the opportunity to penitent souls to comply with this requirement and obtain its promised spiritual benefits, that our Lutheran Church holds as she does, in this Eleventh Article, "that private absolution ought to be retained in the Churches." She thus makes for herself a Church Usage by which an opportunity is given burdened souls to make confession, and by which also there is given her the opportunity of declaring to such souls the divine promise and assurance of their forgiveness, for Christ's sake, upon condition of Evangelical repentance and faith. And that is all that we, as Lutherans, mean by "*Confession and Absolution*." It is only, in other words, the personal preaching of the Gospel to souls convicted of sin, and seeking pardon and assurance of reconciliation to God. It gives the pastor, the shepherd of the flock, the opportunity to apply personally, and according to their individual spiritual condition and wants, the same Gospel of repentance and faith which he has proclaimed to them as a congregation in public.

“Absolution according to the Lutheran conception is simply the individualization of the general promise of the Gospel. In the Holy Scriptures I read that Christ died for the *world*: in the Absolution I hear that since Christ died for the world, He died for *me*, and since He came into the world to save sinners, He came into the world to save *me*, the chief of sinners.” (*The Lutheran*, September 1, 1892.)

To be assured that it was in this thoroughly Evangelical sense, and as a Church Usage calculated to secure the best spiritual results, that the Reformers retained Confession and Absolution, one needs but to turn to Article XXV. of the Augsburg Confession, where they fully explain why they have retained it. (*See also “Schmalkald Articles,” Article VIII.*)

Luther, in his sermon on the Remission of Sin, clearly and strongly expresses the true Scriptural Meaning of Absolution. He says:

“The remission of sins is out of the power of the pope, bishop or priest, or any other man living, and rests solely on the Word of Christ and thine own faith. For if a simple believer say to thee, though a woman or a child, ‘God pardon thy sins in the name of Jesus Christ,’ and thou receive that word with strong faith, thou art absolved; but let faith in pardon through Christ hold the first place and command the whole field of your warfare.”

Dr. Mann says:

"A man who doubts whether a minister of Christ has a right to pronounce absolution in the name of Christ, must never for a moment have held up to his earnest, attentive consideration and reflection, the words of Christ: 'Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven; (Matt. 18:18.) It has been the view of the Lutheran theologians from the beginning, that these words of Christ apply to the ecclesiastical rights of the whole congregation. The connection of the whole passage, together with other Scriptural passages, proves indisputably, that this verse finds its application, not to the Apostles only, but to the whole Church, and every individual member thereof, the rights and obligations of the regular pastor remaining intact.

“Of course, in the congregation as such, the minister is the duly appointed officer, who, in the name of Christ, will proclaim the good tidings of forgiveness to the penitent and the awful wrath of God to the impenitent and to the hypocrite. But this does not forbid, that under certain circumstances a member of the church may confess his sins to another member, and be comforted by the cheering exhortation of his brother, who is no minister.” (*A Plea for the Augsburg Confession*, p. 23)

And Dr. S. S. Schmucker writes:

“Although the Churches (or Reformers) advocated the retention of Confession, they entirely changed its nature, and divested it of the objectionable features belonging to it in the Roman Catholic Church.” (*Popular Theology, 5th Edition, p. 308.*)

Thus rightly understood or interpreted, this Eleventh Article is, indeed, far from teaching anything whatever that is Romish either as a Doctrine or as a Church Usage. Rome makes confession *compulsory*: with us Lutherans it is *voluntary*. Rome demands it from *all*: we expect it only from those who are really *burdened with a sense of sin* and sincerely desire to be *delivered* from it. Rome requires a minute enumeration of sins: we, only an acknowledgment of *sinfulness* and sense of *guilt*. Rome makes it a ground of *merit*: we, a means only of securing unmerited *pardon*. Rome, as a *priestly* act, by daring assumption of the power to forgive sin which belongs only to God, declares “*Absolve te:*” we, as pas tors, and as a declarative act, proclaim, upon the sure ground of God’s Word, and as from God, to all who do truly repent and believe, that, for Christ’s sake, God forgives their sins. Rome makes but little of confession as a *spiritual* act: we make it *wholly* such. Rome prescribes *penance* as a condition of pardon: we, *repentance* and *faith*. Rome finds her ground of absolution in the treasury of *Grace deposited in the Church*: we, in the grace of God *offered freely to us*, “without money and without price,” *through Jesus Christ our Lord*.

Objection is specially made by some to our Lutheran Church usage, as taught in this Eleventh Article, be cause of its being “*private* confession and absolution,” and hence akin to Romish auricular confession. The objection, however, is not well founded. Romish auricular confession requires the minute enumeration of all sins: this our Article declares unnecessary and even impossible. Romish Confession is *absolutely private*, only the priest and the penitent being present: our Article does not use the words “private confession,” at all. It only says “Concerning confession they teach that private *absolution* ought to be retained in the Churches;” and by the word “private,” as thus used by the Confessors, is especially meant, not “private” in the sense of separated from all others except the pastor, but “private” in the sense of “individual.” The *essential thing*, and therefore the *emphatic word*, in the whole article is “*absolution:*” the assurance given the penitent, in the name of Christ, and on the promise of God’s Word, that he is forgiven. And this assurance may be given him either privately or publicly, either alone or in the presence of others. Times, manners, forms and circumstances are all, by this Article, left to the liberty of the Church, and in

each particular case to the conscience of the individual believer, and are not commanded of God. (*Guenther's Symbolik, Section 151.*) These, so far as the mere externals are concerned, may be in the form of the Methodist class meeting, or of the usual inquiry meetings of revivals, or of our "Preparatory Services" before Communion (where there are often few enough present to make it quite private), or of personal private interviews by the pastor with members of his church, arranged for at certain fixed times and places, or of any other form in which the Evangelical pastor can declare the assurances of the Gospel to penitent and believing souls.

To have a convenient time and place, in connection with each of our Churches, where, as one of the established usages, or services, of the Church, the pastor could, for this purpose, meet all such inquirers, and speak to them God's Word, and point them to Christ, and seek to quicken their repentance and faith, and as sure them on compliance with God's declared conditions, that their sins are, for Christ's sake, forgiven: this, according to our Evangelical Lutheran apprehension and use of it, would be "confession and absolution."

Thus many of our Lutheran Churches in Europe today profitably practice it. "When in Germany," writes Dr. H. L. Baugher, "I saw 'Beichte' boxes, or rooms, where half a dozen or more persons would present themselves to *talk to the Pastor* on spiritual things, including their sins, and would receive Absolution." Rev. Jonathan Ruthrauff, pastor of our General Synod Church, at Lebanon, Pa., during many years, and a man eminent for godliness of character and for usefulness in the ministry, maintained the Usage, at fixed hours, during the week preceding the administration of the Lord's Supper, of meeting his members at his home, hearing from them their spiritual condition, and addressing to them such instruction and comfort from God's Word as their personal spiritual state required. And there are pastors of eminent usefulness in our General Synod today, who maintain such good Church Usage with great benefit both to themselves and to their people.

One of our most able and pious pastors, member of the Synod of West Pennsylvania, related, within the last few weeks, that it was no uncommon thing for a parishioner of his to come to his house on Sunday morning before Communion, saying, that he could not possibly get to the Preparatory Service and now desired to make confession. He came to *Beichte*. Was it not his privilege and right to do so? Did not his pastor, or rather the Church acting through the pastor, owe it to him to hear his confession and, in the

name of Christ, assure him of the divine forgiveness? Undoubtedly. To have turned him away, saying to him: "Confession is unimportant, the Preparatory Services are a mere churchly custom; you can come to the Lord's Supper without self-examination and without relieving your conscience of its sense of guilt," would have been both a great sin and a great wrong, a great sin by the pastor and a great wrong to the member. The Reformers were right when they wrote: "Concerning confession, they teach that private absolution *ought* to be retained in the Churches."

In the remarkable paper, however, addressed to this Board, and asking for my removal, I am charged with favoring "the exclusive type of Lutheranism characteristic of the General Council, which makes all the doctrines of the Augsburg Confession fundamental, and which holds to *Private Confession and Absolution*, and to other like doctrines never received by the General Synod, and contrary to her whole history and to her original principles."

How *can* men, with the *facts* of the General Synod's history before them, make such a statement? Did not the General Synod, in good faith, adopt as her doctrinal basis the whole of the Augsburg Confession? Did she ever, in any way, make an exception of this Eleventh Article on Confession and Absolution? Has she ever intimated aught against the doctrine it teaches, under stood in the deeply spiritual and evangelical sense attached to it by the Confessors? Never! On the contrary, when the Definite Platform charged the Confession with holding and teaching Private Confession and Absolution "as anti-Scriptural and as a remnant of Romish error" she, as is well known, most positively and earnestly *denied* the charge. In her Convention, assembled in York, Penna., 1864, of which Convention the honored father of one of the signers of this paper preferred against me was a member, after enumerating certain Romish errors with which the Confession had been charged, such as Transubstantiation, the Romish mass, Baptismal Regeneration in the Romish sense, auricular confession and *priestly* Absolution, she then solemnly defends the Confession against these imputed and insinuated errors by resolving:

"Nevertheless, before God and His Church, we declare that, in our judgment, the Augsburg Confession, properly interpreted, is in perfect consistence with the Holy Scriptures as regards the errors specified."

And yet now we are here told that “the General Synod never received private confession and absolution,” and that it is a doctrine “contrary to her whole history and to her original principles.” Am I asked: “What answer will you give to that charge?” I reply: “I shall not give any.” Life is very short, and time is very precious. No moment should be wasted. We quietly, therefore, pass on.

IV. Lutheran Confessionalism In The General Synod In Respect To Lutheran Catholicity And Union.

One of the avowed and chief ends for which the General Synod was founded was the union of all the Lutherans of this country in one organic body. The evidence of this is in her official records, and can be found running through her whole history.

In the “Address of the General Synod to the Evangelical Lutheran Church,” in the year 1823, we find on page 10 this record:

“We feel grateful to the Great Head of the Church for the establishment of the General Synod, the object of which is, and the tendency of which must be, to augment the density of the ecclesiastical relations of the remote portions of our Church, and to draw still closer the bonds of fraternal affection by which they are united.”

In the same address, with regard to the withdrawal of the Synod of Pennsylvania, which was not at all for doctrinal reasons, there is this language:

“Whilst the General Synod, with due deference to the judgment of this respectable Synod, cannot divest themselves of doubt as to the expediency of the temporary recession of the Pennsylvania Synod from the general union of the Lutheran Church, they rejoice that, in the very act of withdrawing, they declare their unaltered conviction of the propriety and utility of such a union, and intimate that their recession shall continue only until the prejudices against the General Synod shall in some measure have subsided.”

And in the Resolution which was unanimously adopted with regard to this withdrawal, they say:

“This Synod entertain the highest confidence in their brethren of Pennsylvania, and confidently trust that they will, without delay, resume their connection with the General Synod.” (p. 6.)

In the “Address” of 1825 there is this strong expression of Lutheran catholicity:

“Our gratification, at this meeting, has been enhanced by the presence of a delegation from the Synod of West Pennsylvania, and the reception of that numerous and important body into the connection of the General Synod; as well as by a variety of other circumstances, all tending to prove, that the prejudices, which had existed against this body, are rapidly subsiding; and that a few years more will present to the Christian eye, the pleasing spectacle of the whole Lutheran Church, in the United States, joined together by the mild, yet salutary, bond of this Advisory Council. During the five years of the existence of the General Synod, she has given full evidence of the excellence of her constitution, of the fraternal spirit which actuates her counsels, and of the happy results which the friends of Lutheranism may anticipate from her future operations.” (*Minutes of 1825, p. 10.*)

Again in the “Address” of 1827, we read:

“Would any now inquire, what good can the General Synod do? We reply, look and see what good she has already done. Behold a number of our ministers and laymen, from the remote sections of our country, assembled as one family, to consult together concerning the interests of the whole church. Behold those who had never seen each other before, and knew not how far they could trust each other, and how far they harmonized in views and could co-operate in action, embracing each other in the spirit of brotherly love, uniting their prayers and deliberations for Zion’s welfare; and then say, has the General Synod done no good? Behold her extending the bonds of Christian affection and entwining them around our Lutheran brethren in Germany, in Sweden, in Denmark, in Norway, in Prussia, in England, and laboring to enkindle the spirit of brotherly love and holy zeal among all who bear the Lutheran name on earth; and say is not the spirit of the General Synod like that of the divine Master whom she professes to serve?” (*pp. 17, 81.*)

Similar fraternal sentiments are found also in the “Address” of 1835, page 34. The “Address” of 1837, referring to the accession of the New York Ministerium, adds:

“We hail with the brightest anticipations the day when every Lutheran Synod in this land shall have attached itself to the General Synod — when our Church shall have one common center of attraction, one common nucleus around which we can gather, and one common rallying-point to stimulate to action, from which, as from Jerusalem of old, the streams of light, love, truth and benevolence shall be sent forth throughout the land.”

And thus all along in her history, her spirit, through her whole career, has been the spirit of Lutheran catholicity and fraternity. So eager did she show herself for union with all the Lutheran bodies in the land, that she even proposed and arranged to alter in her constitution features which were not satisfactory to some of these bodies. (See “*Pastoral Address*” of 1835, Page 34.) The change made in her doctrinal basis, in 1864, which was not only her official condemnation of “Definite Platformism,” but which was

especially intended to satisfy the stricter Lutheran element, and which did doctrinally so fully satisfy the Synod of Pennsylvania that it, in 1865, concluded to continue its connection with the General Synod; the action taken lay her at Fort Wayne, after the organization, “inviting the delegates of the Synod of Pennsylvania to participate in the discussion, on handing in their credentials and showing who were entitled to this privilege,” and even beseeching them “to waive what may seem to them an irregular organization of this body and to acquiesce in the present organization;” the action of the General Synod, in Washington, in 1869, upon a “Manifesto,” offered by the Rev. Dr. S. S. Schmucker, and which, judged from the Report upon it of the committee to whom it was entrusted, was simply another attempt to commit her to “Definite Platformism” (vide *Minutes*, page 27); the appointment of a committee at Omaha, in 1887, “to unite with the other bodies in securing a correct translation of the Augsburg Confession and Luther’s Small Catechism,” and which, in fulfillment of its duties, sat in joint committee, last September, at Wernersville, Penn., with committees and representatives from the General Council, from the United Synod South, from the Joint Synod of Ohio, from the English Synod of Missouri, and, by correspondence, from the Norwegian Synod and the Icelandic Synod: an exhibition of Lutheran unity and fraternity which filled the entire Lutheran Church of our land with joy, and which must have gladdened the very angels of heaven (although even at this good sight the “*Evangelist*” murmured); the appointment, at Springfield, Ohio, in 1883, of a committee, consisting of Drs. Wenner, Stork, Wedekind, Conrad, and Valentine, “to act with the General Synod South in the preparation of a Common Service Book;” the action, taken at Harrisburg, in 1885: “Resolved, That the General Synod has learned, with great satisfaction, that its committee of conference, with the committee of the General Council and General Synod South, for the arrangement of a common order of service for English speaking Lutherans, has reached a harmonious and unanimous agreement with those committees, that it approves of the work of the committee submitted to us, and that the committee be continued with instructions to finish the details, and also be authorized to publish the completed service for the use of the churches, provided the other two bodies adopt it,” an action which was adopted, as the *Minutes* (page 42) declare, “without a single dissenting voice,” and whose unanimous adoption, in the deep joy of the hour, was followed by the spontaneous and hearty singing of “Praise

God from whom all blessings flow:” blessed facts in her history like these show most conclusively that the General Synod steadily, during her whole long career, has cherished a most fraternal Christian spirit towards every other Lutheran body in the land, and has longed and labored to see all our great Lutheran host, of every division, brought together in both doctrinal and organic unity.¹ As Dr. J. A. Brown truly says:

“One grand object was a union among Lutheran Synods. Before the formation of the General Synod there was no bond of union among the different Lutheran Synods of the United States. But, before the late war, some thirty District Synods were harmoniously united in the General Synod. Different tongues and men from various different nationalities were blended in one, and all recognized each other as Lutherans and Christians.” (*The General Synod and her Assailants*, p. 22.)

And truthfully also does Dr. M. Valentine represent, in this respect, the spirit or genius of our General Synod:

“It stands for the principle of union in *generic or catholic Lutheranism... on the great historic Confession of Augsburg*. It represents both the distinctiveness and comprehensiveness or breadth of Lutheranism, at once true to its essential and characterizing teaching and life, and giving room and freedom to all in the unessential diversities that have marked its true history. Its basis is *not reduced and restricted into the mold of any particular type*, as found here or there in our great Church, but provides for the union and free co-operation and fellowship of all upon the ground of what is common to all.” (*Lutheran Observer*, March 6th, 1891.)

In view of this noble and truly Christian spirit of Lutheran Fraternity and Catholicity which has thus characterized the General Synod, in her entire history, the possession and manifestation of such a spirit of fellowship and unity now towards Lutherans of other bodies ought “surely not be regarded as Disloyalty to the General Synod.” On the contrary, the cherishing and manifestation of such a spirit expresses truest loyalty to her, and truest loyalty, above all, to Christ, her Divine Lord. He prays for the unity of all His people. Where shall we, as Lutherans, begin in our endeavors to realize His prayer? Shall we not begin with those of our own name and of our own faith? Shall we not, first of all, seek to secure union in our own *Lutheran Household of Faith*? “Catholicity?” Is not *Lutheran catholicity* as precious to Christ as any other “catholicity?” And would it not be most productive of good to ourselves, and through us also to others, instead of being separated and divided as we are, to be united among ourselves, than to be in union

with others and opposed to each other? What a blessed con summation it would be to have all Lutherans in this land, nearly one and a half million communicants now already, brought together in a true unity of Lutheran faith and love: what a splendid concentration of spiritual force for Christ that would be! What a mighty agency for the overthrow of the kingdom of Satan would thus be created! What a clear and telling witness to the pure truth of the Word of God and of the great Lutheran Reformation we then could give! How one's heart, as a Lutheran Christian, thrills with the inspiration of the thought, and how fervently one is moved to pray that it all, in God's good time, may be fully realized. And it all *will*, also, I firmly believe, be realized. When I do not know, but *some time* most surely. By what *means* precisely, or under what *name*, or on what precise doctrinal basis, or in what exact *form* of external organization, all this I do not, of course, know; but of this I feel most certain, that steadily God is leading us Lutherans, by His Providence and grace, nearer together, and is ever bringing us into a true, permanent and blessed unity. Given on our part toward all who bear the Lutheran name a sweet Lutheran charity, a warm Lutheran confidence, a hearty Lutheran co-operation, and an intelligent Lutheran liberty, and given, above all, by us all, to our Lutheran doctrine, a genuine Lutheran fidelity, and God will soon give us the Lutheran unity. They who thus really and honestly and lovingly *desire* to come together, will also come together.

Contemplated in the light of these *facts* in the history of the General Synod, and especially of the catholic and truly Christian spirit which they reveal, what judgment shall we form of these "Charges" preferred against me to this Board? There *can* be, it appears to me, but one judgment concerning them, namely, a judgment of severe condemnation. They wrong not me only, but the good name of our General Synod, the best interests of our entire Lutheran Church, the welfare of the cause of Christ. They breathe the very opposite of the generous and gentle spirit of our General Synod, and have nothing in them whatever of the loving and tender heart of Jesus, the common Saviour and Lord of us all. They are narrow, and hard, and partisan, and cold, full of intolerance while prating of tolerance, illiberal while extolling liberty.

If, for one moment, I thought this paper and these "Charges" to be a correct representation of the spirit and attitude of our General Synod towards the General Council, or towards any other Lutheran body, I would

not remain in it a single hour longer. If, as this paper implies, in order to show myself loyal to the General Synod, I must regard as great errorists all other Lutherans outside of the General Synod; if I must deny that they are my brethren; if I must decry them as formalists and ritualists; if I dare hold out no hand of brotherly love toward them, and must repress every outgoing of Christian interest and sympathy and good will towards them; if all this horrid caricature of both a genuine Lutheranism and a genuine Christianity were General Synod Lutheranism, I would renounce it in an instant. If, while allowing me to fellowship with sects of every conceivable doctrinal color, and with some of no Christian color at all, with Universalists, Unitarians, Campbellites or Jews, with anything or everything ecclesiastical, only so it takes the Bible as its creed and calls itself pious, the General Synod should forbid my fellowshiping with my brethren in the Lutheran Faith in the General Council, or in the Synodical Conference, or in the United Synod South, I would break with it instantly.

But, such is not the spirit or attitude of our General Synod towards other Lutheran bodies. On the contrary, she is thoroughly fraternal in her spirit towards them. Firmly planted on her own doctrinal basis, satisfied with the Scripturalness of her methods, and contented to prosecute quietly the work God is giving her to do, she yet feels herself in living unity with all other Lutheran Christians, prays for their success, rejoices in their prosperity, sympathizes with them in their struggles and trials, longs for a nearer relation ship to them, and anticipates with joy the coming of the day when the lines which now divide our Lutheran ranks shall all have faded away, and when all, through out all our land, who bear the name of Luther, regard less of nationality or language, and one in the pure Lutheran faith, shall stand out before the Christian world, and shall especially stand out before the approving eye of her Divine Lord, as one great, organic, united Lutheran Church.

The one especial offense with which I am charged in this paper is what is vaguely designated as "General Councilism." My sin, in the eyes of these alarmed brethren, is that I "hold to the Type of Lutheranism characteristic of the *General Council*" that I "hold the General Synod's doctrinal position to be identical with that of the *General Council*" that my teaching "accords with the Type of Lutheranism of the *General Council*," that I am "in sympathy with the *General Council*'s Type of Lutheranism," etc., etc. And, in the "*Lutheran Evangelist*" I am also charged, along with others, with

deep laid purposes and wily Jesuitic efforts actually to carry the whole General Synod, *nolens volens*, body and soul, “*Lutheran Evangelist*” and all, over into the *General Council*, “like the poor missionary in Timbuktu, who was swallowed, skin, bones, and hymn-book too.”

But there is no need for alarm. I pledge my word and honor to the “*Evangelist*” and to the three anxious brethren who have signed this paper, and have thus hung out the red danger signal to the Church, that I have no such purpose in mind. I could, of course, do it, if I wished, any time; but, out of pure kindness to the “*Evangelist*” and those who read it, I have decided not to do it. For, what would the “*Evangelist*” do in the General Council? Or rather, what would the General Council do with such a sheet as the “*Evangelist*,” if, perchance, it should awake some bright morning and find it on its hands!

But what superlative nonsense thus to talk about a man, or a dozen men, or five thousand men, carrying the General Synod over into the General Council. The one only thing which any one of us *could* carry over to the General Council would be our own little selves. The General Synod alone can take herself away from herself into another ecclesiastical body. And hence, if ever there is any going over to some other ecclesiastical body, by the General Synod, or if ever any change is effected in her doctrinal basis, it must be effected by the General Synod herself, must spring up as a voluntary and universal movement from out her own bosom, and must come as the expression from within herself of a desire for such larger and more comprehensive confessional statement.

But, even if our alarmists’ “Charges” were all true, if all that the “*Evangelist*” writes were all true, (which is indeed a very charitable supposition), even then our condition, as a General Synod, would not be as bad as it might be. There are still worse places to which our General Synod might go than to the General Council. Some men write and talk as though the General Council were the synonym of all the doctrinal and ecclesiastical errors that could be named. Shame on such base partisanship and prejudice! I have no patience with it whatever. It is unworthy of any one calling himself either a Lutheran or a Christian. What is this “General Council,” thus singled out and perpetually held up as deserving only of our condemnation and disownment? It consists of our own brethren, of those composing with ourselves and others our great Lutheran household of faith, of witnesses to the same pure truth of the Gospel to which we witness, a

noble body of fellow-Lutheran Christians who are, in many ways, accomplishing a blessed and most precious work in the up building of the kingdom of Christ. Shame, then, I repeat, on this unceasing assault upon them, as though they were errorists and sinners above all men. The General Synod neither needs nor wants defense by any such bad spirit or methods.

But, while closer fellowship with the General Council would probably prove profitable both to them and to ourselves, the General Synod, so far as I know, is not going toward the General Council; nor do I know that the General Council at all wants us or would receive us if we did come to them. I know of no overtures, looking toward union with us, which they have made. *Some* of us, I am very sure, they do *not* want and would *not* receive. The "*Lutheran Evangelist*" for example, need not, I would suppose, apply.

It has frequently, during the past year, been publicly declared that some of us who have stood faithfully on what we understand to be the doctrinal basis of the Gen-Synod are really on the doctrinal basis of the General Council, and we have been plainly told that *there* is where we belong and there also we should go. Personally I respectfully decline to follow the advice thus given. Having been born in the General Synod, having been baptized and reared and catechized and confirmed and educated and ordained in her, having given thirty-four long years of faithful service to her, being bound to her by a thousand most tender associations and hallowed memories, I will, I think, stay on in her, abiding in the old ecclesiastical home until the Master takes me to the Church triumphant above. I am sorry to impose my self where I am not wanted; but it cannot, I judge, in this special case, be helped, and the "dear brethren" will, therefore, I presume, unpleasant as it may possibly be to them, be compelled, even if they cannot enjoy me, at least to endure me.

Possibly a little more love or charity for each other would help us all. 'We can never, in this life, all come to apprehend divine truth precisely alike, and there will always, no doubt, among the wisest and best of us, on many things pertaining to Christian doctrine, be some diversity of opinion. But surely we need not on this account hate each other, and break down each other's influence, and wrong each other. We can still certainly love each other. We can prove to each other the excellency of our Lutheran orthodoxy by the excellency of our Christian spirit and the sweetness and gentleness of our piety. If our Lutheranism, however orthodox or unorthodox, lacks the sweetness of the Gospel and the gentleness of love, if

it is deficient in piety or in the spirit and life of Christ our Lord, it is not true genuine Lutheranism. "True Lutheranism," says another, "conjoins the piety of the Pietists with the orthodoxy of its opponents; it neither arrays orthodoxy against piety, nor piety against orthodoxy; but it shows, both by word and lip, that true orthodoxy is piety, and that true piety is orthodoxy." (Krauth's *"Religion and Religionisms,"* p. 5.)

Our duty clearly, then, is diligently to cultivate toward each other a larger measure of Christian forbearance and brotherly love, praying daily for more of the divine grace of charity which "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," remembering that "now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is *charity*."

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1. Especially gratifying in this respect is the action adopted unanimously at the recent convention of our General Synod at Canton, Ohio. The paper was offered by Rev. Dr. M. W. Hamma, of the Synod of California, and reads as follows:

OVERTURES FOR PRACTICAL CO-OPERATION, TO ALL LUTHERAN BODIES IN AMERICA.

"WHEREAS, The Lutheran Church of America is divided into a number of different branches, which are not in practical accord the one with the other, and

"WHEREAS, All these subscribe to the Augsburg confession, and here to the same general system of government, practice in a measure the same forms of worship, and recognize and glory in the same origin and history, and

"WHEREAS, While it is incumbent upon all evangelical Christians to cultivate fraternal relations, this is most manifestly the duty of those who are of the same denominational name and faith; therefore,

Resolved, That the General Synod will regard with favor any movement looking to a closer co-operation of all Lutheran bodies in this country, in the practical work of our denomination, upon such terms as will secure the largest possible harmony of action in all lines of mutual interest, recognizing that such co-operation is not to be interpreted as a surrender or compromise of the doctrinal position of any party entering therein.

"Resolved 2. That this General Synod respectfully, sincerely and fraternally suggests a conference of committees, to be appointed by the General Lutheran bodies of this country, for the purpose of an interchange of views upon the possibilities of said closer practical cooperation between the several branches of our Lutheran household.

"Resolved 3. That, for the furtherance of this object, a committee of five be appointed at this convention, to represent the General Synod in such possible conference, and that said committee be and is hereby authorized to confer with the other said bodies in regard to the objects herein named, provided always, and it is herein expressly declared, that said committee shall have no power or authority whatever to bind the General Synod by any action it may take in conjunction with any other committee or committees; and that it is invested with only confederal authority, and shall report back to the next General Synod the results of its efforts.

"Resolved 4. That in the name of our beloved Church, and in the greater name of our Lord and Master, and appealing to the Searcher of all hearts for the integrity of our motives, we respectfully ask and hope for the kindest consideration of all our Lutheran brethren of this our fraternal overture, and pray for the richest blessing of almighty God upon it.↵

V. Lutheran Confessionalism In The General Synod In Respect To Experimental And Practical Piety.

There are several mistakes, connected with this subject of Lutheran Confessionalism in our General Synod which ought, if possible, at once, to be corrected. The one is that Lutheran orthodoxy, or honest and full acceptance of the Augsburg Confession, and even of all the Symbolical Books, is incompatible with Evangelical and living Lutheran piety: and the second is that Lutheran liturgical worship is destructive of spirituality and true devotion in Lutheran worship.

Both these conclusions are erroneous, and are not sustained by facts.

The first is most clearly a mistake. Many of the most eminent names in the calendar of Lutheran saints, men conspicuous in their age for holiness of character and burning zeal in the preaching of the Gospel and in efforts to win souls to Christ, accepted fully and heartily not only the Augsburg Confession but all our Lutheran Symbols. In the Preface to that precious devotional work, John Arndt's "True Christianity," the pious author declares: "I affirm that this book is not to be understood in any other manner than in accordance with the Symbolical Books of the Churches of the Augsburg Confession, namely, the first unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Schmalkald Articles, the Catechisms of Luther, and the Formula of Concord." Spener, the Father of German Pietism, and its best representative, published an especial treatise in defense of the Formula of Concord. Dr. Mann writes: "He was a man distinguished for his living piety as he was noted for his orthodoxy, and who labored, both as a writer and as an ecclesiastic of high rank, for the revival and restoration of spiritual life."¹ The same is true of A. H. Francke, who subscribed all the Lutheran Symbolical Books, and accepted them fully, whose deep spirituality, however, and intensity of Christian love, and grand achievements in practical benevolent piety have been the wonder of the Christian world and are shedding their benign influence down over the Church even to this day. So also with thousands more — with Hans Egede, with Schwartz, with Ziegenbalg, with Bengel, with Pastor Harms, "Symbolists," all of them, but

" Pietists" also in the very best sense of that word. And so also with the fathers and founders of our Lutheran Church here in our own land. Pages could be rilled with quotations from the "Life and Times of Henry Melchior Mühlenberg," proving that he, and those associated with him in the planting of our Church on this Western Continent, held firmly to all our Lutheran Symbolical Writings, and yet what godliness of character they possessed, what holiness of life, what noble sacrifice for Christ and His Church! The Lutherans, also, of today, composing the Synodical Conference, known to us familiarly as the Missouri Lutherans, how intense in their Lutheran orthodoxy, even to an exclusiveness which we cannot justify, and yet how thoroughly evangelical, how unquestionably pious, how abundantly useful they are! Dr. Sprecher, wise enough to read aright the character and work of this noble body of Lutheran Christians, and honest enough also to express his favorable convictions concerning them, may well say as he does: "An increased knowledge of the spirit, methods and literature of the Missouri Synod has convinced me that a sense of the necessity of personal religion and of the importance of personal assurance of salvation can be maintained in connection with a Lutheranism unmodified by the Puritan element."

Lutheran orthodoxy and Lutheran piety are not, then, antagonistic. Each, on the contrary, needs and demands the other. Lutheran orthodoxy, without Lutheran piety, is a cold, lifeless and unprofitable formalism: Lutheran piety, without Lutheran orthodoxy, is an unscriptural, unspiritual and unhealthy fanaticism. But Lutheran orthodoxy *and* Lutheran piety, Lutheran doctrine filled with the Christly spirit and life, this is, indeed, ideal Christianity, a union consummated by the Spirit of God, a very wedlock of the skies, and "what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

'1. Because of the adversaries of our Church, who did not know what was the real meaning of the Augsburg Confession.

'2. To declare the teaching of the Lutheran Church on questions in reference to which there was controversy concerning the meaning of the Augsburg Confession.' He shows at length:

'1. The great distinction between the respect to be accorded Symbolical Books and that to be rendered the Holy Scriptures.

'2. Symbolical Books are no rule of faith, but only a rule of doctrine. My faith is not determined by any Symbolical Book, but only by the clear testimony of Scripture; but the Symbolical Books contain the interpretation of Holy Scripture which those who have called me to the position of a

public teacher understand me to hold, and upon this guarantee have pledged me to teach.

'3. They are not infallible; nor do all their statements have the perfection that is to be desired. They are the composition of men who could not foresee the future; and hence their words refer only to controversial aspects of doctrine then in view. If the godly men who composed them had foreseen the future, they sometimes would have modified the form of expression. Nevertheless, in all articles of faith *per se*, and in explicit decisions concerning controverted points, they are without error.

'4. It was not the purpose of our theologians to write a perfect system of theology, but only, at a particular time, to explain the sound doctrine concerning controverted points. On this account the Symbolical Books are not intended to prevent all further growth in the knowledge and confession of Divine truth.

'5. Our theologians should always be ready to argue from Holy Scripture with any honest doubter of the correctness of the statements of Holy Scripture, provided such doubt be expressed in a modest and inoffensive manner." (*Dr. H. E. Jacobs, Magazine of Christian Literature, June, 1892.*)

Equally an error is the conviction, cherished by so many, that the use of liturgical forms in public worship is destructive of spirituality and true devotion in worship. Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, the Psalms of David composed for the temple worship at Jerusalem, the Lord's Prayer, were all pre-composed forms of devotion. The public worship at the Jewish Church was conducted according to prescribed forms. To the temple and synagogue worship of the Jewish Church Jesus scrupulously conformed while here upon earth; and the fact that He did so, and never condemned it, is conclusive evidence that He did not consider it wrong to use forms of prayer and praise. Besides, He not only thus conformed to the liturgical worship then in use, but He also Himself gave His disciples a form of prayer to use in their devotions, saying (Luke 11:2), "When ye pray, *say*" — clearly showing that we are to use this prayer as well as to frame *other* prayers after this model. The followers of Christ asked Him to "teach them to pray as John also taught His disciples." What a fine opportunity this would have been to condemn the use of forms of prayer! But no! Instead of doing so He promptly gave them, as a form, our precious Lord's Prayer. The primitive Christians, of Jewish origin, probably used prescribed or pre-composed forms of prayer, as they had previous to their conversion to

Christianity been accustomed to do. Liturgical worship, as we know from Church History, was in general use in the early Christian Church at the beginning of the Fourth Century. Large portions of the Christian Church, in every century since then, have worshipped liturgically. Our Lutheran Church has always been a liturgical church. Mühlenberg and other founders of our Lutheran Church in this new world, fresh from the Pietistic University at Halle, used liturgical forms in worship.

Of course *extempore* prayer has also been constantly used in the worship of the Christian Church, and certainly its use is nowhere condemned in the Scriptures, but is encouraged. Both liturgical and unliturgical worship are evidently recognized, taught and enjoined in Sacred Scripture as acceptable worship. I am not now pleading for either as preferable to the other, or as more profitable than the other. I am simply trying to remove, if possible, a groundless prejudice against liturgical services. True worship is determined neither by the use of liturgical services nor the non-use of them. It is determined by the spiritual state, or the worshipful frame, of the worshiper himself. One may be a “formalist” either with or without a prescribed form; and one may also worship truly and profitably with a liturgy or without one. Neither the Pharisee nor the Publican used a liturgy, both prayed extemporaneously; but the prayer of the one was the prayer of the lip only, and was unanswered, while the prayer of the other was the prayer of a broken heart, and secured, at once, the blessing of God. Both Judas and John often, no doubt, together joined in “Our Father, which art in heaven,” but there was mere unexpectant formality, nothing but empty words, when Judas uttered that prayer, while, when John uttered it, there thrilled through it upward to God a longing and loving spirits which obtained for itself in return the richest heavenly blessings.

Let us divest ourselves, then, of prejudice and misapprehension in regard to this matter. Liturgical worship is not necessarily a *hindrance* to spirituality in worship: *extempore* worship is not necessarily a *help* to it. The true worshiping spirit will always find its way to God whether it prays with a liturgy or without one, in the use of either method of approach into His presence, and will always come back to the duties and experiences of life strengthened with His might and radiant with His glory.

Our General Synod, in respect to both these common errors, occupies, I believe, the true middle ground. In her doctrinal basis, in her cultus or public worship, and, as the fruit of both, in her experimental and practical

Christian life, she exhibits, I believe, the true union of Lutheran orthodoxy and Lutheran piety; more perfectly perhaps than it has ever elsewhere been exhibited, or than it is now anywhere else exhibited.

She is, first of all, soundly *confessional*. Her genuine Lutheran orthodoxy is secured in or by her true and honest acceptance of the Augsburg Confession. To have, as her doctrinal basis, *less* than that Confession would make her less than truly and distinctively Lutheran: to have more than that she deems unnecessary, since, having that, she has all that is distinctively and essentially Lutheran, and that is all she wants.

With this soundness of Lutheran orthodoxy she possesses also an earnest, experimental, aggressive, evangelical piety. From the very beginning of her history our General Synod has asserted herself as the friend and promoter of a living Scriptural Christianity over against both a lifeless Rationalism and a lifeless Orthodoxy. There was, as we all know, a time in her history when, influenced by sects outside of herself, and when, forgetting her own true and better spiritual heritage, some of her churches came temporarily under the sway of a wild fanaticism. But that day in her history is about past, and she is now again, in this respect, true to herself and to her Lutheran origin and history. She knows that man, by nature, is under the curse of sin; that he needs new spiritual birth; that faith alone in Jesus Christ will save him. She recognizes God's Word and Sacrament, as "means of grace," or as instruments which the Holy Ghost uses by which to effect this needed spiritual renewal and this saving faith in Christ. She believes the Church of Christ, and herself as part of that Church, to be the bearer to the lost world of the grace which God offers. Hence she is diligent in her use of the "means of grace." She preaches the Word, she administers the Sacraments, she circulates the printed Scriptures, she publishes Christian literature, she enjoins piety in the home, she sustains Sunday-schools, she practices Catechization, she holds properly conducted "Protracted Meetings," she believes heartily in Scriptural "Revivals," she supports educational institutions, she prosecutes the work of Home and Foreign Missions, she cares for the orphan; in many ways she seeks to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ with its regenerating, comforting, uplifting and saving power, to the children of men. She is, indeed, no withered limb tied only on the out side of the Vine, but a true living branch of it, bearing much precious fruit to His praise and glory. Our General Synod, I repeat,

possesses and advocates a vital, experimental and genuinely evangelical piety.

In the atmosphere of such vital, experimental and genuinely evangelical piety, Wittenberg College, as I read her early history, was founded, and in that same thoroughly evangelical spirit and type of religious life has she also continued to this day. The type of her religious life was of the Halleian or Pietistic character. She has been conspicuously a "Revival College," visited repeatedly with mighty manifestations of the power of the Holy Ghost to quicken and save souls. Many in the ministry of our Lutheran Church today, were converted in these "times of refreshing" within the walls of old Wittenberg. In the days of her infancy, under the sainted Dr. Keller, and during the long and faithful presidency of Dr. Sprecher, this was repeatedly her blessed experience. And this, today, is still the type of her piety and of her religious experience. Forty-one years are now passed since I came as a student to Wittenberg College. During all these long years I have known her, and observed her closely, and have rejoiced in her abiding and ever deepening religious life. But with all that may be truly and thankfully said of her in this respect, in the past, I declare, most honestly, that never, at any time since I have known her, has Wittenberg College been in a better spiritual condition than she is in today. Never have I known a larger proportion of her students to be professing Christians, or more consistency in Christian conduct, or more activity in Christian work, or better attendance upon meetings for prayer, or manifestations of deeper interest and spirituality in them, or more missionary spirit and liberality in giving to the cause of missions, or more constant and earnest study of the Bible, or more candidates for the ministry, than there are there now. Only a few weeks ago, quietly and thought fully ten young men rose in one of the devotional meetings and expressed the determination, by the grace of God, to live henceforth a Christian life. Every young lady student in the College is a Christian. Thirty-four young men are now in the theological department, a larger number by far than has ever been in attendance at the same time before. About one hundred students gather voluntarily every Lord's Day afternoon and a large number each Tuesday evening also as a prayer-meeting; and it may not be immodest to add that some of the professors who have been held up before the Church as "Formalists," "Ritualists," "Sacramentalists," and what not, are always, if possible, present and join in and enjoy the services.

In the type of her piety Wittenberg College, therefore, has *not* departed from her original evangelical and positively spiritual character. She is, in this special respect, today where she has always been. She has not been “switched.” The doctrinal views, and the confessional attitude, of some who now occupy her chairs, do not probably accord with those of the godly men who, in her earlier history, occupied them. Her confessional basis has, as we know, been changed by virtue of the confessional change in the General Synod. Some of the methods, also, which were once employed in efforts to awaken souls and lead them to Christ may possibly not now be deemed the most Scriptural or best. But still, in the vital thing itself, in the real matter of aggressive, living, and evangelical piety, Wittenberg College is, today, where she has steadily been ever since, almost fifty years ago, the godly Dr. Keller knelt upon the unbroken sod of our now beautiful College campus, and, with uplifted eye and with heart pulsing with hope and faith, implored the benediction of heaven upon her. Today, as ever, is being realized the pious wish of her founders when they

“Resolved, That in humble reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and alone for His glory and honor, we, now in Synod assembled, do ordain and establish a Literary and Theological institution.” (Minutes of Synod of Ohio and Adjacent States, 1842, p 9.)

The relation of the General Synod to the matter of liturgical worship is well known. A glance at her minutes during her whole history will convince any one that she has always looked with large favor on liturgical worship, and has always declared uniformity in the public worship of our Lutheran churches, while not necessary, yet very desirable. Already in the year 1825 a committee was appointed “to prepare a Hymn-book, Liturgy, and Collection of Prayers, in the English language, for the use of our churches” (p. 9.) Action on liturgical worship was again taken in 1827, (p. 9); in 1831, (p. 8); and in 1835, (? 13-) 1° the Preface to her Liturgy, in 1847, an elaborate statement is made presenting ably the Scripturalness and advantages of the use of liturgical forms in worship. At repeated times, in subsequent years, similar action was taken, until at Washington, in 1869, our so-called old “Order of Public Worship” was adopted, and then, finally, at Omaha, in 1887, there was adopted and recommended what is known as the “Common Service.”

Our General Synod, therefore, in harmony with the historic Lutheran Church in all lands and times, has been steadily favorable to liturgical worship.

She has not, however, been arbitrary in the matter. She has always accorded to the churches the largest liberty in respect to the use of the prescribed forms which she prepares and recommends to them. She only *recommends* their use. She allows cheerfully to each church its own free choice, either to use the full Common Service, or the full old Order, or parts of each of them, or no part of either: a liberty large enough, surely, to hush, at once, the cry of “trying to *force* the Common Service on us!” The Preface to the “Com mon Service” is itself the best refutation of all such misrepresentation:

“This Service is not presented as obligatory upon the congregations. It is commended to them so long as its use serves to edification. Or, if the full Service is not desired, it is in conformity with Lutheran Usage to follow a simpler form, in which only the principal parts in their order are used. But for those who desire the complete Service, ample provision has been here made.”

And now it is remarkable how entirely in harmony with this liturgical attitude of our General Synod the fathers and founders of Wittenberg College also were. In the Minutes of the Seventh Session of the English Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Ohio and Adjacent States, convened at Washington, Guernsey county, Ohio, in October, 1842, at the very session when it was determined to establish Wittenberg College, this action was taken:

“*Resolved*, That inasmuch as many of the members of the Lutheran Church in Ohio are prejudiced against what they call”new measures,” therefore,

“*Resolved*, That this Synod recommend to all its members the importance of conforming, as much as possible, where practicable, to the customs, manners, forms and usages, of our fathers, without injuring the cause of vital godliness — and that they attend faithfully to the long established and excellent system of catechetical lectures, where it is expedient — and that they recommend uniformity in worship — and that in conducting revivals of religion, we be careful to obey the injunction of the apostles: ‘Let all things be done decently and in order’ — and that our licentiates and young men pay particular attention to these suggestions. But that we highly approve of extraordinary efforts to awaken sinners, and bring them to the knowledge of truth as it is in Christ.

Again, in 1843, this same Synod approved the action of the General Synod upon this subject, and adopted the following:

“They also speak of the importance of uniformity in public worship, and advise the adoption of an English Liturgy by the different synods in their connection, on the basis of the German liturgy adopted by several sister synods.” (*Minutes, p. 13.*)

And, once more, in 1845, *n the Report of the Committee on the President’s Report, there was taken this action:

“The fifth recommends uniformity in the public worship of our churches. Your committee would recommend that Synod advise the brethren to observe the resolution already passed on this subject at Washington, Guernsey county, Ohio, in 1842.” (*Minutes, p. 8.*)

Action was also taken in 1852, earnestly enjoining catechization upon the pastors and churches. (*Minutes, p. 32.*) In 1859, the East Ohio Synod calls the attention of pastors and people to the duty of infant baptism and urges its observance, declaring that “parents who do not subject their children to this ordinance cannot be considered” as consistent Lutherans. (*Minutes, p. 24.*) Again, in 1860, this Synod takes strong action in condemnation of ‘certain brethren of this Synod who have departed from the universal and exclusive mode of Baptism as practiced by the Lutheran Church, in that they have immersed individuals presenting themselves as subjects of this rite.” (*Minutes, p. 24.*)

In view of such evidences as these extracts furnish, it becomes quite manifest that there was not, after all, so much of a distinct “Type of Lutheranism,” and different especially from “General Council Lutheranism,” in these fathers and founders of Wittenberg College, as some men in our day would have us think. They were at least Lutheran enough to appreciate liturgical worship; to desire uniformity in worship; to recommend the practice of infant baptism; to condemn Lutheran preachers who baptized by immersion; to enjoin earnestly upon pastors and parents the catechization of the young and the Christian nurture of children, even from their in fancy, in the love and service of Christ. Possibly the ministry of some in our day who stand forth as the self-appointed defenders of these fathers and founders of Wittenberg College against the inroads into the institution of “High Church Lutheranism,” would not, if it were carefully

inquired into, be found measuring up to anything like such good Lutheranism as was theirs.

It now, in conclusion, only yet remains that I should frankly declare my position upon some of the controverted matters among us which enter into the worship, the Christian activities, and the experimental and practical life of the Church.

The charge has been made against me, as proof of my sympathy with the General Council type of Lutheranism, and of my disloyalty to the General Synod, that I am an open friend of liturgical worship, and am even an advocate of the "Common Service."

The charge, as the statement of a fact, is true: but where is the *guilt*? Does not, as we have seen, the whole history of the General Synod show that she her self is liturgical? Has not she herself recommended the use of the "Common Service" to the churches? Am I, then, disloyal to the General Synod when I favor and advocate liturgical services, or even the "Common Service" in our churches? Are *they* loyal to the General Synod, it might rather be asked, who not only do not use either of the Orders of Liturgical Worship which she provides, but who do not even use her hymn-book in their public services?

I am, I readily admit, a decided friend of liturgical worship; and if I could persuade all our churches to use the Common Service, I undoubtedly would do so. It is a Service recommended to the churches by the General Synod: it is thoroughly Scriptural; it would be in my judgment helpful to reverent and true worship; and it would serve to draw and bind together all our churches into a uniformity in our sanctuary services which is most desirable. And yet I would not be willing to see this Service, or any other, forced upon any of our churches, or the peace of any church disturbed in the least by the attempt to introduce it. If it is not voluntarily introduced by our churches, let it remain out forever. Pure doctrine is the really essential thing, not liturgy; and soundness in the faith is always in finitely more important than the most perfect uniformity in ceremonies and order of worship.

It has also been charged against me, as another proof of my "High Churchism," that I would "introduce the gown," implying that I attach great importance to its introduction, and that I am busying myself greatly in advocating its use.

Concerning this I will only say, that while I see no valid objection whatever to its use, and can even think also of some very decided benefits

or advantages from its use, yet I class it among the “*adiaphora*”, or things indifferent, would disturb the peace of no church either to introduce or exclude it, and am ready to preach any where either in the gown or without it. The Reformers all preached in it, and some of them, we must admit, our Luther for instance, did some quite effective preaching in those old gowns of theirs. Whitfield, also, was a passably good gospel preacher; yet he preached in a gown. John Wesley also managed to get off some right sound evangelical sermons in it. The great majority of Protestant preachers, of all denominations, all over Europe, today, preach habited in such “pulpit toggerly;” and yet many of them succeed right well in it to bring home divine truth. And even in this country of ours some pretty useful preachers, like Dr. Theodore Cuyler, and Dr. Parkhurst, and Dr. W. M. Taylor, and Dr. John Hall, and many more, do their preaching in it. And, on the other hand, hundreds and thousands of godly and able ministers, all over our land, preach every Lord’s Day, as we know, without it. Why then talk about the gown at all? Why suggest that its use is proof of disloyalty to the General Synod? Have we not all liberty in non-essentials?

Finally: I am charged with the offense of inculcating upon my students a special type of practical piety, and of impressing them with a religious spirit and life different from that which formerly prevailed in Wittenberg, and foreign to the whole spiritual genius of the General Synod.

This charge is made, indeed, against my colleagues in the Seminary as well as against myself, and together we are accused with seeking to “revolutionize” the character of the institution and to swing it completely away from all its past spirit and life.

There is but one way in which to meet a charge so groundless as this: namely, by a simple denial of its truth. The charge, I do, therefore, now most emphatically deny, and challenge our accusers to produce any proof whatever of our departure in this respect from the religious life of Wittenberg in the past. The high type of earnest spiritual life, of experimental piety, of heart religion wrought by the Holy Ghost through the truth, of deep personal godliness or holiness of character, showing itself in constant practical obedience to the will of God, this same high Scriptural ideal of a Christian life which was impressed upon Wittenberg nearly half a century ago, pervades and dominates her today. Humbly, yet faithfully, we are seeking to cherish the deep spiritual life which those who have gone before us possessed, and to carry steadily on the work which they so nobly

and usefully here prosecuted; and, by God's grace, thus will we do even to the end. Our piety is "Pietistic Lutheranism," of the Spener, Francke, Arndt, Mühlberg type. We believe in man's absolute need of regeneration; of a living faith in Christ as his Saviour; of progressive holiness; of a consistent godly life before the world; of a holy, active spiritual Church, doing all in her power to lead a lost world to God. We believe in fellowship with other Christians; in hearty cooperation with all who are Christ's in practical Christian work; in continued or protracted religious services, Scripturally conducted, for the Church's revival and for the awakening of sinners; in pastoral catechization and sound indoctrination of the young; in family worship and Christian nurture in the home; in a pious and earnest Gospel ministry; in daily closet prayer and reading and study of God's precious Word. We believe in the possession and exhibition, by all who profess Christ, of the spirit of Christ: the spirit of kindness, of gentleness, of forgiveness, of self-sacrifice, of love both to God and man. This is our faith and this is our spirit; and these, as all who know us can testify, we inculcate upon our students, by example and precept. This is the kind of "High Churchism" and "Formalism" of which we are guilty, and which we are bidding the young men under us to cherish and to carry out with them in their ministry into all the Churches. May God give us success in this good work!

With this full and frank statement of my theological views and position, I now cheerfully submit the decision, upon the "Charges" preferred against me, to the wise judgment of the Board.

The hour, I feel, is a solemn and critical one in the history of our beloved Wittenberg College. Great interests, connected with her future welfare, are, this moment, here at stake. Her destiny is possibly now being determined. This Board, therefore, as the guardian of her interests, can ill afford to make a mistake in the decision which today they render.

The influences of this hour reach, however, also beyond the limits of Wittenberg College. In view of the character of these "Charges" against me, and the grounds upon which I am assailed, the issue affects not myself only, or myself principally, but it affects the very life of our General Synod, and affects the whole matter of Lutheran unity and of the future destiny of our Lutheran Church in this land. Great Lutheran doctrines are, by this trial, being accepted or rejected. Great Lutheran principles are here being honored and recognized, or trampled under foot and violated. The eye of

the Church, today, is on us. The eye of God looks steadily and searchingly down upon us.

This, then, is no hour for prejudice or passion or mere love of victory to hold sway. Christ and His Church should, today, as always, have supreme place in our hearts. Love for the Truth of God's Word, as confessed by our Lutheran Church, should govern us infinitely more than love for ourselves. All personal considerations, whether of friendship or of enmity, should in this hour be entirely forgotten, and every heart should be swayed only with loving loyalty to Wittenberg College, to our General Synod, to our whole Lutheran Church, to the "Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints," everywhere, and, above all, to the Lord Jesus Christ, our one common Lord and Saviour, before whom in judgment we shall all soon stand, and with whom also we all, as His disciples, shall soon, I trust, dwell in eternal glory.

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1. "Spener, the best representative of Lutheran pietism, published an especial treatise in defense of the Formula of Concord. He maintains that its preparation and obligatory subscription were highly important:↵

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