1961

The Attitude of the Lutheran Church in America Toward the New Deal

Alfred Paul Klausler

Loyola University Chicago

Recommended Citation


This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License. Copyright © 1961 Alfred Paul Klausler
THE ATTITUDE OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH
IN AMERICA TOWARD THE NEW YEAR

by

Alfred Paul Klausler

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

June
1961
LIFE

Alfred Paul Klausler was born in Hankinson, North Dakota, February 22, 1910.

He was graduated from Concordia College (academy division) June, 1927, and Concordia College (junior division), St. Paul, Minnesota, June, 1929. He was graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, June, 1932, with a diploma of completion and a Bachelor of Divinity ranking.

He was ordained as a Lutheran clergyman August, 1934, and served as a parish pastor in Glendive, Montana, until July 1942, when he entered the U.S. Army as a chaplain. He was on active duty until January, 1946.

After leaving the Army, he was installed as executive secretary of the Department of Communications of the Walther League, a Lutheran youth organization.

He has taken several graduate courses in English and Journalism at the University of Minnesota, in theology at the University of Chicago, and one course in history at Columbia University.

The writer has written three popular types of religious books and one historical novel for youth.

He is also staff correspondent for the Christian Century and chief of chaplains for the 322d Logistical Command, USAR, with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.
PREFACE

In reading various histories about the rise and growth of religion in the United States, the writer noted that frequent mention was made about the "strict orthodoxy" or the "rigid confessionalism" of the Lutheran Church. The Social Gospel was especially anathema to Lutherans, for they believed that Christians ought to avoid involving themselves with social, political and economic problems. Lutherans generally held themselves aloof from secular matters. They believed that the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments were sufficient tasks for the church. They believed that if individuals were changed, then society would eventually be changed.

Then came the depression of the thirties and the New Deal — two historical facts which deeply involved man and society. What was the Lutheran attitude to governmental acts designed to improve man's social and economic condition?

This thesis examines first the general historical background of the Lutheran churches in America, the rise of the Social Gospel, and the coming of the depression and the New Deal. Then four major groupings of Lutheran bodies are studied. A brief presentation of each group's beginnings in America precedes the discussion of the group's attitudes toward the New Deal. The final chapter shows how the Lutherans gradually emerged from their isolation and began to take a greater interest in American life.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General theological and social background of the Lutheran churches in America—The rise of interest in the Social Gospel in American Protestantism—The increase of interest in Lutheranism in American conditions—The Wall Street stockmarket crash of October 1929 and the advent of the depression—The coming of the New Deal.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>THE UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH FACES THE NEW DEAL</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnic and theological background of the United Lutheran Church with particular attention on the Pennsylvania Ministerium—Minutes of the biennial conventions studied—News and editorial comment of ULC publications as related to the New Deal—Sermons of the thirties analyzed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH—THE CHURCH IN THE CENTER</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organization of the AIC by various middle west synods—Theological background and controversies with other Lutheran groups with attention given to socio-economic issues—Studies of synodical proceedings, church papers, sermons.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>THE SCANDINAVIAN LUTHERANS AND THE NEW DEAL</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Swedes and Norwegians in the middle west organize separate synods—Minnesota Lutherans react to Floyd B. Olson—The New Deal in its agricultural aspects and the churches' reaction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>CONSERVATISM ON THE DEFENSIVE AND ATTACK</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Missouri Synod Lutherans overcome language barrier—The theological wars of the nineteenth and twentieth century carried over into political attitudes—New Deal measures either attacked or ignored completely—Study of Missouri Synod publications.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VI. OUT OF THE SHELL

Gradual emergence of feeling of social and economic responsibility among Lutherans in America—Contrasts between various bodies—Obvious changes in Lutheran approaches of the sixth decade as contrasted with the fourth decade.

BIBLIOGRAPHY
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The various New Deal measures created violent dissent among many Americans and equally enthusiastic approval among an overwhelming majority of other Americans. The role of the Protestant churches in creating or dissipating dissent and approval is well worth examining. Among Protestant churches in America, the Lutheran church in previous centuries had expressed little concern with national social problems. Thus when political and social experimentation became part of the American scene in the Thirties, Lutheran church membership might conceivably adopt a hesitant or conservative attitude toward the various New Deal proposals. As this thesis will demonstrate, many Lutheran leaders expressed an innate conservatism or at times an open antagonism toward so-called radical governmental procedures.

In order to appreciate the significance of the Lutheran church's position toward the New Deal, it is well to keep in mind this church's origins. Its beginnings, of course, go back to the second and third decades of the sixteenth century in Germany when Martin Luther rejected papal authority. A combination of political, economic and cultural forces hastened a complete break with Rome. Although Luther disapproved the naming of his followers after him, the name "Lutheran" became the accepted term for all those who chose him as their inspiration and leader. By the time of his death in 1546 he had many followers in Germany and the Scandinavian countries.
The Lutheran theological position is stated in *The Book of Concord*. This massive volume contains the confessional statements which have guided Lutherans in all countries since 1530. The two principal documents in *The Book of Concord*—"The Augsburg Confession" and the "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," contain paragraphs which throw light on the Lutheran attitude toward the state.

The background of the "Augsburg Confession" may be briefly described thus: Emperor Charles V had issued a summons, dated January 21, 1530, for a meeting of the imperial diet at Augsburg, Germany. He hoped to put an end to the religious disunity in his empire. He asked that there be a discussion of the religious differences among the princes and the free cities. Upon the basis of the invitation the Elector of Saxony asked the professors of theology at the University of Wittenberg to prepare a statement of belief reflecting the faith of Luther's followers.

Article XVI, dealing with civil government, criticized the Anabaptists who had adopted an antagonistic attitude toward government. The Lutherans were at pains to emphasize their loyalty to their respective princes and their obedience to constituted authority.

It is taught among us that all government in the world and all established rule and laws were instituted and ordained by God for the sake of good order, and that Christians may without sin occupy civil offices or serve as princes and judges, render decisions and pass sentence according to imperial and other existing laws, punish evildoers with the sword, engage in just wars, serve as soldiers,

---

Condemned here are the Anabaptists who teach that none of the things indicated above is Christian.2

After the Lutherans had read the "Augsburg Confession" before Emperor Charles V, the Roman Catholic theologians prepared a refutation of various statements advanced in this Lutheran confession of belief. When the emperor demanded that the Lutherans accept the refutation, they refused and prepared a reply. This reply, known as the "Apology of the Augsburg Confession", was published, May, 1531.

The "Apology," and elaboration and a commentary on the original document, is also accepted by all Lutherans as a formulation of their faith. Of particular interest is the fact that the Lutheran position in regard to civil government, Article XVI, was "received with pleasure" by the Roman Catholic disputants. In the "Apology" there is an extensive statement of the Lutheran attitude toward government. The Lutherans were making every endeavor to placate the princes and to demonstrate that they had no concern with government beyond the fact that government should allow the Lutherans to pursue their particular mission.

Christ's kingdom is spiritual; it is the knowledge of God in the heart, the fear of God and faith, the beginning of eternal righteousness and eternal life. At the same time it lets us make outward use of the legitimate political ordinances of the nation in which we live, just as it lets us make use of medicine or architecture, food or drink or air. The Gospel does not introduce any new laws about the civil estate, but commands us to obey the existing laws, whether they were formulated by heathen or by others, and in this obedience to practice love....Our doctrine does not weaken but rather strengthens the authority of magistrates and the value of civil ordinances generally.3

2Ibid., p. 37.
3Ibid., p. 223.
The "Apology" once more severely condemns the Anabaptists who had adopted a rather cavalier attitude toward property. The Lutherans strongly insisted that every man had the right to possess property. They also emphatically stated that contracts, recourse to courts, the safeguarding of property rights was the legitimate function of government and that Christians had every right to appeal to the civil authorities for protection of these rights.

In Article XXVIII the Lutherans declare their belief in two realms, the state and the church. These must be kept separate; for the spiritual authority alone has the right to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. On the other hand, "temporal authority is concerned with matters altogether different from the Gospel. Temporal power does not protect the soul, but with the sword and physical penalties it protects body and goods from the power of others." The same article emphatically states that the church "should not annul temporal laws or undermine obedience to the government."

The Lutheran church supported the government as long as it did not interfere with the church's right to preach the Gospel. In the Scandinavian countries and in the German states where Lutheranism was dominant, the Lutheran church became the established church. As the established church Lutheranism was bound to do two things: support the government and look with a frowning eye upon anyone or anything disturbing the political status quo. A modern Scandinavian Lutheran theologian, who has studied the history of the Lutheran church, comments as follows:

\[\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 83}.\]
One result of this distinction between the two realms is that in Lutheran countries the Church has regarded it as its duty to hold itself aloof to a large extent from political life. Lutheranism theologians have emphasized the autonomy of the State. Certain fields of human activity such as politics and economics have their own laws with which the Church has no right to interfere. Lutheran theologians can even maintain that politics have nothing whatever to do with Christian ethics.5

Eighteen years after Martin Luther's death, the first Lutherans come to Colonial America. In 1564, Admiral de Coligny, the great French Huguenot leader, established a settlement near present-day St. Augustine, Florida, over which Spain had dominion. We next read that "whereupon Pedro Menendez was dispatched under commission 'to destroy the Lutheran French there.'" There then occurred the "Massacre of Fort Caroline" in which two hundred and thirty-three members of the settlement were beheaded. Over the graves was placed the inscription, "We slew them not as Frenchmen, but as Lutherans."6

The first big wave of Lutherans migrating to colonial America occurred between 1624 and 1643. The Thirty Years' War served as an impetus to drive Lutherans from their homes in Germany. Most of these Lutherans settled in New Amsterdam. Here they suffered considerable abridgment of their religious freedom through the maneuvering of the Reformed church and New Amsterdam's governor, Peter Stuyvesant. Not until 1664, when the English took over the Dutch colony, were the Lutherans granted complete freedom according to their confessions.


6Louis J. Schwartskopf, The Lutheran Trail (St. Louis, 1950), p. 1. The author does not cite the source for this quotation.
In the latter part of the seventeenth century Lutherans migrated in increasing numbers to America. Most of the immigrants came from Germany and the majority settled in Pennsylvania. It is estimated that by the middle of the eighteenth century there were perhaps 60,000 Lutherans in that colony alone. There were also Lutheran settlements in Georgia, South and North Carolina, Virginia, New Jersey, Maryland and Delaware.

Under the leadership of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, the first Lutheran synod in America, known as the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, was organized in 1748. Thereafter other synods were organized on regional lines. It is worth noting in passing that the Muhlenberg family played a significant role in the Revolutionary War, in the formation of state governments, and in the establishment of the Federal government.

Now that the Lutherans were firmly established in colonial America, they broke their organizational ties with the established churches in Europe. They felt that as Lutherans they were also Americans and were free of European ties. By the middle of the nineteenth century Lutherans were a significant part of the American scene and as the immigrants poured into the middle west, Lutherans established congregations and organised synods in profusion. In the ten years preceding the Civil War four large Lutheran synods were organized. By 1870 there were 400,000 Lutherans and the Lutheran church stood fourth among Protestant churches. Even more startling was the growth of the church in the years between 1870 to 1910. Confirmed memberships grew to nearly 2,250,000.

---

7 Historical details and census figures obtained from Census of Religious Bodies: 1936, Volume II, Part 2, United States Department of Commerce. (Washington, 1941).
The Lutherans now held third rank in Protestantism, outnumbered only by the Methodists and Baptists. In the 1936 religious census Lutherans numbered 1,244,890 members in 11,788 churches.

The Lutherans were generally well instructed and indoctrinated in their confessional positions. In the colonial days when there was a shortage of clergymen Lutheran leaders frequently complained about the lack of proper religious instruction among the laity. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, systematic instruction in religious doctrines was more general. As a result of this instruction, which was firmly based on the confessional writings of the sixteenth century, Lutherans were less inclined to be swept away by the religious fervor of revival movements or to become enamored of new theological approaches to religious problems.

Another factor which kept Lutherans from becoming involved in some of the religious, cultural and political movements of the nineteenth century was the persistence of quarrels among the various Lutheran synods over the correct interpretations of Scriptural doctrines and confessional principles. The Lutherans from the German provinces and state churches insisted on the importance of certain creedal positions while the Lutherans from Swedish, Norwegian and Danish churches felt that the German Lutherans were neglecting other great doctrinal principles. For example, the Lutherans migrating from Saxony, Germany, had to battle the spirit of rationalism which had infected the established church. Hence these Lutherans insisted upon an absolute orthodoxy
and confessional loyalty. On the other hand, many of the Scandinavian Lutherans wrestled with the problems of pietism and revivalistic fervor. They felt that these were contrary to the spirit of Lutheranism. Quarrels arose between the synods, most of them organized originally on a nationalistic basis. Thus a complete unification of the Lutherans was never accomplished. Much of this disputation between synods was carried over into the twentieth century even though Lutherans always agreed among themselves to accept the confessional writings as contained in the Book of Concord. To the non-Lutheran this always remained a strange and bewildering paradox: the Lutherans agreed on confessional principles but refused to form a united denomination.

When the Social Gospel began to be discussed in the Protestant churches in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, Lutherans paid it some attention although they did not regard it of paramount importance in the church's theological life. They felt that the Social Gospel did not belong in the life and work of their church. Despite Lutheranism's negative approach to the Social Gospel and its chief advocate, Walter Rauschenbusch, the ideas of this non-Lutheran theologian did create at least some concern for social problems, as will be shown in later chapters.

For this reason it is of value to examine briefly the rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism. Augustus Rauschenbusch, father of Walter, was

---

It is outside the purpose of this thesis to examine the various theological disputation between the synods. An interesting account of the problems faced by a large group of Saxon Lutherans may be found in Walter O. Forster's Zion on the Mississippi (St. Louis, 1953).
the sixth in an unbroken line of Lutheran ministers. He came to America from Germany in 1846 as a Lutheran minister among the German immigrants of New York City. He left the Lutheran church in the 1850's because of doctrinal differences with fellowchurchmen and became a Baptist. Walter Rauschenbusch also entered the Baptist ministry and became pastor of the Second German Baptist Church on the edge of New York's notorious "Hell's Kitchen" in 1886. Here he had intimate contact with poverty. He saw children suffering from malnutrition. He agonized over the vile living conditions of his parishioners. In his reading he discovered Henry George and felt that in the writings of this reformer-economist he had the answers to the ills of his times. He felt that the Christian view of wealth was at variance with what the Bible taught. But he was faced with a dilemma. On the one hand he had his own personal religious life, and on the other he had caught a larger social outlook as he observed life in the New York slums and in the fashionable areas of the city.

Rauschenbusch felt strongly that the way the ordinary and average Christian believed and conducted himself in contemporary America did not cover all aspects of the Gospel message. He wanted justice for the workingman. He hit upon the idea of the Kingdom of God, a familiar Scriptural concept, and applied it to social and ethical problems. In his sermons he stated that wherever the Kingdom of God was fully realized the social and industrial problems of the mechanization of industry would be solved. Other aspects of Rauschenbusch's Kingdom of God consisted in the rigid control of the stock market, the breaking up of monopolies, the recognition of labor unions, governmental ownership of railroads.

With the publication of Christianity and the Social Crisis in 1907
Rauschenbusch achieved international fame which went far beyond theological circles. The preceding years had been marked by some recognition in church circles but those years seemed more memorable for the studious indifference with which his writings and sermons in various church journals were greeted. Lutherans in particular greeted the advent of the Social Gospel with a re-emphasis on the true function of the Christian church, namely to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. Indeed it almost seemed that the Lutherans purposely snubbed Rauschenbusch because of his one-time Lutheran background.

When the Lutherans of the Missouri Synod established their first learned theological publication in English in 1897, the Theological Quarterly, they devoted a major portion of the first issue to a lengthy review and discussion of Lyman Abbott's Christianity and Social Problems (Boston, 1896) without once mentioning Rauschenbusch, although Abbott's ideas were freely borrowed from Rauschenbusch. They commended Abbott for the brilliance of his writing but pointed out repeatedly that Christianity cannot legislate love and morals. "Christianity is a religion...not a social order or a political theory intended to supplant other theories." 

---


This, of course, was the typical Lutheran point of view and undoubtedly it would be unfair to expect a sudden alteration of belief and opinion. Thus it was natural for the reviewer to conclude with the statement, "The Gospel is not an aggregate of social principles, but a means of grace, and was not entrusted to the state, but to the Church, by Him who has ordained that civil government should bear the sword."

Despite the rather cold dismissal of the efforts of the social gospellers, there was a certain awareness among Lutherans at the turn of the century that economic life in the United States was not bringing security or well-being to everyone. In 1903 a Lutheran editorial writer declared that "the Church must in some way learn to touch the everyday life of the toiler with the finger of divine love. It must apply the Christianity it professes. It must stoop to conquer — go down to where men are. A new method must be combined with the old of preaching the Gospel."

Rauschenbusch felt that the Baptist, the Congregational, and the Lutheran churches were well-fitted to undertake a movement for social justice. He believed that these three Protestant groups had a glorious revolutionary past and ought to carry on the tradition. In an article in the Christian Socialist, "The Social Call to the Lutheran Churches of America," he challenged the Lutherans to become revolutionary once more. He pointed out his own Lutheran ancestry and indicated that he was deeply involved in the Lutheran church's revolutionary heritage. He felt that the Lutherans had become conservative with the passing of the centuries. He cried out "Let the Lutheran churches remember

---

their own brave revolutionary beginnings and summon up the daring spirit of the youthful Luther in his noblest days, when he was the voice of his nation and its darling, and embodied in his big, heroic heart all the noblest aspirations after national unity, social justice, moral health, and religious sincerity. ¹²

But the Lutherans did not accept the challenge. An examination of Lutheran periodicals issued during 1910 and 1911 reveals an almost insulting silence in response to this call to social action. Almost two years after the Rauschenbusch appeal there appeared an editorial in the Lutheran Review which made no reference to this summons to Christian action. ¹³ After a lengthy analysis of the problems of suffering, economic disturbances, unemployment, and poverty, the writer concluded with the statement that the true function of the Lutheran church is always to preach the Gospel. Where there is the proper preaching of the Gospel, there will be eventual amelioration of the dislocations of modern economic life.

Despite the many disclaimers uttered by Lutherans that they were interested only in the administration of the Word, there was an awakening of interest among all Lutheran groups in the social problems of America. This interest manifested itself mainly in the medical care of Lutherans unable to support themselves during a lengthy illness. As an example of devotion to helping those unable to provide proper medical care, Lutherans established a sanatorium in 1906 in Wheat


¹³Lutheran Review, XXX, (December 7, 1911), p. 25.
Ridge, Colorado, to which tubercular Lutherans might come to obtain a hoped-for "cure." Lutherans also set up orphanages and home-finding societies in various parts of the nation. However, these agencies were in many instances patterned after similar denominational agencies operating in Germany and the Scandinavian countries. The establishment of a sanatorium or an orphanage did not prove that the Lutherans had become aware of the social problems of the nation and wished to do something to ameliorate or eliminate these problems. Nevertheless, the mere fact that they had to work in the area involving social welfare meant that Lutherans would be forced to become aware of situations and tendencies in American life which could not be cured by the preaching of the Gospel alone.

During World War I days the German-speaking element of Lutheranism suffered from the attacks of the super-patriots. Because their church services were still held in the German language in most instances, Lutherans were held suspect. They were considered oftentimes to be the agents of Kaiser Wilhelm II. Despite the disclaimers and despite the protestations of their innocence, they frequently had to suffer the ignominy of being called pro-German. The Lutheran cause was not helped by the fact that in their parochial schools they taught German along with other prescribed subjects. The pages of Der Lutheraner, which continued publication during World War I, are filled with accounts of petty persecution and editorials stating that Lutherans were as loyal as their neighbors who spoke English and had English-sounding names.

As World War I continued, the draft reached German Lutheran families and soon many Lutheran boys were in the armed services of the nation. The elders of the church continued to counsel loyalty to the nation, but it remained for Lutheran youth groups to decide to do something specific and positive for their
fellow Lutherans now bearing arms. In particular, the Walther League, the youth group of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, supported an Army and Navy Service Commission which supplied Lutheran soldiers and sailors with prayer books and New Testaments in the English language. This act in itself was revolutionary since the Lutheran servicemen had received their religious instruction, in the majority of instances, in German. Now Lutherans were being forced to receive spiritual solace in the English medium, the language of America. Obviously this would impel them to achieve greater awareness of American life and society.

By the end of the twenties Lutherans were supporting a large network radio program broadcasting the Lutheran Hour. This program helped much to remove suspicion about Lutherans generally while Lutherans themselves felt that they were becoming more and more a part of American life. Lutheran governors and senators in such states as Minnesota, North Dakota, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania demonstrated to the nation that Lutherans had become a part of the American scene.

Language barriers were down at last even though doctrinal barriers were still up and would continue to be kept up. It took the resounding Wall Street market crash of 1929 and the coming depression days to make Lutherans realize that they were part of the American community. They did not live on an island. The elaborate expenditures and indebtedness they had incurred for churches, parochial schools, colleges and seminaries involved them in the American economy. They were participants in the Coolidge prosperity even though they did not agree with Bruce Barton’s *The Man Nobody Knows*, a biography of Jesus which
Walter League Messenger, XXXIV (July 6, 1926). In an editorial, "Americanism — Lutheranism: Each Needs the Other," there is a denunciation of many aspects of American Christianity, but at the same time the writer says, "In our congregational work, young people should assist in making the adoption of American policies and methods possible." He comments favorably on salesmanship in the church and wants a positive public relations attitude. p. 672.


per cent in expenditures over a ten-year period indicates that Lutherans were also participating in a wealth they had never before experienced. An examination of a variety of Lutheran periodicals, lay and professional, reveals no comment of a critical kind about the prosperity from which the churches were also benefiting. Lutherans were concerned with the "regeneration of individuals and not the reformation of the social order." 17

One historian in studying the depression years during the thirties made the observation that "the period 1929-1941 began with a domestic debacle which stemmed from many causes, but perhaps the most basic was selfish blindness to the bond between group welfare and the satisfaction of the individual." 18 In this statement may also be found an indictment of the Protestant churches and, of course, also the Lutheran churches.

In his discussion of the October 29, 1929, Wall Street market crash, Frederick Lewis Allen comments: "No matter how many soothsayers of high finance proclaimed that all was well, no matter how earnestly the President set to work to repair the damage with soft words and White House conferences a major depression was inevitably under way. Nor was that all. Prosperity is more than an economic condition; it is a state of mind.... There was hardly a man or woman in the country whose attitude toward life was not now affected by the

17 The quotation is an amalgam of similar ones found in the writings of Rauschenbusch. See also Reinhold Niebuhr's Reflections on the End of an Era. (New York, 1934).

sudden and brutal shattering of hope."

As economic tragedy disrupted the lives of millions of Americans there were many attempts made to explain the cause of the stock market collapse. Margin-purchasing of stocks gave everyone from bellboys to bankers a deeper interest in speculative trading. There was a general feeling that the times were ripe for a quick killing of the stock market. Herbert Hoover placed the blame directly on the economic collapse of Europe. "But, standing alone, even the stock speculation, the other domestic adjustments, and our weak banking system, could not have created the degree of ultimate wreckage that occurred in the United States, had we not had panic in Europe."

As the thirties dawned it was obvious that there was indeed a terrible economic catastrophe overwhelming the nation. By the end of 1930, the stock market had dropped lower than at the time of the crash in October, 1929. Over a thousand banks had closed during 1930. Unemployment continued to grow and it was estimated that by the end of 1930 there were six million jobless. "There was a general sense that something had gone wrong with individualistic capitalism and must be set right — how could it be otherwise, with the existing system dragging millions of families down toward hunger and want?"

The remaining years of Hoover's administration were marked by a continuing

---

19 Only Yesterday, p. 338.


21 Only Yesterday, p. 355.
decline in the nation's economy. Despite Hoover's efforts to "prime the pump," unemployment increased. Nevertheless, he was renominated for the presidency by the Republicans. The Democrats nominated Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York. The stage was now set for a dramatic political campaign. According to Senator Alben Barkley, Democratic keynote speaker, "We must by a major operation remove from the body of our nation the dead flesh and decaying bones resulting from twelve years of Republican quackery."22 Roosevelt told reporters on the eve of delivering his acceptance speech, "We will break the foolish traditions and leave it to the Republican leadership to break promises. Ours must be a party of liberal thought, of planned action, of enlightened international outlook and of the greatest good to the greatest number."23

Roosevelt's campaign electrified the nation. Although his promises of specific help were rather vague, the voters liked what they saw and heard. By eleven o'clock on the night of the election, November 8, 1932, the election was over and shortly after midnight President Hoover conceded defeat. A total of 39,731,270 votes had been cast. The Democrats received 22,809,638 votes; the Republicans 15,758,901; the minority parties 1,163,181 votes.

The time for drastic economic action had come. As inauguration day approached, national income had dropped to less than half of what it had been in 1928. "Nearly thirteen million Americans — about one quarter of the labor force — were desperately seeking jobs. The machinery for sheltering and feeding the

22Time, XX, July 4, 1932, p. 18.

23Ibid., XX, July 11, 1932, p. 21.
the unemployed was breaking down everywhere under the growing burden. And a few hours before, in the early morning before the inauguration, every bank in America had locked its doors. It was now not just a matter of staving off hunger. It was a matter of seeing whether a representative democracy could conquer economic collapse. It was a matter of staving off violence, even (at least some so thought) revolution."  

Roosevelt did not delay action. He called Congress into special session on March 5. Within one hundred days a series of acts and executive orders showed the nation that a "New Deal" had been launched. What the Lutheran church's reactions to these legislative acts and executive orders were will be examined in greater detail in the succeeding chapters of this thesis.

The chief acts of the Roosevelt administration in the early days of office can be summarized as follows: The export of gold was forbidden, the nation was taken off the gold standard, a national bank holiday was declared, and the return of 3.2 per cent beer was authorized. In order to help the fifteen million unemployed and the six million on state and municipal charity rolls, Roosevelt proposed various types of relief. There was to be direct aid to the states for feeding and clothing those in need. Workers were to be given jobs. There were to be public works. The PWCA (Public Works Administration) was to stimulate heavy industry. This was a "pump-priming" agency. There was the CCC

(Civilian Conservation Corps), designed to take young men off city streets and
to give them jobs in healthful surroundings as they helped restore or build up
America's natural resources. The CWA (Civil Works Administration), which got
under way November 15, 1933, provided immediate jobs, although these jobs might
be of short duration. The PERA (Federal Emergency Relief Act) provided the
needed food and clothing. The Emergency Farm Mortgage Act provided for the
refinancing of farm mortgages. The TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority Act) set up
the unified development of the Tennessee Valley. There was also the HOLC
(Home Owners' Loan Act) which helped home owners to refinance their home
mortgages.

One of the controversial acts of the New Deal was Section 7A of the NIRA
(National Industrial Recovery Act), for this section of the act required that
all codes for manufacturers required also collective bargaining through
representatives of labor's own choosing. Minimum hours, minimum wages and
conditions of labor were established in the section. Labor had won the right
to organize in past generations but employers could also, as they frequently did,
fire employees for union activity or for joining a union. The intent of Section
7A was noble in purpose. The difficulty was that the section did not clarify
the problem of company unions, nor did it spell out the problem of the closed
shop. Labor and management would have to sit down and bargain with each other.
On the whole, labor regarded the section as one more bit of evidence that the

---

25 Herbert Hoover, p. 433-439. Hoover correctly describes the provisions
of the act, but is extremely denunciatory.
New Deal was favorably inclined toward the working man. John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers since 1920, said of the entire NIRA, "From the standpoint of human welfare and economic freedom, we are convinced that there has been no legal instrument comparable with it since President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation."26 There was no doubt that as the result of Section 7A labor now could organize, strike, and develop itself into a meaningful part of American industrial life.

The AAA (Agricultural Administration Act) asked for "adjusted production" in such commodities as wheat, corn, cotton, hogs, rice, tobacco and dairy products. As the act was carried into effect America saw the strange sight of thousands of acres of cotton ploughed under. Wheat and corn acreage was also limited. Through this limitation of production it was hoped that farmers would receive adequate prices for the crops they did raise.

These, in brief, were a few of the acts of Roosevelt's New Deal that brought about reactions in many areas of American life, not the least in the area of American church life, specifically Protestantism and Lutheranism. Will Herberg aptly commented: "As American social life became more complex, and as Protestantism itself became more and more an institutional reflection of certain strata of middle-class America, the religious individualism remaining from frontier religion began to serve as a means of ignoring and evading the social

26 The Coming of the New Deal, p. 136-151. Lewis quotation p. 139.
problems that were arising in the New America of big cities and modern industry.\textsuperscript{27}

Now there was an administration whose president said: "Today there is emerging a real and forceful belief on the part of the great mass of the people that honest, intelligent and courageous government can solve many problems which the average individual cannot face alone in a world where there are no longer one hundred and twenty acres of good free land for everybody."\textsuperscript{28}


\textsuperscript{28}Franklin D. Roosevelt, \textit{The Public Papers and Addresses} (New York, 1938), Volume VIII, p. 65.
CHAPTER II

THE UNITED LUTHERAN CHURCH FACES THE NEW DEAL

Although The United Lutheran Church in America was organized November 15, 1918, it may still be considered the oldest Lutheran group in the United States since the constituent synods then made formal unofficial cooperative agreements dating back to colonial days. For example, two of the larger synods, the Ministerium of Pennsylvania and the Ministerium of New York, date back to 1743 and 1786.

In order to understand The United Lutheran Church's attitude toward some of the changes of the thirties, particularly in the area of economic and social change, a rapid glance at its historical development will serve as a base of understanding. In addition, the reaction of The United Lutheran Church to various New Deal measures and proposals will also become clearer.

Records of Lutheranism in colonial America are sparse and the records of the first Lutheran services held in Pennsylvania, the center of the Lutheran population in America in the latter half of the seventeenth century, offer few dates and places. Not until after 1700 did Lutheranism take on a more organized aspect, particularly in Pennsylvania. Credit for this pioneer work belongs to the Reverend Justus Falckner who came from Halle, Germany, to do both mission work and to gather the Lutherans into congregations. He found mostly Germans, although there were Lutherans of many other nationalities in the state. However, he did not find an eager group of worshipers. Many of the Lutherans had
gone over to other sects. In a letter to a mission society in Halle, Germany, he wrote, "In short there are Germans here, and perhaps the majority despise God's word and all outward good order; who blaspheme the sacraments, and frightfully and publicly give scandal." \(^1\)

With the arrival of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, a graduate of the University of Gottingen, on September 22, 1742, organized Lutheranism in America began to flourish. From the time of his installation on December 27, 1743, at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Philadelphia, until his death on October 7, 1787, Muhlenberg led an intensely active, creative life as a Lutheran leader. Both he and his family made notable contributions to America's colonial life. One of his sons, Peter M., became vice-president of Pennsylvania while Benjamin Franklin was president; another son, Frederick A., was a member of Congress, 1789 to 1797, and served as speaker of the first and third session.

Muhlenberg demonstrated a genuine social and religious concern not only for the German immigrants but also for the Indians and Negro slaves. In his diary there is this typical comment: "When one looks at these poor people, one deplores their blindness and darkness; and when they look at us, they think we are to be deplored, which is true in so far as we have the light and for the most part do not walk in the light but love darkness more than the light!" \(^2\)

---

\(^1\) Julius Friedrich Sachse, *Justus Falckner* (Philadelphia, 1903), p. 43.

Muhlenberg's primary interest always remained the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the two sacraments, Holy Baptism and the Holy Supper. His interest in the social welfare of his parishioners was centered mainly around his concern for the prevalence of drinking and the spread of taverns. Drinking created poverty. His diaries reveal many instances where Lutheran groups in various localities were completely demoralized by drink.

One of Muhlenberg's great contributions to organized Lutheranism in the United States was the founding of The Ministerium of Pennsylvania, "the mother synod of the Lutheran Church in America," in 1748. The confessional basis of the synod was The Book of Concord and the Holy Bible. By the time Muhlenberg's ministry had come to an end, Lutherans in colonial Pennsylvania numbered some five-hundred heads of families in Philadelphia alone. His personal motto, Ecclesia Plantanda, the church must be planted, was amply carried out in his life.

During these colonial years Lutheran clergymen did not, as a rule, participate in politics or in reform movements. They felt that the church and state must be kept separate. They felt they were, above all, spiritual caretakers. Muhlenberg, for example, said that he scrupulously kept politics out of the pulpit. He said that he and his fellow-ministers were in the world to preach repentance, faith, godliness. These were the direct means to heal political wounds and bring about a better life. The Lutheran clergy constantly emphasized loyalty to the government. They prayed for their political rulers, their lawmakers, and for the peace of their country. They were on the side of the revolutionary cause and American independence because they feared the
possibility of an established church.  

During these years Lutherans spoke mainly German. Minutes of their various synods were always in German. Only occasionally is there a record of a Lutheran pastor preaching in English. In many respects these Lutherans of The Pennsylvania Ministerium formed a cultural island and remained aloof from many frontier developments. They were known as hardy and industrious farmers and small-town businessmen.

Muhlenberg would undoubtedly have been gratified, had he been present at the formation of The United Lutheran Church in 1918, at the size of the Lutheran group that owed its origin to his efforts. By 1918 The Pennsylvania Ministerium counted as its fellow-members forty-five synods, 2,754 pastors 3,747 congregations, and 757,886 communicants, and slightly over one-million baptized members. During the twenties and early thirties the church's growth is relatively modest. In 1937 there are 2,836 pastors serving 3,961 congregations. The number of baptized members had risen to 1,558,115. In Pennsylvania there were 601,684 Lutherans in 1,635 congregations. The majority of these Lutherans were affiliated with The Pennsylvania Ministerium. No exact statistics are available as to the languages used in divine worship services in the thirties.

3Abdel Ross Wents, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia, 1955). The writer is indebted to Dr. Wents's account of Lutheranism in colonial times.

4L. Fuerbringer, Editor, The Concordia Cyclopaedia (St. Louis, 1927), p. 778.

because the Lutheran World Almanac dropped the listing of German, as well as other languages, after World War I.

While it might be true to a certain extent that Lutheranism as a whole "persisted in its historic reluctance to engage upon affairs of the state and the world" during the thirties, an examination of synodical minutes and church publications shows that Lutherans of The United Lutheran Church were deeply conscious of the significance of the depression and the New Deal. They involved themselves in the social and economic events of the thirties far more than they ever did in previous decades.

When The United Lutheran Church met for its biennial convention in 1932, President Frederick H. Knobel in his presidential report stated that the economic and social picture in the United States was far from rosy. He said that the present depression was not necessarily good for the life of the church and that it did not necessarily follow that a spiritual awakening was inevitable. He lamented the decline in the circulation of church papers and that no one among the laity seemed unduly alarmed about the decline. He stated that benevolent gifts had fallen off in a most distressing manner.

"The world has not sobered in the least, for its frenzy is now revealed in dazed bewilderment. Riches have flown and financiers have been found as fools, but for the depression men continue to cry that big plans be made, with quick results." But the president was more alarmed that congregations would engage


in grandiose plans, such as large building projects, to bring back prosperity. Such a way is a sure indication that God is forgotten in man's calculations, the president told the convention. However, President Knubel did not offer an economic solution for the present distress affecting the church's members. He stated that the answer would be found in evangelism, for evangelism will purge the church of forgetfulness of God and the repentant spirit will return once more. He concluded his presidential address by emphasizing the church's task to preach Jesus Christ.

The Report of the Committee on Moral and Social Welfare expressed a slight disagreement with President Knubel's main concern. The committee stated that much more needed to be done for the social welfare of all people in the nation. The committee readily confessed that it did not know the "what," "why," and "how" in bringing help. It did list the chief social ills of the times: gambling, racketeering (by individuals and corporations), exploitation of natural resources, bribery in all areas of American life. The committee asked that the church should serve as a "conscience for the world." It furthermore asked the church to recognize its responsibility "for the realization of God's will for the temporal and eternal welfare of all mankind." 8

The committee reported that the church need not set up a new program providing the church remained faithful to its task of getting all members to be Christian. "When a man is identified with God through communion, God communicates love for fellowman to his heart and spiritual impulse is begotten,

---

8 Ibid., p. 417.
which is first compassion, then passion, and then personal concern and Christ-like service." 9

The convention adopted the report and resolved that "it expresses its deepest concern over the 'distress arising from present economic conditions.' It implores its members everywhere to use this opportunity to demonstrate the spirit of Christ through kind, sympathetic assistance wherever it can be given .... It declares it to be its conviction that the practice of true Christian Brotherhood and Stewardship is the only universally effective security for economic and social justice." 10

In the biennial convention of 1934, President Knobel declared that "it is the president's conviction that it was the most critical biennium since the first one in our history." He pointed out the distress and tensions created by the depression. He said that there had been many "critical meetings" of church officials to deal with calls for economic help to congregations and members. 11

In the Report of the Department of Church Extension and Finance committee members reported that they had many "heart-breaking sessions" as they dealt with churches on the verge of losing newly-built structures. The report also stated that despite the "unspeakable chaos in the financial world" many of the church's investments were still safe. 12

9 Ibid., p. 418.

10 Ibid., p. 418.


12 Ibid., p. 200.
This concern to protect the financial investments of congregations was again expressed by The Department of Church Extension and Finance Report at the 1936 convention. "The primary concern of the Department of Church Extension during the last biennium has been to conserve to the church those congregations faced with dissolution because of the loss of their church properties through foreclosure proceedings."13

The Report of the Committee on Moral and Social Welfare, while making no direct reference to various New Deal measures, discussed at considerable length the problems of social reconstruction, "including re-employment, proper housing, relief from abject poverty, the abolition of class feeling and all measures conducive to the realization of Christian brotherhood." The report stated that "the exploitation of wage-earners ought not to be tolerated in civilized society. Ruthless predatory competition among business enterprises should be halted, the looting of small investors through the low practices of 'corporation sharks' should be regarded as a crime drastically to be dealt with by society."14

The committee urged that Lutherans must work hard to bring about an increasingly Christian economic order. At the same time the committee emphasized that the root cause of the disorder was sin and recommended that Christian stewardship be practiced.

When the Pennsylvania Ministerium met in 1934, its president, the Reverend Ernst P. Pfatteicher, declared that "the only cure for what ails the world is


14Ibid., p. 372.
justification by faith rather than sanctification by method." The president expanded on this assertion: "Since we have become engulfed in major social problems, the attack upon our problems from the standpoint of sin, or of the righteousness of God, has largely receded into the background. Our social welfare planning of today is largely a matter of charts, pulse-beats, migrations, hospitalization, housing, birth-control, the sordid details of sordid case work.... There is no such thing as an earthly paradise by human planning." 15

Reports and addresses at church conventions echo the writing and discussion that has taken place in the church during the preceding year. While there is no specific mention of the New Deal in the convention proceedings, an examination of church publications of The United Lutheran Church reveals that clergy and laity were aware of the actions and implications of the New Deal.

In the Lutheran Church Quarterly, professional publication for the clergy, there were articles and sermons throughout the depression years dealing with social and economic attitudes of the church. In the April, 1934, issue, the Reverend Martin Schroeder criticized his church for not offering solutions for the distressing economic problems. "We are not a socially aggressive denomination," the pastor wrote. He complained that the church insisted on preaching the Gospel but did not give the individual help and direction in applying the Gospel to the current economic problems. "Our theoretical

---

inflexibility cuts the individual life into halves, the one serving the state and the other God."16 The same note of rebellion against the church's passivity appears in succeeding issues of the journal. The clergy are exhorted to obtain a better grasp of social problems and to step into the arena of political life, not as politicians but as men of the Gospel who are angered over the exploitation of the depressed.

It is in the pages of The Lutheran, especially in the issues of 1932, 1933, and 1934, that one finds specific comment on the depression and the New Deal. There is a progressive growth in appreciation of the critical situation of the nation. There is also a growth in appreciation of some of the New Deal measures designed to alleviate suffering.

Just before the 1932 presidential election, the lead editorial in The Lutheran states that "congregations should take care of their own household first. They are not selfish in so doing. They take that much of a burden off the municipal, county and state agencies, and at the same time bear witness to the reality of the Christian fellowship." But the writer confesses that conditions are not improving. There are many undernourished children and parishes are urged to report them to civic agencies. "Not politically but morally, the church folk of the United States and Canada should couple assistance and courage. Not many of us thought we should have three successive winters of unemployment to endure.... We may be hard pressed but we shall win

16 Martin Schroeder, "Where Do We Stand?", Lutheran Church Quarterly, VII (April 1934), 189.
this battle against hunger and cold if we keep on fighting it." The editor stated that the bottom of the depression had been reached.

Two weeks later the Chicago correspondent reported that no city in America has suffered more from the depression than Chicago. He reported the case of a Christian mother thanking God that she and the members of her family had at last "found a garbage dump where they can now and then find a morsel." The correspondent reported that there seemed to be no solution to the depression in sight. In the same issue a letter from a reader is printed that sharply criticizes current Lutheran attitudes. "Nor can we salve our consciences with a bit of inner mission work. Our inner mission work is a glorious one, but it can be nothing more than a great hypocrisy if we are content to bind up a few broken hearts while we become the defenders of the social system that has helped to crush those bodies.... May I conclude with the earnest prayer that the Lord deliver us from the temptation to degenerate into ministers who think they are preaching the Gospel of Christ when they are merely fighting to keep the world in status quo." 18

December 1, 1932, the editor makes the observation once more that the bottom of the depression has been reached. He based his comments on a complimentary copy of The Magazine of Wall Street which a subscriber had sent to him urging him to note the optimistic forecasts in the issue.

17 The Lutheran, XV, November 3, 1932, p. 16.
18 The Lutheran, XV, November 17, 1932, p. 21.
Through December, 1932, and January and February, 1933, there are recurring editorials on America's critical situation. News stories in each issue describe how congregations are attempting to aid unemployed fellow Lutherans through cooperative marketing ventures or made-work situations. The first specific editorial ventures into comment or analysis of the New Deal appeared in two March, 1933, issues. In a lengthy editorial on the bank holiday, the editor describes the results of the closing of the banks, caused by conditions "never before seen by any living American." He approves Roosevelt's action because "the cause — fear — must be removed, and at the moment the only effective and permanent way seems to be the guarantee by the Government of deposits."\(^{19}\) In the next issue the term "planned society" makes its first appearance in a story about the sufferings of unemployed and "distressed brethren" in New York city. The writer states that the depression is far too large for individuals or churches to defeat. Nation-wide planning will be necessary. However, he adds the warning: "The planned society which this period of business upheaval will unquestionably usher in will need the highest religious idealism."\(^{20}\)

Two weeks before the Agricultural Adjustment Act went to Roosevelt for signature, The Lutheran's editor commented enthusiastically on an address Henry A. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture, had delivered in the latter part of April to a group of Protestant editors. He described how the secretary had defended

---

20 *The Lutheran*, XV, March 23, 1933, p. 11.
the AAA's provisions and had asked Protestantism to meet the challenge of abundance.

"When, in short, the problem is abundance instead of meagerness, has religion no message to guide society? Can the church offer nothing in the sphere of equitable distribution of easily produced wealth? Can grace inspire men to contend effectively with nature but not with social selfishness, and the ethics of human intercourse? Secretary Wallace thinks the Gospel can teach us here and now, and implies that Christians are indifferent to the will of their Master. Well, he may be right," the editor concluded. Three months later Secretary Henry A. Wallace's defense of the New Deal is published in The Lutheran. The Secretary's article concludes with the words: "It is the job of government, as I see it, to devise and develop the social machinery which will work out the implications of the old prophets and of the Sermon on the Mount." The editor urged subscribers to read the article because it contained the gist of the New Deal philosophy.

The idea of crop control and production created controversy throughout the nation. The spectacle of cotton crops being ploughed under caused many Americans to shake their heads in disapproval. Years later, former President Hoover wrote, "Fascism came to agriculture by way of the Agricultural Adjustment Act of March 12, 1933, sent by the President to Congress as a 'must' and passed

---


22 The Lutheran, XV, August 3, 1933, p. 4. Henry A. Wallace, "Protestant Endurance in America."
with little real debate." 23 A careful examination of the publications of the United Lutheran Church does not reveal condemnation of the controversial act. In fact, there is an increased use of such words and phrases as "individualism" (always condemned), "social planning" (generally approved). No letters condemning the act were published although the editor published letters which approved The Lutheran's stand to support the general objectives of the New Deal. 24

When Congress passed the National Industrial Recovery Act June 16, 1933, the nation faced an aspect of the New Deal which alarmed many people, for it seemed that now the government was entering almost every area of American life. The act contained two main parts. Title I, "Industrial Recovery," contained a variety of sections providing for fair competition and the federal licensing of business. Section 7a gave organized labor recognition it had never had before on such a large scale. The section pledged the government's cooperation in collective bargaining, maximum hours, and minimum wage scales. Title II called for the establishment of a Public Works Administration with an appropriation of $3,300,000,000. 25

In a lengthy editorial, The Lutheran's editor encouraged Lutherans to support the government's plans to achieve industrial recovery. "Whatever the Gospel reveals to us concerning social righteousness, economic helpfulness and


conscientious regard for our fellowmen's welfare must be plainly presented to the people in order that each of them may intelligently obey God at this time."

He asked Lutherans to cooperate on the basis of five points:

1. Physical misery, mental distress and spiritual anxiety has increased to an alarming extent throughout the nation. There must be a nation-wide attack on unemployment. Such an attack is justifiable.

2. Religion must not be regarded as an "opiate." Lutherans must demonstrate that their concern is for the needs of the people.

3. "It is the church's high privilege to nourish the spirit of recovery by friendly, optimistic and industrious cooperation." The church's members must show confidence in the nation's future.

4. The time has come to defeat personal ease and the exploitation of the unfortunate.

5. "We may be on the threshold of a new and better social system." The church's influence can be spread like the leaven of the parable in the Gospels. The church dare not be idle in these momentous times.26

No critical letters appeared in subsequent issues. In "An Open Letter to the President of the United States," published on the cover of the December 6, 1934, issue, the editor told the president that his church supported the housing projects sponsored by the Public Works Housing Corporation and the Public Works Administration. The church desired the success of these housing endeavors because the Lutheran church believed that "insufficient housing facilities tend to magnify difficulties in the ideal fulfillment of the marriage covenant.... Every Christian has a definite, a truly religious duty to

26 *The Lutheran*, XIV, August 3, 1933, p. 18.
do all in his power in behalf of better housing equipment for families."

Favorable editorial comment on various New Deal acts was also supplemented with news accounts of actions taken by lay organizations. The Lutheran Brotherhood encouraged all its members to study and analyze the many governmental problems and to aid authorities to find the right solution for the present crisis.

In an editorial, "Social Reconstruction," the editor commented on the president's message to Congress in which the president asked for old age pensions and unemployment insurance. The editor wrote, "From economic and political points of view, there would seem to be good and sufficient reasons for careful and probably favorable consideration of Mr. Roosevelt's recommendations." But the editor expressed alarm over the fact that the state must "take over what families should provide within themselves." Nevertheless, The Lutheran gave approval to any measure which would provide for old age security. Whether all Lutheran clergy and laity approved the editor's favorable response to the New Deal is hard to determine. When the Literary Digest polled all American clergymen on the question, "Do you NOW approve the acts and policies of the Roosevelt New Deal to date (January, 1936)?" 62.66% were against the New Deal. The accuracy of the poll is questionable. The Literary Digest did not break down the 21,606 responses into denominational categories.

27 The Lutheran, XVII, December 6, 1934, p. 1.
Although the criticism has been made that many churches became completely enamored with the New Deal, an examination of the periodicals published by the United Lutheran Church does not indicate an uncritical acceptance of New Deal measures. This Lutheran body was first of all concerned that members confess their sins of selfishness and greed. The church also tried on a national and regional basis to alleviate individual distress and congregational insolvency. As time went on, however, the church saw that church action alone would not solve the problems of unemployment, under-nourishment, and bankruptcy. The government would have to provide the needed help through legislation. It is for this reason that the United Lutheran Church cooperated with the Roosevelt administration and urged clergy and laity alike to cooperate. Social welfare did not become a new confessional tenet of the United Lutheran Church. Concern for neighbor, community and nation did become a far more important part of the church's thought and action than it had ever been in the years gone by.
CHAPTER III

THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH--THE CHURCH IN THE CENTER

When the American Lutheran Church is referred to as "the church in the center," the reference is not to a political or economic position but rather to a theological position it has adopted toward other Lutheran bodies in the United States. However, in examining its attitudes toward the New Deal, one detects tendencies to the left and right. It is not until the middle thirties that there is a definite expression of interest and approval in the New Deal approach toward solving social and economic problems.

There are two factors to keep in mind as the American Lutheran Church's attitude toward the New Deal is considered. First of all, it has always had a deep interest in the unification of all Lutheran synods in the United States. This interest overrode even the problems of the depression, New Deal legislation, and involvement in political life. The second factor is the fact that the American Lutheran Church came into corporate existence August 11, 1930. During the thirties, therefore, the church had the overriding problem of staying alive, not to mention the problem of welding together the three synods which had merged to form this church body.

The Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio, the oldest of the three participating synods, was organized September 14, 1818. The Lutherans who belonged to this synod had moved to Ohio from Pennsylvania where they had been
members of the Pennsylvania Ministerium. They were descendants of the labors of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg whose piety and missionary zeal had formed early American Lutheranism. These migrants were mainly German-speaking, although in 1836 a group of pastors requested permission to conduct services in English. This request was granted with the stipulation that they remain loyal to the Augsburg Confession.

This stipulation was extremely important because there was a movement among English-speaking Lutherans in Pennsylvania to desert the old Lutheran confessional standards. At the end of the seventeenth century Lutherans in America and Europe were giving way to rationalism. They were denying the inspiration and authority of the Bible, the validity of the Apostles' Creed, and the Lutheran confessional writings. Indeed, when the General Synod, the first federation of Lutheran synods in America, was organized in 1820, no mention of Lutheranism's basic confessions was contained in the constitution. Thus the fears of the Ohio Synod Lutherans were realized and the synod forbade pastors and congregations to join the General Synod whose ultimate objective was to make a national Lutheran body.

Throughout the nineteenth century the Ohio Synod continued its work in gathering Lutherans of a predominantly German background into congregations. During these years the synod was frequently torn apart by violent doctrinal controversies, especially over the doctrine of predestination. There were also

bitter quarrels over language. The German-speaking members of the synod insisted that those who spoke English were more liberal in theology. Despite controversies and quarrels the Ohio Synod continued to grow and by the time of its merger with the other synods in 1930 it had congregations in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, and as far west as Washington and Oregon. Its rolls in 1930 included 847 pastors, 1034 congregations, and 283,000 baptized members. 2

The Buffalo Synod was organized in Buffalo, New York, June 25, 1845. Its origin dates back to 1817 in Prussia when a union of Lutheran and Reformed churches was ordered. Many Lutheran pastors refused to accept this union. Johann Andreas August Grabau, a Lutheran pastor in Saxony, spearheaded the revolt. He was imprisoned for nine months and, after escaping from prison, was jailed once more. Upon his release he was ordered to leave Prussia unless he wished to go to prison again. By 1838, it was apparent that the dissenting clergy and their followers, known as "Old Lutherans," would find freedom of worship and confession only in the United States. They received permission to leave Prussia and sailed for America. A large contingent settled in the Buffalo, New York, area. Another group settled in the neighborhood of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. When these "Old Lutherans" organized into the Buffalo Synod, they were determined to remain unwaveringly loyal to the Lutheran confessions. They also accepted Grabau's insistence upon a central authority in the synod rather than in the congregation. Grabau insisted furthermore that the clergy held a higher rank than the laity and that only those clergymen who

2Ibid., p. 394.
were learned in doctrine could administer properly the sacraments and rightly preach the Word of God. Despite Grabau's difficulties with an authoritarian church in Prussia, he, nevertheless, insisted on an authoritarian church in the United States. He had no sympathy with pure democracy in either church or state.  

The Buffalo Synod was repeatedly torn apart by controversy. Indeed Grabau himself was suspended from membership in the synod because of his demand that the clergy held a higher rank than the laity. After his death, the Buffalo Synod was more ironically inclined. At the time of its merger with the Ohio and Iowa Synods in 1930 it numbered forty-four pastors, fifty-one congregations, and 10,341 baptized members.  

The spiritual father of the Iowa Synod was Wilhelm Loehne, a University of Erlangen graduate, and pastor of a church in the village of Neuendettelsau, Germany, where he had organized a training institution for home, foreign, and inner mission workers. Although Loehne remained in Germany, he encouraged young Lutheran missionaries to go to America where they could do mission work among the American Indians and the German immigrants. The Iowa Synod was organized at Sebald, Iowa, on August 24, 1854.  

The synod did not have a constitution, nor did it have a clergyman as its  

---

3 Fred W. Meuser, *The Formation of the American Lutheran Church* (Columbus, Ohio, 1953).

4 Swihart, p. 390.

5 Swihart, p. 390.
president. For its first thirty-nine years a layman headed the synod. This group of Lutherans placed great stress on practical piety and Bible study. Although the Iowa Synod accepted the confessions of the Lutheran church, it did not give these writings the primary importance other synods did. This position created controversy with other Lutheran synods. In fact, through the rest of the nineteenth century the Iowa Synod was torn by doctrinal quarrels both inside the synod and with other Lutheran synods. One result of these quarrels was that the Iowa Synod became more conservative doctrinally. 6

Despite the quarrels over doctrine and the use of the German language the three synods grew closer together. They had a great deal in common. Aside from their agreement on the Word and the importance of the confessions, these Lutherans believed in a thorough training of the clergy, disapproved of revivalism, mistrusted the Calvinists, consisted in the main of first and second generation German immigrants.

In order to understand the attitude of these Lutheran synods toward the role of the church in society and, subsequently, to the New Real, one must remember that Lutherans believed that the church's duty was to preach the Gospel and to convert the individual. These Lutherans, or their forebears, were members at one time of an established church in Europe. They believed that the church and state each had their separate spheres. When the state decreed that

6 Meuser, p. 35.
churches must do something contrary to their confessions, there was discontent in the churches that turned into open rebellion or migration to other lands. Let the state concern itself with man's physical needs, Lutherans believed. Let the church concern itself with man's spiritual needs, Lutherans maintained. In America, Lutherans believed, this distinction between the two spheres would bring them confessional freedom. "To understand the history of the confessional German immigrant synods this principle must be kept in mind: the faith of the Church is its greatest treasure and raison d'être; contamination of that faith is the Church's greatest pitfall." 7

By 1917 doctrinal agreement between the Ohio and Iowa synods had been reached. A formal merger between them was ratified in 1926. In the years leading up to this ratification the disputes between the synods had ranged over a vast theological territory. The synods had quarreled over the authority of the church and ministry, predestination, chiliasm, inspiration, open questions, usury. The result of these disputes was a collection of theses: the Toledo Theses, the Chicago Theses, the Madison Theses, the Davenport Theses. At the time of the merger of the three synods, there was brought together a diversity of backgrounds. They had been kept apart by doctrinal controversies but now the union of these three historic synods is based upon real unity of faith, doctrine and practice.... Convinced that a more perfect union would enhance the ability of the several bodies to carry out the objects for which they were formed,

7Meuser, p. 37.
the merger was consummated."

At the time of its organization in 1930, the American Lutheran Church numbered 510,153 baptized members, 1,577 pastors, and 2,019 congregations.\footnote{Lutheran World Almanac and Encyclopaedia (New York, 1932), p. 53.} During the thirties it faced the problems of pre-merger indebtedness of its colleges and seminaries, the depression, internal problems of doctrinal amity on local levels. Thus it is understandable that these concerns would be of primary importance in the church rather than a broader concern about national problems in the area of government.

Chief voice for the American Lutheran Church was the Lutheran Standard, a weekly publication addressed to clergy and laity. The writer has selected the year 1935 in order to obtain a sampling of the attitude toward the New Deal since by this time the New Deal had become a part of the contemporary American scene.

References and discussion of the New Deal are generally in an oblique manner. In an article, "Home, Church, and State," the writer points out that the obligation of the church is to preach the Gospel, to administer the sacraments, and to be a guardian of Scriptural truth. "The duty of the State is, according to Article 28 of the Augsburg Confession, to 'defend the bodies and bodily things against manifest injuries, and to coerce men by the sword and corporal punishment that it may uphold civil justice and peace.'"\footnote{Ibid., p. 53.}

\footnote{Lutheran Standard, XCII, January 5, 1935, p. 9, E. Gerfen, "Home, Church, and State."}
In the same article the writer pleads with the church to act as salt in American life. He deplores the efforts of some churches to carry on political agitation in the troubled times of the depression. "The pulpit must not be used for political agitation, nor should political affairs be discussed in congregations."

Throughout 1935 there is constant reference to the menace of Communism in the United States. In one article Russian Communists and Jews are regarded as corollaries. "Communism is of godless and apostate Jewish origin." The writer goes on to say that Communism actually had its origin with the Illuminati of the eighteenth century. He stated that "an apostate Jew, Dr. Adam Weishaupt" started the entire idea of Communism which was later developed by Karl Marx. None of these assertions were documented. The writer also made the sweeping assertion that "International Judaism" was the underlying cause of the depression. This concern about Communism was due to the fact that Federal investigators had found evidences of Communist activity in various states.  

In an editorial, "The Golden Mean," the editor warned readers that the church is not to be regarded as an agency to improve the social order. He attacked the Reformed church which thought of the church as a social agency. The editor was aware, however, that the Lutheran church was in danger of "losing sight completely of the moral aspect of the great economic and social


problems that confront the nation." He urged Lutherans to become far more socially minded. He asked Lutherans to support the cause of the CCC camps, since these camps took many urban young men off the streets and provided them with jobs.\[13\]

In August the Lutheran Standard began publishing a series of articles which directly attacked the problems of the depression and the New Deal's efforts to solve those problems. The articles, which ran through three issues, did not directly endorse any specific New Deal measures but did indicate that Lutherans needed to reorient themselves to a new world. The writer explained that the economic world had changed drastically in the past decades. One of the greatest blessings of modern times was man's liberation from drudgery. Man now has the leisure to pursue recreational activities of all kinds.

Another great economic change of modern times was the growth of stock companies and the stock market. More and more people, the writer explained, invested their savings in Wall Street. At the time these investments were made, there were no proper safeguards and thus in the 1929 crash thousands of people lost their life-savings. He also wrote that the crash was the result of hysteria and fear. Along with the rise of investment opportunities, capital and labor clashed because capital feared it would lose its investment opportunities. Now there were eleven million unemployed and the Federal government was taking over. "Today the wielding of dictatorial powers by the President is received

---

gladly, because it usually means action. There is a "nervousness that permeates the masses" because of these startling changes in the American way of life.

In the second article, the writer discussed some of the blessings of technological advances and he expressed hopefulness that the church would take advantage of the forty-hour week. On the other hand, the writer stated that the church has a responsibility toward the unemployed and toward the many social problems. "There is no reason why only a certain few should enjoy the brains and brawn of this generation while others remain slaves." The church will indeed have to help because it is obvious that the laboring man is left out of consideration. The New Deal does not herald the millenium and the church will need to serve as a mediator between capital and labor.

In the final article there is a strong appeal to Lutheranism's role as the salt of the earth. The church must cast more light on social trends and it has been entirely too aloof on the social matters even though the Bible instructs in all things. The church must remember that the enactment of laws and their enforcement will never regenerate society. He encouraged the Lutheran church to enlarge its social vision and its social program. In this way Lutherans would influence American society. This is the church's response to the New Deal.


In its attempt to encourage the American Lutheran Church to break out of its isolation, the editor published an article which described the past condition and status of Lutherans in a typical American community. The author drew a graphic picture of German Lutherans in a South Dakota community who jealously guarded their customs and their native language. In those days, not too long before the coming of the New Deal, the pastor was the bearer of culture and learning. Only German was spoken at church services and English-speaking neighbors who were invited to the services were told in no uncertain terms that only German was permitted in the church and on church premises. Lutherans depended for news of the outside world on the weekly Deutsche Zeitung.

Life among the Lutherans was familial and tribal. With the changes brought about by the New Deal, Lutherans would now have to adopt a greater social and spiritual realism in their confrontation with the world.17

Ten sermons were studied by the writer, all published in the Lutheran Standard. Subject matter of the sermons dealt with the customary themes of the appropriate church festival. Not one of the sermons made even a passing reference to the problems of unemployment, depression, drought, or the efforts of labor to organize itself into an effective bargaining agent under the provisions of Section 7a of the NRA. The editor complained that the typical Lutheran sermon of his synod lacked imagination and an awareness of present day situations.

In summarizing the attitude of the American Lutheran Church toward the New Deal, one must keep in mind that this church group had been preoccupied with organizational and doctrinal problems practically from the time its first constituent synod was organized back in the nineteenth century. When the three synods merged in 1930, the new church organization had the problem of solidifying itself as a cohesive group. For this reason, there was less concern with the social and economic problems of the thirties.

The lack of definitive comment, either positive or negative, on the New Deal is an illustration of H. Richard Niebuhr’s observation: "In general it may be said that the political churches of the Old World have become less political in the New World than have non-political sects of Europe." ¹⁸ The American Lutheran Church felt that it should refrain from comment on, or interference with, the legislative function of the state. On the other hand, the reason for this church’s hesitancy about becoming deeply involved in American political life may have been caused by a feeling that the Lutheran church had had enough of politics in the old country. As Niebuhr puts it, "They have carried over into their new environment the attitude of acceptance of constituted rule which their past history had written deeply into their character." ¹⁹ In short, they would accept authority both because the state guaranteed them freedom and because it would not be proper to meddle with authority.

At the same time, the American Lutheran Church exhibited a growing awareness of its role in American life during 1935. Its chief editor and writers willingly tackled themes which would not have been considered in previous decades. Although the evidence may at times seem tenuous, nonetheless the writer is convinced that the American Lutheran Church showed no overt hostility to the New Deal. It accepted the New Deal's effort as highly necessary for a time when society was deeply disturbed by unemployment, a dwindling economy, and attacks on labor.
CHAPTER IV

THE SCANDINAVIAN LUTHERANS AND THE NEW DEAL

At the time of the 1936 religious census there were 877,403 baptized Scandinavian Lutherans in the United States. The distribution of membership into the Scandinavian Lutheran synods was as follows:

- Augustana Synod (Swedish) ................. 327,472
- United Danish Synod ......................... 33,531
- Norwegian Lutheran Church .................. 516,400

These figures do not include several minor, dissident groups of Scandinavian Lutherans who had quarreled with the parent body over doctrinal or administrative matters. Membership in these groups totalled approximately 55,000 baptized. In this chapter the attitudes of the Norwegian and Swedish Lutherans toward the New Deal will be examined.

Although Swedish Lutherans were the first Scandinavians to establish a settlement in America with the founding of the New Swedish Colony in Delaware in 1638, the Norwegians claim priority because they were the first to arrive in large numbers and the first to maintain the identity of their Lutheran faith. The Swedish Lutherans transferred their churches and congregations in Delaware and Pennsylvania to the Anglicans in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

---

There were, of course, Norwegian Lutherans in America before the beginning of the nineteenth century, but their role in church life was insignificant. They were mostly sea-faring men residing in Atlantic ports. The immigration from Norway to America that took on the proportions of a tidal wave began in 1825 with the arrival of the first boatload of Norwegian Lutheran immigrants in the Restaurationen. During the next hundred years, historians estimate that Norway sent more than three-quarters of a million of her citizens to the United States. Most of these played an important part in the establishment of the Norwegian Lutheran Church.

There were three great waves of migration: the post-Civil War Years (1866-74); the decade of the eighties; and the first years of the twentieth century. A sizeable number also came in the twenties. There was little or no religious motivation that impelled these Norwegians to come to America. True, there had been disputes, some doctrinal disputations and difficulties with their national church, but none of these were the kind of problems that had plagued the German Lutherans during the same century. "The basic motivation was the desire and hope for economic betterment." Closely allied to this motivation was a growing feeling of social and political discontent among the farmers, agricultural laborers, and city workers. The great discontent was to be found among farmers who made up ninety per cent of Norway's population at

---

3 Ibid., I, l7.
4 Ibid., I, l8.
the beginning of the nineteenth century. These farmers generally had small holdings and to achieve economic independence they would have to be handy at a variety of trades, such as fishing, farming, carpentry, lumbering. Life was rugged for these farmers. Poor soil, especially in the western part of Norway, and limited acreage gave the farmer little better than a subsistence level for daily life. Furthermore, they belonged to a distinctly lower class in Norway and not until the middle of the nineteenth century did rural society begin to achieve some representation in the Storting (parliament).

The Norwegian emigrant looked forward to America because this was a land where the social system was far less rigid than in Norway, for in Norway the majority of citizens were relegated to positions of social inferiority. The bonde, the Norwegian farmer, was despised by the educated few. Not until several decades after the adoption of the Constitution of 1814 did the bonde achieve any degree of representation either in the Storting or in the cultural or social life of the country.

When the Norwegian settled on the prairies of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the Dakotas, he was determined to achieve independence, economic and political. The novels of Ole Edvart Rolvaag, professor at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota, accurately picture the struggles of these dauntless pioneers of the early decades of the twentieth century. His Giants in the Earth and Peder Victorious portray bonde Lutherans struggling to climb socially and economically.

5Ibid., pp. 7, 11, et passim.
It is significant that Rolvaag's characters have a continuing mistrust of their clergy.

The Lutheran Church in Norway was the state church. It had the episcopal form of church organization and the clergy occupied a high position in the social scale. Had it not been for the influence of Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824), a Lutheran lay evangelist, the Norwegian church might have succumbed completely to rationalism and lost its hold on the people. Hauge preached repentance and conversion. He encouraged the laity to read the Bible and to practise the ethical principles of the New Testament. He also told his followers to continue to support the state church. Hauge is credited with starting a people's religious movement which carried over into social and political life. The Norwegian emigrant who came to America in the nineteenth and twentieth century may not always have been a Haugean but he had certainly been affected by the democratic awakening started by Hauge. His follower, Elling Eielsen, was the moving spirit in organizing the first Norwegian Lutheran synod in 1846 in America.

There was a great deal of resemblance in the Swedish migration to the Norwegian migrations. In Sweden of the nineteenth century there was a great deal of unrest caused by the restricted availability of land, the humiliating class distinctions, and the rising industrialisation that crowded out the trade guild member and the craftsman. Improved education brought a greater degree of literacy to the rural and urban farmer and worker. Travel accounts of the almost limitless economic possibilities and political freedom in the United States served as a lure to the dissatisfied. As in the Norwegian church, there was also unrest among the Swedish Lutherans. The episcopal form of church
government created a gulf between clergy and laity. Lay movements, inspired by
the Haugean movement in Norway, deepened the spiritual life and also created in
many Swedish Lutherans the desire to go to a free country where the church was
disestablished. "The efforts of political and ecclesiastical authorities to
stem the tide of the evangelical movements by repressive measures was one of the
reasons for the exodus to America in the middle of the nineteenth century."6

Although some Swedes settled in New York and New England, the majority
came to the middle west, principally to Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa. They
organized the Synod of Northern Illinois in 1851. Then in 1860 Norwegian and
Swedish Lutherans joined to form a new synod called "The Scandinavian
Evangelical Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America." The word "Augustana"
was used in the title in order to assure all Lutherans that this new synod
adhered to the traditional Lutheran confessions.

In 1870 the Norwegian Lutherans withdrew from the synod because of
tensions between the Swedes and Norwegians. There was also some theological
disputation which added to the tension. From this date on these two national
groups have maintained their separate synods. The synods established colleges,
academies, seminaries. Although most of these Scandinavian Lutherans were
rural, they had a deep interest in education. An equally great interest and
enthusiastic participation in state political life was another hallmark of the
Scandinavians. The various economic depressions of the 1890's and the first

6Abdel Ross Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia,
quarter of the nineteenth century practically forced them to become involved in politics. Through the years such names as Johnson, Nestos, Anderson, Preus, and Olson were prominent in governorships. In almost all instances, the Scandinavian Lutherans were Republicans but it was a Republicanism of the progressive and populist variety. This insurgency reached its crest with the coming of the depression to the farm states. The Republicans were replaced by the Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota in 1930.

The leader of the Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota and a friend of the Democrats was Floyd Bjerstjerne Olson, elected Governor of Minnesota in 1930. His Scandinavian background was impeccable. He had been born of Swedish and Norwegian Lutheran parents in Minneapolis. He was not, however, affiliated with the Lutheran church. Despite this seeming handicap, his vigorous political speeches and his downright radicalism as governor won him many friends among the Minnesota Lutherans. Indeed, a comparison of some of Olson's statements with editorials appearing in the Lutheran Herald show a striking similarity in approach. That Olson was a friend of Franklin D. Roosevelt was known to the editors of the Lutheran Herald, for the editorial offices and the synodical headquarters of the Norwegian Lutheran church were in Minneapolis. They had observed at first-hand the depression as it affected the people of Minnesota and they also were acquainted with the efforts of Governor Olson to alleviate the economic distress.

An examination of a series of editorials in the Lutheran Herald, official publication of the Norwegian Lutheran church, shows a reflection both of Governor Olson's statements and actions, at the same time showing also an awareness of what the New Deal was attempting to accomplish through the AAA.
In an editorial "Divine Providence and the Depression," the editor reminded readers that they are not to blame God for the depression. "The present depression prevalent all over the world was not brought on by the direct will of God, but it is the result of man's stupidity, greed, sin, exploitation, and selfishness. We believe that God has even set bounds to this." The editor confidently asserts that God will guide the nation through the present evil. The depression is a challenge and not a catastrophe. It offers a challenge to a spiritual adventure.

Less than a month before the 1932 presidential election, the Lutheran Herald published an article describing the plight of the unemployed in Minneapolis. The writer stated that during September 7,886 Minneapolis families had been given grocery orders. 3,020 single men had also received these food orders. A family of two received a grocery order of $4.50 every two weeks; a family of four $8.00; a family of eight $12.75. Single men were given two ten-cent meal tickets each day. 40,000 men, women, and children in Minneapolis were dependent upon governmental or church charity. There were many sick and undernourished children. The writer indignantly asked how a family could possibly live on any of these amounts doled out by the city. He urged the church to support all relief measures and to support municipal and state endeavors to alleviate near-starvation. "Our church is facing possibly the greatest crisis in its history," he wrote. He asked the Lutherans to become

Lutheran Herald, XVI, January 5, 1932, p. 17.
socially-minded in this hour of peril.

In an election day editorial, the Lutheran Herald stated that it was making no recommendation nor any forecast. The editorial pointed out once more that the times were exceedingly critical. In the same issue a letter from a Lutheran pastor in Chicago was published in which the writer graphically described the effects of the depression among his members. He wrote that many people now stayed away from church because they had no suitable clothes to wear.

Two weeks later the editor expressed concern for the increasing deficits in the church. He believed that there were two reasons for the accumulating debts: economic strain and a spirit of defeatism. He offered no specific solution other than to write: "If our church people would even now only buy a little less gum, eat a little less candy, smoke a little less tobacco, attend a few less shows, prepare a few more modest meals," then the church would be helped. On the other hand, a clergyman wrote that the depression was a chastisement from God. He reminded his Norwegian readers that they had experienced similar hard times in Norway during the nineteenth century when many of the people were forced to eat bark bread and tree roots to stay alive. But out of those hard times there grew a great religious awakening.

In a sharply worded editorial, "Starvation in a Land of Riches," the editor lamented the lack of action on the part of men and the government to

---

8S. H. Holstad, "Relief Work in Minneapolis", Lutheran Herald, XVI (October 11, 1932), p. 1050.


solve the difficulties. We have too much machinery, too much food, too much clothing and merchandise, and paradoxical as it seems, some are starving in the midst of our abundance. The depression is not an act of God, but the result of our own sins, foolishness, and lack of foresight.... It is absolutely necessary that farm prices must come back to a reasonable level before there can by any change. It is up to our statesmen and economists to show the way."\(^{11}\)

As the New Deal began its operations in 1933, the agricultural crisis in Minnesota, Iowa, and the Dakotas deepened. Throughout 1933 editorials, letters, and articles discussed the tragedy of farmers losing their homesteads through mortgage foreclosures.

Since 1932 the National Farm Holiday Association had attempted to rally the farmers to strike for higher prices for their products. There was violence in Iowa in the summer of 1932 as farmers dumped their milk rather than bring it to market. By 1933, when it seemed that Congress was hesitating too long about the passage of a bill to aid the mortgaged farmers, the Farm Holiday Association threatened violent action if any more farmers lost their holdings through foreclosure action. When a judge refused to halt foreclosure proceedings, angry farmers almost lynched him. Iowa's governor declared six counties under martial law as a result of the farmers' violent reactions to continued foreclosure acts. Governor Olson recommended to the president that

\(^{11}\)Lutheran Herald, XVI (December 27, 1932), p. 1475.
the government would have to take over the operation of key industries if the depression continued. He told Minnesota's farmers that he was in favor of the extension of cooperative ownership and control on the Scandinavian plan. Although he spoke many times about the need for radical action, he did not actually take such action. But he insisted that "only remedial social legislation, national and state, can prevent the appearance of rampant lawlessness and possible revolution just beyond the horizon of a scene of unemployment, abandoned farms, and poverty." When Roosevelt signed the Agricultural Adjustment Act on May 12, 1933, Governor Olson persuaded the Farm Holiday Association to postpone its strike and to give Title II (Emergency Farm Mortgage Act) of the Act a chance.

During the remainder of 1933 the Lutheran Herald continued to observe the efforts of the New Deal as well the mounting problems of its rural membership. In January, 1934, in an editorial, "What Are The Prospects for 1934?" the editor expressed guarded doubt that the New Deal was entirely successful. The general theme of his complaint was that for thirteen years farmers had suffered from deflation, a high-priced dollar, and low commodity prices. The New Deal had attempted to raise commodity prices, but there could be no recovery as long as the farmer had no prices and as long as the local banker was afraid to loan his money. The New Deal had brought some success. There was a rise in certain farm prices. Purchase power seemed to be increasing. The editor was happy to

---

12 News story on Governor Olson's inaugural, Christian Century, L (February 1, 1933), p. 1.'1.

note that Minnesota, North and South Dakota, and Montana would receive in 1934 $300,000,000 in Federal aid.  

In a lengthy editorial, "President Roosevelt Emphasizes the Rights of Humanity in Preference to Property Rights," approval was given to the president's message at the opening of the seventy-third session of Congress. The editor singled out for commendation Roosevelt's assertion: "We have demanded of many citizens that they surrender certain licenses to do as they pleased in their business relationships; but we have asked this in exchange for the protection which the State can give against exploitation by their fellow men or by the combinations of their fellow men." The editor commented guardedly on a paper by a Lutheran pastor he had read. In the paper this clergyman had excoriated Adam Smith and laissez-faire and severely criticized the Republicans for their past economic policies. The pastor had urged the church to speak out against "man's inhumanity to man." In closing the editor attempted to place the responsibility for the economic debacle upon the Lutheran clergy who had failed to preach civic justice and righteousness and thus had helped create an unconcerned church.  

In a succeeding issue the Lutheran Herald editor is accused by a reader of dodging the issues. He wrote that the editor should have made his indictment of the church far stronger. "Have you really found much evidence among us of an aroused social consciousness? Have you found any intelligent appraisal of

14Lutheran Herald, XVIII (January 9, 1934), p. 29.
15Lutheran Herald, XVIII (January 23, 1934), pp. 75-76.
laissé-faire? Have you heard any of us protesting from our pulpits against social injustice and exploitation? Have we made it plain that a social order based on acquisitiveness is un-Christian? Have we not... uncritically taken the acquisitive social order for granted? 16

In the same issue the article, "Present Day Trends in American Civilization," approvingly quoted President Roosevelt's statement: "We are wholly ready to challenge the pagan ethics that are represented in many phases of our boasted civilization." The writer then proceeded to attack the profit motive, the concentration of wealth in America, holding companies, interlocking directorates. He cited the popularity of the New Deal among the average people and he was certain that there are new motives in society. He encouraged clergy and laity alike to read Stuart Chase's The New Deal and The Tragedy of Waste. "We shall have to make it clear that we are not a Church only for the well-to-do, and the well-thought of.... If we dislike the possible coming of a centralized, completely socialized economy, we had better not court violent revolution by refusing to alter in any way the old order." 17

In issue after issue of the Lutheran Herald the writer noted an increased use of New Deal terminology. Such terms as "planned economy," "abundant life," and "exploitation of natural resources" were used in all types of articles and editorials. The much-debated and fought-over Section 7a of the NRA drew favorable comment: "I am confident that what labor has attained and now seeks


to attain in the way of recognition of its claims and for its own betterment is in harmony with Scriptural principles."\(^\text{18}\)

Among Swedish Lutherans similar expressions of distrust of the old economic order were frequently expressed in their official publication for the laity, the Lutheran Companion. In the Augustana Quarterly, the theological magazine for the Swedish clergy, there were many articles and editorial comments which encouraged the clergy to become increasingly aware of the social and economic problems facing America. In January, 1935, a pastor declared, "We are witnessing today perhaps the greatest social and economic upheaval in history." He described the centralization of wealth, the ruthless competition and dishonesty in much of American business. However, he said that the church must not become aligned with the New Deal. It was more important to have regenerated personalities.\(^\text{19}\)

One of the few disapproving notes on the New Deal was an article, "The Social Crisis or the Chaos Calling for Repentance", which appeared in the Augustana Quarterly. Although the writer admitted there was a social crisis in the land, nonetheless, he felt that there was a strong tinge of Marxism in many of the New Deal efforts. He thundered against any attempts to pack the Supreme Court. "The greatest menace of today to the peace of the world is the autocratic power committed by nations to their leaders. The social crisis of today expresses itself in terms of license, fear, force, exaggeration, and


meedlesome interference." He stated that the most destructive force was sin and that it was the task of the clergy to preach sin and repentance with renewed vigor. 20

On the other hand, in the same issue another Lutheran pastor wrote: "Public ownership and control of our natural resources and of the common arteries of our body politic would not necessarily be treason to a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, under God." 21

In 1934 there had been considerable discussion in the Swedish Lutheran press about the Federal Council of Churches' statement, "Social Ideals of the Churches." In this council statement there had been a sympathetic account of the attempts of the New Deal to solve the problems of the depression through such legislative acts as the AAA and the NRA. In a comment on the statement, a contributor to the Augustana Quarterly readily granted that under Section 7a the employee had the right to bargain collectively and to organize into a union. He also stated that he agreed with the Federal Council's demand that there must be economic justice for the farmer. 22 There had also been other statements in this theological journal to the effect that the church had been remiss in informing its members about social obligations and righteousness. There were repeated warnings throughout 1934 that unless the church did something civilization would collapse. Nowhere was there any specific remedy offered. By

---


1935 and throughout 1936 theological writers of this Swedish group readily granted that the old political values had disappeared. Most articles expressed an unrelieved gloom over the current situation in the United States. Sermons and reports to synodical conventions stress man's helplessness and the need to look to God for all strength and wisdom.22a

In considering the attitude of the Scandinavian Lutherans to the New Deal, particularly to the Agricultural Adjustment Act, there is apparent a difference in attitude between the Norwegians and Swedes. In examining the publications of the Norwegian Lutheran church, a more vocal sense of indignation is immediately apparent. There is approval, qualified at times, of those New Deal measures designed to protect the farmer. At the same time the editor of the Lutheran Herald pointed out at various times that the church cannot take sides in political or economic issues. It is also interesting to note that the Lutheran Herald's editor counselled his readers not to indulge in "railroad baiting." He pointed out that Class I railroads' revenue in 1931 was 20.3 percent below 1930. He reminded readers of the tremendous role the railroads had played in the development of those states where the Norwegian Lutheran church was now well established. The railroads had always been ready to make special concessions to the church and its clergy. As a clinching argument, the editorial pointedly mentioned Jim Hill's (founder of the Great Northern Railroad)

22a See especially the annual presidential addressed to the Augustana Synod conventions meeting in Omaha, Nebraska, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. The sermons and presidential reports at all the conventions between 1932 and 1937 always offer an optimistic Biblical conclusion but they are preceded by reports on crop failures, mortgage foreclosures, etc. cf. Augustana Synod Minutes of Annual Conventions, 1932-1937. Similar gloom may also be found in the Reports of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, 1932-1937.
splendid donation of $100,000 to Norwegian Lutheran schools in Minnesota.23

On the whole, the writer concluded that the Norwegian Lutherans adopted a more favorable attitude toward the New Deal because it was aggressively seeking to protect the farmer. This favorable attitude was also a reflection of the determined policy of Governor Olson to provide legislative and executive aid to depressed areas. He had announced, "As long as I sit in the Governor's chair there is not going to be any misery in the state, if I can humanly prevent it."24

Swedish Lutherans were more inclined to lament over the effects of the depression and to demand a more intense preaching of repentance and conversion. It is true that at the 1935 convention of the Augustana Synod delegates approved their church president's request for the appointment of a Commission on Morals and Social Problems. However, the commission confined itself to making recommendations on the proper stewardship of wealth, family life, marriage and divorce. The writer looked for theological analyses of social and economic problems which the New Deal faced, but was unable to find any. This is all the more baffling when it is remembered that the chief causes for the great Swedish migrations to the United States between 1840 and 1907 were social and economic.25

24 Literary Digest, CXV (April 29, 1933), p. 3.
The writer is undecided as to whether both Swedish and Norwegian writers and clergy were more favorably inclined to the New Deal than the laity. In the Literary Digest poll, reported in 1936, which tested New Deal strength, North Dakota voted 59.23 per cent against the New Deal and Minnesota voted 63.81 per cent against. The accuracy of the poll has been questioned in the light of its failure to forecast the results of the 1936 presidential election. And yet, granting an error of ten to twenty per cent, the result of the poll would show that a large number of residents in these two states were opposed to the acts and policies of the New Deal. Swedish and Norwegian Lutherans in these two states numbered 311,400 baptized members. The big question, of course, is how significant a part the Scandinavian Lutherans played in the political life of the two states. North Dakota's population in 1935 was 641,935; Minnesota's 2,792,300. Since there was no campaign material of any kind in the church publications, it would be extremely difficult to decide in which direction Lutheran sentiment lay. On the other hand — and this may be regarded as proof of the poll's unreliability — both states voted Democratic in the 1936 presidential election.

26 Literary Digest, CXXI (January 8, 1936), p. 11.
CHAPTER V

CONSERVATISM ON THE DEFENSIVE AND ATTACK

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has had in American church history a reputation, frequently self-styled, for doctrinal conservatism. The synod has claimed that it was far more zealous in its adherence to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran confessional writings. Although other Lutheran synods have insisted that they were equally loyal to fundamental Lutheran principles, Missouri Synod Lutherans claim that they are far more loyal. A United Lutheran Church historian states this Missouri Synod conservatism is the result of a strict devotion to the Scriptures and the entire body of the Lutheran confessions. "The synod.... has the strictest doctrinal basis of all Lutheran groups in America."¹

It is for this reason that the title of this chapter carries the word conservatism. The conservatism of the Missouri Synod group of Lutherans finds expression in the theological disputes engaged in with other Lutheran synods, in its adherence to the German language until World War I, in its insistence upon confessional orthodoxy. This conservatism is to be found also in its social and economic outlook during the thirties when the New Deal affected the lives of so many Americans. It is not the primary purpose of this chapter to

discuss the theological position of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. It is necessary, however, to present the origin and growth of this synod in order that its attitudes toward the New Deal may be understood.

Preceding by ten years the organization of the synod, a group of Lutherans in Saxony, Germany, decided that they could not in good conscience worship any longer in the established church of Germany where rationalism in liturgy and preaching was tolerated. A group of 750 persons, joined by a group of 95 emigrants from Prussia, left Saxony in November 1838 and arrived in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1839. In their "Emigration Regulations" they stated the reason for their migration: "After deliberate and mature counsel they can, humanly speaking, see no possibility of retaining in their present home this faith pure and undefiled, of confessing it and transmitting it to their posterity."

The emigrants settled in St. Louis and on a tract of land in Perry County, Missouri. Here they hoped to serve God undisturbed "in the way of grace revealed and ordained by Him, and where they can enjoy, without being interfered with, fully, without adulteration, the means of grace ordained by God for all men unto salvation." But they were not able for long to enjoy this freedom. Grave doctrinal disputes arose regarding the position of the clergy. The leader of the Saxon Lutherans, Pastor Martin Stephan, was accused of hierarchical tendencies. Pastor Stephan had prevailed upon many of his

---


3"Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod," p. 607.
followers to sign a document in which they vowed all obedience to him in all religious and business matters. Before Stephan was able to consolidate his position, charges of moral unfitness were brought against him. He was deposed from his position and exiled from the colony of Saxon Lutherans.

There was a great deal of confusion in the colony as a result of Stephan’s determination to be regarded as a bishop and his subsequent unfrocking. The colonists wondered what constituted true doctrine, what rights a congregation had, and how a clergyman received authority to become the minister of a congregation. They had never before faced a similar situation since in Saxony they had been members of the established church and their clergy had always been assigned to congregations by the state ministerium.

Pastor Carl F. W. Walther, a young clergyman of the colony, saved the Saxon Lutherans from disorganization by setting up eight theses which established the Scriptural ground for the organization of a Lutheran congregation. He successfully defended his theses and at the same time showed the colonists what constituted a Christian congregation and how such a congregation might establish the office of the ministry in its midst. Walther now emerged as the leader of these Missouri Lutherans. In 1844 he established Der Lutheraner, a German publication which espoused the cause of conservative Lutheranism. As its circulation widened, Lutheran congregations in other parts of the United States decided that here was the genuine kind of Lutheranism they had been seeking. In 1847 a group of twelve congregations, represented by pastors and lay delegates, met in Chicago, Illinois, and organized the Deutsche evangelisch-lutherische Synode von Missouri, Ohio, und anderen Staaten, popularly known as the Missouri Synod. The new synod had as its confessional basis the traditional
Lutheran confessions, as "the pure and uncorrupted explanation and statement of the Divine Word." From the time of its organization the Missouri Synod carried on a vigorous defense of what it considered to be true Lutheran doctrine. The synod was also determined to maintain doctrinal purity in its midst and to that end established parochial schools and founded its own colleges and seminaries.

One of the contributing factors which isolated Missouri Synod Lutherans from many phases of American life was its official decision to use German exclusively in the conduct of synodical affairs. All business on the floor of synodical conventions had to be transacted in German. Professional and lay publications appeared in German. German was an official part of the parochial school curriculum. German was the official language of the synod's youth organization, the Walther League, established in 1893. Not until 1911, when the English Synod was accepted as part of the Missouri Synod, was English officially recognized as a language which might be used in ecclesiastical procedure.

The justification for this almost intolerant insistence upon the use of German was that many of the pastors in the early years of the synod had received their theological training at German universities and seminaries. Most of the members of the congregations were German immigrants whose knowledge of English was elementary. Thus these immigrants received their religious instruction for the confirmation rite in German. In the wave of German migration in the latter half of the nineteenth century the Missouri Synod found it necessary to devote

4Wents, p. 119.
5"Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod," p. 609.
its chief energies to gathering these immigrants, most of them Lutheran, into their churches. There was no time to develop an English-speaking ministry in the rapidly expanding synod, although by the end of the century there were a few English congregations in the New Orleans area. Despite the presence of a few English churches, Missouri Synod Lutherans doubted the orthodoxy of pastors and laity who spoke English. "The German language and the Christian language became identified in the minds of most Missouri Lutherans. The practical consequences were far-reaching. It enabled the second and third generation of Missourians to sit in the same pew and sing out of the same hymnbook. At the same time the cultural policy insulated the Missourians as a group against the prevalent currents of thought. Culturally this state of affairs was costly, but religiously it was of decided advantage." 6

By 1917 the Missouri Synod numbered 1,001,380 baptized members, ninety percent of whom attended German services and received their instruction in German. 7 But 1917 also marked America's entry into World War I and German became a language and a way of life extremely un-American. In South Dakota the state legislature passed a law forbidding the use of the German language in church services. 8 William Allen Whites warned in the Emporia Gazette that German art,

---

6 Carl S. Mundinger, Government in the Missouri Synod (St. Louis, 1947), p. 216.
7 "Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod," p. 629.
8 The writer of this thesis vividly recalls how, as a child, he accompanied his father, a Lutheran clergyman, to outlying mission stations in South Dakota to administer the Lord's Supper to small German-speaking groups gathered in isolated farm houses.
music, and literature should not be banned, but he had to admit by June 16, 1917, that an "orgy of intolerance" was sweeping the country.  

When the Missouri Synod met in its 1917 convention, the designation "German" was eliminated from the title of the synod. The synod also encouraged clergymen to become camp pastors or to accept commissions in the nation's armed services as chaplains. The Walther League, the youth organization of the synod, gathered funds to supply the Missouri Synod's young men in the Army and Navy with testaments and other religious literature.

Many parochial schools were closed because parents refused to send their children to schools so closely identified with German. Enrollment dropped from 96,737 in 1916 to 71,361, in 1919. The use of German in divine services continued, but there was a gradual climb in the number of English services. By 1925, fifty-two per cent of the whole synod used English. By 1936 there were only 178 all-German congregations in the synod; 1,979 were all-English, while the remaining 2,223 were bilingual. Church attendance in 1936 was thirty-three per cent German and sixty-seven per cent English.

The Missouri Synod had a sense of mission throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century in the defense and preservation of doctrinal purity. It carried on a continuing theological battle with all other Lutheran groups in the United States. It was convinced that the other Lutheran synods did not

---

10 "Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod", p. 629.
11 "Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod", p. 610.
always subscribe fully and completely to the traditional confessions as contained in the Book of Concord. Because of its intense preoccupation in indoctrinating its own membership and in debating with non-Missouri Synod groups, the synod was isolated from many of the cultural and political events of the nineteenth century. Little or no impact was made upon these Lutherans by such events as the Civil War or the Spanish-American War.

One of the theological quarrels was with the Iowa Synod, later of the American Lutheran Church, over the acceptance of the Lutheran confessional writings. The Iowa Synod maintained that certain teachings of Holy Scripture are not clearly defined in the Book of Concord. For instance, "alther and his followers in the Missouri Synod held that every Lutheran must hold that the Pope at Rome is the Antichrist in person. The men of the Iowa Synod could not agree that the Pope is the Antichrist referred to in the New Testament. The result of this difference was that the Missouri and Iowa Synods could never come to an agreement.

The other quarrel was with the Ohio Synod, also to become a member of the American Lutheran Church, over the difficult question of predestination. "The long and bitter controversy on predestination did more to split up the Lutheranism of America than all the issues raised in an earlier generation."¹³ Both sides accused each other of heresy but neither side made concessions. The Iowa Synod joined the Ohio Synod in the dispute, thus creating an even greater

¹³Wents, p. 212.
tension. All of the controversy was carried on in print and in German. The rest of Protestantism occasionally caught distant rumbles of the sounds of theological battles. The "conscientious obstinacy" of the Lutherans was branded by other Protestants as a sign of their Scandinavian or German background. The United Lutheran Church did not become involved in these particular quarrels, although the Missouri Synod regarded members of this synod as too liberal and as Lutherans tainted with an American viewpoint which considered Lutherans too theologically-minded. And yet a United Lutheran Church historian generously writes about the Missouri Synod's intransigence: "Whatever may be argued about the correctness of Missouri's doctrinal and confessional positions, it cannot be denied that her deep convictions and faithful persistence have helped to produce a volume of Christian enterprise that constitutes a fine record for Lutheranism in America."

Because of this preoccupation with doctrinal purity, there was practically no mention in Missouri Synod literature of the various social, political, or economic crises which deeply affected American life. Members of the synod were encouraged to be good citizens, to obey the constituted authorities, to "seek the peace of the city." The stock market crash, the depression of the thirties, and the New Deal aroused the synod to a greater awareness of the happenings on the American scene. Three widely-circulated publications will be examined to show varying attitudes toward the New Deal.

_Lutheran, p. 216.
The *Lutheran Witness*, official publication of the Missouri Synod, had no comment to make about the forthcoming inaugural of President Roosevelt in March, 1933. Instead, the lead editorial in the issue preceding the inaugural, dealt with synodical projects for 1933, the large number of unemployed ministerial candidates, the budget cuts ordered by the synodical board of directors. The editorial closed with the general comment that the world’s midnight offered the challenge of a new day for the church in carrying on mission work. The first direct reference to the New Deal was in an editorial in the March twenty-eighth issue: "We all admit that we are in need of a new deal. We all hope and pray that we shall have a new deal in banking, and in business, and in governmental affairs."¹⁵ In the same issue the editorial, "The Protestant Anti-Christ," attacked the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America for its espousal of social legislation ranging from the abolition of child labor to shorter working hours for labor. The editorial stated that the Christian church dare not venture into the area of advocating specific reforms. It quoted approvingly an editorial from the *Chicago Tribune* which had denounced all social planning, all control of the monetary system, insurance for old age and unemployment. The answer to the present misery, said the *Lutheran Witness*, was repentance over America’s greed.

The first specific reference to a New Deal measure, the NRA, appeared late in August, 1933, when the editor expressed the hope that the various NRA codes

would bring back prosperity. In January, 1934, the editor used the NRA codes to attack the proponents of the Child Labor Amendment. He declared that the amendment was objectionable because it limited the rights of parents and handed the children over to the control of the state. He claimed that the NRA codes had abolished child labor. He declared that the Child Labor Amendment advocates were victims of the propaganda of the Department of Education at Washington and that this bureau would "dictate grade-school and high-school education through swivel chair control." One month later the editor again attacked the Child Labor Amendment and stated that the adoption of this amendment would be an unwarranted invasion of parental rights. He returned to the attack the next month and said that Socialists and Communists were behind the amendment.

In April, 1935, the Lutheran Witness published an article by the synod's superintendent of education which attacked the Child Labor Amendment. The superintendent stated that it was farthest from the truth that millions of children were employed in hard labor. He cited the 1930 government census which showed that of 14,300,576 children in the United States only 4.6 per cent were employed in gainful labor. In manufacturing, 68,266 were employed. He said that before the NRA went into effect only 236 children were employed in southern factories. He claimed that the advocates of the amendment wished to emancipate children from parental control and that the entire scheme was "a subterfuge of the American Federation of Labor." The Child Labor Amendment, according to


the superintendent, was originated by "communist women" and that adoption of
the amendment would "mean the establishment of Communism on American soil as
part of our Constitution." 17

The Lutheran Witness refused to believe Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins' statement: "Children have been driven into street trades, into industrial home
work, domestic and personal service, and industrialized agriculture, the very
trades where conditions are most often undesirable and where, because they are
unregulated, opportunities for exploitation exist. It is a crucial hour in the
history of the fight against child labor." 18

The Child Labor Amendment was never ratified. Whether the Missouri
Synod's official publication deserved at least part of the credit for its defeat
cannot be determined because there are no records of how many state
legislatures were influenced by the Lutheran Witness editorials.

As the drouth and dust storm areas grew larger, the Lutheran Witness
published news accounts from pastors in those areas. But in an editorial on
dust storms the editor said that the way the government rushed aid to these
areas was folly of the worst kind. He wrote that the destruction of crops and
the slaughter of animals compounded the folly. The dust storms demonstrated
the fallibility of human endeavors and resources. The Lord's hand was evident
in all these events. 19 The Lutheran Witness had no sympathy with the

17 A. C. Stellhorn, "The Statistical Fraud of the Amendment", Lutheran

18 Literary Digest, CXV (May 20, 1933), p. 19.

government's measures to aid the unemployed and those who had lost their farms in the drought years. On a visit to New Mexico the editor recorded his observations of the relief procedures through the FERA and the WPA. He declared that he had the opportunity to observe the working of the Federal government at close range. He wrote that the emergency relief measures were "creating a huge population of loafers.... These people were living more comfortably under relief — extended under the condition that they be idle — than ever under normal conditions. They now refuse to work when work is offered them.... They are now degenerating into loafers." He reported that he had seen similar conditions in other states.

The first approval of the government's efforts to help the unemployed and needy appeared in an article, "Relief." The writer posed the question of the Christian's responsibility to the 22 million on relief. He maintained that the individual Christian must always be mindful of the needs of others. The church likewise must be ready at all times to dispense charity. But there comes a time when the church and the individual can no longer give all the help. The state must step in and the Christian citizen must support the efforts of the state.

However, the Lutheran Witness continued its editorial attack on the WPA. The relief measures were deplored. The editor asked what C.F.W. Walther,

---


organizer of the synod, would say were he observing the present scene. He reminded readers that Walther had written a tract, Socialism and Communism, in which the theologian had declared "with only eight hours to work on every workday we would be breeding a race of loafers." 22

There is an under current of anti-semitism in some of the attacks on the New Deal. The Washington correspondent for the Lutheran Witness reported:

"The Jews are finding a very congenial atmosphere and very lucrative positions in Washington. Never before have so many and such prominent Jews come to the national capital, and never in the history of our country have so many and such high offices been held by the descendants of Abraham as now.... Their Promised Land has suddenly become Washington." 23

As the 1936 presidential campaign grew more heated, the Lutheran Witness declared that "the merits of the New Deal with reference to the improvement of social conditions is a matter with which we are not concerned." But in the same editorial there was sharp criticism of the Federal Council of Churches' The Social Ideals of the Churches and the Social Program of the Government. Lutherans were warned not to be beguiled by the political and religious radicalism contained in the statement, for it is also the program of the New Deal. The editorial disapproved Franklin D. Roosevelt's statement: "State and Church are rightly united in a common aim. With the help of God we are on the road toward it." "We wish to be disassociated from this type of religious

---


thinking," the editor commented, as he went on to declare that it was not the
church's problem to be concerned about obsolete housing, lack of bathtubs, poor
farm credit, the regulation of stock exchanges.24

In a brief editorial after the 1936 presidential election, the editor
wondered whether the two-party system had come to an end. He asked whether the
clock had struck for a dictatorship. He ended by declaring that he could not
interpret the election results and he offered no congratulations to President
Roosevelt.25

The Walther League Messenger, the Missouri Synod's youth publication,
echoed the opinions in the Lutheran Witness. It did not believe that the WPA
or other relief measures were good for the American citizens' moral fiber.
"Repeated experience in connection with public relief roles demonstrates that
many are eager to live on public charity without raising a finger to support
themselves in gainful employment. To subsidize laziness and extend governmental
encouragement to indolence is a procedure which militates against the Christian
ideal of honest, industrious labor."26

There was favorable comment on the goals of the National Youth
Administration which had an allocation of $50 million to be used for the
economic and social rehabilitation of young people. The editor was convinced
that this fund was "a sincere and far-reaching approach to one of the most

24Editorial, "Improving Social Conditions", Lutheran Witness, LV (August

25Editorial, "A Parting of the Ways?", Lutheran Witness, LV (November 17,
1936), p. 386.

26Editorial, "Plain Facts on Wealth Redistribution", Walther League
serious problems of the day." He outlined the fourfold task of the NYA. It was to help relieve the unemployment of young people by finding work for them in private industry; it was to retrain young people for industrial, technical and professional activities; it was to provide employment for young people on large governmental projects; it was to distribute funds enabling young people to continue their attendance at high school and college. The editor was confident that the NYA "crystallizes in a very tangible manner the help which the nation at large should extend to those who in many ways suffer most unfairly and unfortunately from the sins of their predecessors, — the young people of America." He urged Lutheran youth who were unemployed or who were in danger of leaving high school or college before completing their education to avail themselves immediately of NYA assistance. "The NYA is definite, tangible, remedial; it offers dollars and cents." The Walther League Messenger offered to help any Lutheran young person who needed NYA assistance by encouraging the youth to write to the editor. In turn, the editor would provide information about obtaining NYA help.

There was none of the vituperation of the Lutheran Witness and none of the vacillation of the Walther League Messenger toward the New Deal in the pages of the American Lutheran, an independent magazine published by the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau. This bureau was established in 1913 in New York City by a group of Lutheran pastors and laity who wished to publicize the Lutheran church. Its headquarters were in New York and it had no official connection

with the Missouri Synod whose headquarters were in St. Louis. Membership in the bureau was limited to members of the Missouri Synod and to any synod affiliated with it.

In its first editorial dealing with the New Deal, the American Lutheran discussed the implications of the NRA. After stating that "our intense and widespread social and economic problems are fundamentally moral and spiritual in character," the editor commended President Roosevelt for recognizing this by establishing the NRA. The editor referred to the exploitation of man-power and child labor and urged that the church speak out against commonly accepted social and economic evils. However, the New Deal can be successful only if people become converted. "The only dependable force that can compel natural and cheerful habits of fair dealing and that can really give vitality and stability to the New Deal is the converted heart of the child of God.... Yes, the church has a very vital part to play in our country's rehabilitation." 28

The editor continued on the same theme in the next issue as he compared Martin Luther's denunciation of rapacious German noblemen and the New Deal's efforts to bring about recognition for labor in Section 7a of the NRA. 29 The New Deal will be successful if the graft and corruption present in American life is exposed and then eliminated.

Throughout 1934, the American Lutheran continued to remind its readers

28 Editorial, "The NRA and the Church," American Lutheran, XVI (September, 1933), p. 3.

that a new social order was now on the American scene. This new order "forces us into fields hitherto scarcely touched by our congregational endeavors." 30

In November, 1934, the editor lamented about the "dogmatic sterility" which prevented the church from attacking current social and economic problems. He stated that the Missouri Synod had "adopted a defensive attitude which found itself chiefly concerned with the preservation of its doctrinal standards" rather than with a concern for people's troubles. "It can be said without fear of successful contradiction that many of these improvements in church welfare work which we have made came only when the superior service of others and actual legislation by the state compelled us to do better." 31

This defense by the American Lutheran of the New Deal continued through succeeding years. While the magazine defended the social and economic legislation, it refused to admit that it was following the Social Gospel. It constantly asserted that its interest in the New Deal was solely motivated by a concern for the unemployed. In the past the Missouri Synod had adopted an aloof attitude toward civic and national problems. The New Deal offered Lutherans the opportunity to acquire a deeper interest in government and at the same time to become concerned about the nation's social and economic needs. "The language barrier has vanished and the day of linguistic isolation is past," the editor declared. 32

---

31 Editorial, "They Are Our Brothers", American Lutheran, XVII (December, 1934), p. 11.
32 Ibid., p. 11.
An examination of these three major publications within the Missouri Synod reveals a dichotomy of approach and attitude toward the New Deal. On the one hand, the official publication, the Lutheran Witness, exhibited an almost implacable hostility. The Walther League Messenger could not quite make up its mind except for its whole-hearted endorsement of NYA. An explanation for this seemingly close relation between the two publications may lie in the fact that both editors were members of the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis. The American Lutheran, edited and published outside the center of the Missouri Synod population, was much freer in its comments and opinions. It caught the American mood in a more exact manner. While it did not gloat over President Roosevelt's reelection in 1936, it expressed satisfaction that the American people had recognized the New Deal's concerned approach to national problems.

Missouri Synod convention proceedings during these New Deal years make no reference to New Deal legislation. Prime concern of the conventions was the over-supply of ministerial candidates. These graduates of the synod's seminaries could not be placed in congregations because many churches had consolidated with neighboring congregations. Lack of mission funds prevented the synod from opening new preaching stations where candidates could be placed. The synod also continued to express concern over the preservation of pure Lutheran doctrine. It consistently denounced secret societies, such as the Masons and the Elks, because these societies were unchristian. In the twenty-six issues of the Lutheran Witness in 1934 there appeared nineteen articles or editorials directed against lodges. Such editorial expression was the result of decisions made at synodical conventions.
Although the official publications, proceedings and documents of the Missouri Synod expressed hostility or indifference to the New Deal, there was a ferment stirring within the membership. The fact that the American Lutheran could write sharply and eloquently about the necessity for the New Deal without being disowned by the synod was proof that a considerable minority was willing to become involved in political and social aspects of American life. At the very least, the American Lutheran and the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau did not succumb to financial problems.

The fact that there was even discussion of the New Deal in Missouri Synod publications demonstrated that this synod was slowly creeping out of its shell. In previous generations there had been no such heated discussions in the synod's magazines.
CHAPTER VI

OUT OF THE SHELL

All Protestant churches reeled under the impact of the depression. In the optimistic flush of the '20's many congregations had built new edifices far too large and expensive. When the depression hit, they found themselves unable to pay. Most carried their huge debts; a few refected their obligation, thus bringing shame on the Christian Churches. Records of the mission and church extension boards of all the Lutheran synods offer proof that the nation's financial troubles were clearly reflected in church treasuries. Many church enterprises had to be curtailed or abandoned. Dreams of expansion on home or foreign mission fields had to be given up.

When President Roosevelt attacked the problems of the depression through his various New Deal measures, the nation experienced once more a feeling of optimism. While unemployment did not disappear overnight, Americans felt that something was at least being done. Lutherans were also among the recipients of the New Deal money distributed through a variety of projects or through direct relief. Lutheran youth were encouraged to receive financial aid from the National Youth Administration, a New Deal measure.

---

The lessons which Lutherans could learn from the New Deal's actions were many. They learned that the church did not have adequate resources when a truly national and international calamity, such as the depression, struck. For a short time the church might be able to take care of the members of the "household of faith," but over a longer period of time the church could never supply employment or food to large segments of the membership. Indeed the Lutherans could not even provide enough calls to churches for the seminarians who were graduating during these depression years. Seminarians in fact worked on WPA jobs until they were assigned to parishes or to newly-opened mission stations. In many instances the homes of seminarians' parents were saved through the Home Owners Loan Corporation which made over a million loans to mortgage-ridden home owners.  

When the Social Gospel first came into prominence in American church life through the efforts of Rauschenbusch, Gladden, and others, Lutheran reaction was either indifferent or hostile. Lutherans did not believe that it was the function of the Christian church to transform society through better employment conditions or improved housing. They believed that the Social Gospel by-passed the essential elements of Christian life and doctrine. It was a this-worldly gospel of works and not a gospel of grace.

---

2Based on testimony given to the writer of this thesis by Lutheran seminary graduates of the thirties. See also James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox* (New York, 1956), p. 267.

Thus while Lutherans generally rejected the Social Gospel, they observed the New Deal's actions directed to help the unemployed, to encourage workers to form labor unions, to provide direct relief to the hungry and the inadequately clothed and housed Americans. This was not Social Gospel but it was "politics of the deed." Some Lutherans maintained a hostile attitude toward the New Deal but the majority accepted the government's efforts to provide help. Some Lutherans also regarded the New Deal as a challenge to the Lutheran church to change its attitude of the past and to become more concerned about the social problems afflicting millions of fellow citizens. "The state compelled us to do better," wrote the American Lutheran's editor.

The gradual emergence of a sense of social and political responsibility was hastened by the New Deal because Lutherans were face to face with disaster. Lutherans of earlier centuries and generations were mainly concerned with establishing themselves in the United States. They had left state churches in Europe where rationalism, a dead orthodoxy, or even open hostility to a revivified kind of Gospel-preaching, was common. They emphasized the regeneration of the individual rather than society. They were not indifferent to human need, for they established many institutions of mercy, such as homes for orphans, hospitals, nursing homes for the aged. Usually these institutions were intended for their unfortunate fellow-Lutherans.

---

4Burns, p. 266.

5American Lutheran, XVII (December, 1934), p. 11.
In the nineteenth century and in the early decades of the twentieth century the Lutheran church was still largely rural. Both laity and clergy regarded the problems of America's growing industrial society as remote. By the middle of the twentieth century's second decade some Lutheran pastors began to inform themselves about the social movements for the betterment of society. In 1914, the Pittsburgh Synod of the United Lutheran Church protested against conditions in industry. But zeal for social action was not of dominating interest in the rest of the Lutheran church.

It was not until 1933 that Lutherans established a Committee on Social Trends. The committee was set up by the National Lutheran Council, a federation of all Lutheran synods in America, with the exception of the Missouri Synod. This committee studied the relation of church and state, economic and social security, and the effects of communism. As a result of its work, the National Lutheran Council established a Department of Welfare in 1938. The function of this new department was to relate the church's welfare programs to those of the local community, the state and the nation. This was an important function of the new department because a survey by the National Lutheran Council revealed that in 1936 there were eighty-eight welfare societies and agencies, 294 institutions in thirty-two states, serving orphans, the handicapped, aged and sick, representing a valuation of about $50,000,000.

---

7Ibid., p. 334.
In 1936 and 1937 these welfare groups gathered over $300,000 to aid the American Red Cross when it came to the aid of Mississippi River flood victims.9 This financial contribution was the first offering of any size ever given by a Lutheran group to an agency non-Lutheran in origin. Lutherans had come out of the shell of their former aloofness to civic needs and were now willing to provide financial help.

As the New Deal faded from the scene, particularly after Roosevelt's attempts to make the Supreme Court more amenable to New Deal legislation, Lutherans continued their interest in the broader aspects of social life. They carried on their work of charity and relief through the National Lutheran Council. The exception was the Missouri Synod which refused to join this federation because it felt that by so doing it would compromise its faith and confession. However, Missouri Synod Lutherans carried on their charitable work through their own agency, the Associated Lutheran Charities.

During World War II, doctrinal differences, while not forgotten, were held in abeyance as all Lutherans cooperated in providing religious services for Lutherans in the armed services. Over one thousand chaplains from the Lutheran synods accompanied the men and women in uniform. Millions of pieces of devotional literature, prayer books and testaments were distributed through the chaplains and the service centers operated by Lutherans for the benefit of Lutheran and non-Lutheran alike.

This enthusiastic cooperation among all the Lutherans prompted a gathering

9Ibid., p. 79.
of Lutheran editors in 1942 to draft a resolution encouraging all Lutherans to form a federation: "We are firmly convinced that the present desperate crisis in world affairs presents a definite challenge to the Lutheran Church in America to close its ranks and to meet the problems now confronting it with a united front." The Missouri Synod rejected this proposal. Nevertheless, this synod continued to cooperate with the other Lutheran groups in all charitable work.

This cooperation of all Lutheran synods continued during World War II and the 1950's. Through Lutheran World Relief, American Lutherans cooperated with non-Lutheran agencies in bringing relief to war-stricken countries in Europe and Asia. Lutherans in the United States contributed $10,000,000 in 1946 and 1947 for aid to suffering people. In 1948 and 1949 they contributed $1,000,000 each year. It is estimated that since World War II Lutherans have given in cash $39,965,928 for relief purposes. To this sum must be added the gifts of clothing, food, medicine and other gifts for refugees. Since its start, Lutheran World Relief has sent abroad relief cargoes totaling 113,544,536 pounds, valued at $38,290,208. Lutheran World Relief is registered with the Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid, Foreign Operations Administration of the United States, and holds membership in the American Council of Voluntary Agencies for Foreign Service, in American Relief for Korea, and in Christian Rural Overseas Program (CROP). 11


This reorientation of Lutheranism toward cooperative work, and social welfare regardless of synodical differences, represents a decided shift from the positions held by Lutherans prior to the coming of the depression. It is not only in the area of cooperation in social work that Lutherans have worked since World War II but in the field of improving better relations between races, especially between Negro and white, that Lutherans have been active. Resolutions leading to direct action have advanced the cause of racial integration. It is in this field of racial harmony that Lutherans have worked closely together with other Protestant groups seeking to bring about better understanding between races. Lutherans also belong to the National Conference of Christians and Jews, a membership which would have been bitterly disputed by an older generation.

This chapter is headed by the title "Out of the Shell." The writer has sought to demonstrate that Lutherans in America, while adopting differing attitudes toward the New Deal, have been profoundly affected by the forces of acculturation as manifested in the New Deal. "With the introduction of English as church language other changes inevitably set in," Will Herberg writes. These other changes were not only in the area of accommodating a foreign culture to the American scene, but also in the area of becoming more closely identified with a deepened sense of responsibility toward the social, economic,

---


and political life of America. Although it may well be argued that the evidence of cooperative Lutheran work in the areas of charitable endeavor and human relations, as cited in this chapter, does not approach the realms of governmental activity and economic reform, nevertheless, there was an enlarging of the base of Lutheran concern for total national and international welfare. This concern could be interpreted by the sympathetic observer as a by-product of the depression and the action of the New Deal.

As a result of the New Deal and the attitudes the Lutherans expressed toward it, the following four conclusions flow out of the consideration of Lutherans' words and actions during the 1930's when the depression and the New Deal held all men's attention.

1. Lutherans learned that they were "brothers in suffering" with all Americans regardless of creed or national origin. The widespread effects of the depression touched Lutherans and non-Lutherans alike. They may have always regarded themselves as the unique possessors of Scriptural truth, but this possession did not protect them from the consequences of the depression.

2. There was a growing awareness among the Lutherans that they were no longer an immigrant church speaking a foreign language, such as Norwegian or German. They were part of the American scene. They had a right to express political and economic opinions on matters up for legislative or executive action. They expressed these opinions in the pages of their religious publications.

3. As the depression deepened and the New Deal measures were enacted Lutherans realized that church-related relief measures were not enough to alleviate suffering. The church could not provide enough jobs for unemployed
Lutherans, nor could it provide food and clothing for those in want. The Lutherans began to realize that in a crisis of this kind the state would have to step in and do things which had previously been the task of the church. Along with this realization that the state needed to help the unemployed, the hungry, the poorly-clothed, Lutherans, formerly rural-minded, saw that the high idealism expressed by the New Deal was an idealism which the church should have initially expressed. When the New Deal encouraged collective bargaining and the preservation of natural resources for public use, these were measures which the church might have proposed to the government. Lutherans began to realize that the pure Gospel could not be preached effectively to people living on a starvation level on submarginal land. Thus Lutherans began to see that their long-cherished belief of the separation of church and state might be in need of some adaptation. The church could cooperate with the state and the state in turn could give aid to the church.

5. The occasional similarity of attitude on the part of some Lutheran Synods toward the New Deal served perhaps as an indication to the Lutherans that, there might, after all, be a similarity in doctrine and confessional beliefs. It is true, one major segment of Lutheranism in America, the Missouri Synod, refused to unite on a doctrinal basis with fellow Lutherans. However, as the years went on, even Missouri Synod Lutherans began to cooperate with the other synods in social welfare matters. As Lutherans united to express a favorable attitude toward the New Deal, it would not be too wild a dream to venture the prophecy that some day, when all nationalistic and cultural barriers between synods are down, all Lutherans will be united. Franklin Delano
Roosevelt's New Deal never had this as an objective but perhaps this is one of those by-products which makes the study of history the most fascinating of all branches of learning.
CRITICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

A. BOOKS


The defeated 1932 Republican presidential candidate offers a vigorous defense of his policies to counteract the depression. He also accuses the New Deal candidate of twisting or misstating the facts during the campaign. When Hoover discusses the AAA he comes close to vituperation and labels the AAA as an example of American fascism. These memoirs are an important source for obtaining the conservative political reaction to the New Deal.


This is an indispensable source for all statistical information on America's church bodies. A brief historical sketch, written by the denomination's historian or statistician, accompanies the denominational statistics.


Only those addresses and documents were read that pertained to a defense or discussion of the New Deal measures which created reactions within the Lutheran church.


This is the authoritative edition in English of the basic confessional writings of the Lutheran Church.

The condensation of the voluminous diary of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg (1711-1787), the founder of Lutheranism in America, gives a day-by-day account of life in colonial days, especially in the life of the church.

B. MINUTES


Reports, minutes, proceedings, and news accounts of the conventions of the Augustana Lutheran Church, the American Lutheran Church, and the Norwegian Lutheran Church were carried in their church publications.

C. PERIODICALS

American Lutheran, 1932-1938. New York, 1918--.

Augustana Quarterly, 1932-1938. Rock Island, Ill., 1922--

Christian Century, 1932-1938. Chicago, 1894--.

Der Lutheraner, 1916-1920. St. Louis, 1844--.


Lutheran, 1933-1937. Philadelphia, 1861--.

Lutheran Church Quarterly, 1932-1936. Gettysburg, Pa., 1849--.


Lutheran Review, 1932-1938. Mt. Airy, Pa., 1882--.
II. SECONDARY SOURCES

A. BOOKS


A graphic account of the twenties that helps the reader quickly grasp the background of the 1929 Wall Street crash.


Although highly emotional and religiously oriented, the author includes a survey of the activities of the Lutheran church during World War II and the post-war years.


In the nature of a "follow up" of Rauschenbusch's A Theology for the Social Gospel, the author pays special attention to some of the elements of social strategy which the church might follow during a time of economic and social dislocation. There is also an eloquent defense of the New Deal's experimentation. The author is a non-Lutheran.


A thoughtful study of how Rauschenbusch attempted to combine in his concept of the Kingdom of God the two elements of personal salvation and the need for a changed social order. Only the last chapter is devoted to the application of the Social Gospel to religious education.

This documented history of the Protestant church in America takes into consideration the secular happenings, the social and economic changes, occurring at the time of church developments. The author's description of the plight that faced the Protestant church in the thirties when the Social Gospel seemed a failure is extremely revealing.


A careful analysis of the church and state relationship both from the point of view of past occurrences and the changes taking place in the time of the crisis in the thirties. The author is an Episcopalian and seems to have at times an "establishment" point of view. The bibliography is comprehensive.


Termed a political biography, this study of Roosevelt's strategies, successful and unsuccessful, makes quite clear why some of the more advanced New Deal proposals achieved acceptance. The biography also offers proof why the New Deal ended when Roosevelt failed to pack the Supreme Court in 1937. The bibliographies for each chapter are exceedingly valuable to the student who wishes to study further Roosevelt's political acts.


A highly detailed and documented study of the group of Saxon Lutherans who settled in Perry County, Missouri, in 1839. The author is objective in setting forth the faults as well as the virtues of these Lutherans who hoped to establish a pure Lutheranism in the United States.


All the articles are written from the point of view of the Missouri Synod and are, therefore, at times quite critical of other Lutheran bodies and non-Lutheran church groups. This reference book must be used with care.


Here is a sharply critical study of other Lutheran synods whose doctrinal attitudes are not in agreement with the Missouri Synod.

A study of the Americanization of the churches in America. In the section devoted to the Protestants, Herberg discusses the various ethnic backgrounds of the denominational groups and pays particular attention to some of the problems the Lutherans faced as they became integrated into the American scene. He also discusses the doctrinal and confessional backgrounds of the churches. An extensive bibliography makes this a helpful book.


This is a useful book because it describes the America of the 1890's and the succeeding decades. Since White lived in Kansas throughout his life, the author's presentation of life in the middle west provides an insight into the conditions which the Lutherans faced. The author also shows how White bravely met the anti-German hysteria of World War I. This book is a loving tribute to a great editor.


This almanac contains the detailed statistical tables and parochial reports of all Lutheran synods in the United States. In addition, there are also articles which treat the outstanding Lutheran events of the years from 1932 to 1937.


This is the successor to the Concordia Cyclopaedia. It is more free of Missouri Synod bias than its predecessor. The historical articles are presented factually although occasionally there is some editorializing.


The author is chairman of the Augustana Synod’s Commission on Morals and Social Problems. He discusses all social, political and economic problems from the Lutheran viewpoint. He strongly urges all Lutherans to become more deeply involved in current affairs. The book is rather dramatic evidence of a change in Lutheran concerns of previous generations.


This is a comprehensive study of the historical development and creedal positions of all the churches in America. It is scholarly and free of bias. The author was a Lutheran professor of theology.

Meuser, Fred W. The Formation of the American Lutheran Church. Columbus, Ohio, 1958.
The history of the organizational problems and the formulation of the constitution of the American Lutheran Church. This is an extremely well-documented account with a great deal of emphasis placed upon the theological problems which had to be solved before the Ohio and Iowa synods could merge.


This is a study of the change that took place in the thinking of theologians and religious leaders who at one time had placed extremely heavy emphasis on the Social Gospel. A great deal of space is devoted to the gyrations of the Christian Century during the New Deal years. There is also a lengthy analysis of Reinhold Niebuhr's theological transition from the Social Gospel to neo-orthodoxy. The emphasis of the book is placed mainly on the political agitation within Protestant churches other than Lutheran. The author implies that Lutherans were quite naive in many of their political attitudes and that their effect upon the national consciousness was extremely limited. The voluminous bibliography is helpful to the student of the church during the New Deal period.


As with the previously cited Meyer book, Miller devotes all of his attention to Protestants other than Lutherans. He presents in greater detail Protestant reaction to the Child Labor Amendment agitation. He describes in detail the Prohibition propaganda. His conclusion is that Protestants were inept or, at the worst, uninformed on the basic political problems.


This book by a prominent Scandinavian Lutheran theologian devotes considerable attention to the forms of church government in the church bodies of the world. Since he is a European scholar, his bibliography places a heavy emphasis on source material that American scholars may not be acquainted with.


The editor of the Christian Century makes a defense of the Social Gospel as the means by which the depression can be solved. Written before the advent of the New Deal, it is interesting to note that he advocates political and economic measures that were adopted in a changed form, although still recognisable, by the New Deal proponents.

This is a critical study of the rise of church government in the most conservative of all Lutheran synods in the United States. The author does not hesitate to criticize some of the autocratic and hierarchical procedures of the synod's founders.


This detailed history of the growth of the Norwegian Lutheran church in the United States is not merely a laudatory account of the heroic struggles of the middle west pioneers but it is a carefully documented account, based on primary sources. The authors devote a great share of their attention to the many theological debates and divisions which marred late nineteenth century Lutheranism. Although they make some mention of the economic struggles of the pioneer Norwegians, they leave much of this church history isolated from the great middle west movements, such as Populism and the later rise of the Farmers' Union.


A required book for anyone studying the role of the Protestant church during the thirties. Niebuhr here turns from a dependence upon the Social Gospel to a neo-orthodoxy that asks Christians to recognize the demonic in man and society. He scores Christians who forget political necessities in the struggle to establish a decent human society.


This is a continuation of Moral Man and Immoral Society. He devotes considerable attention to the necessity for a belief in original sin as a necessary parallel to political realism.


Although Niebuhr devotes this study mainly to the growth of the Methodists and Baptists in American democracy, his description of how the immigrant churches lost many of their European traditions is applicable to the Lutheran church. He believes that denominationalism represents the moral failure of Christianity and that the church must learn the secular nature of its denominationalism.


An account of the Swedish Lutherans' efforts to establish a synod in
middle west America. He devotes a great deal of space to the doctrinal discussions at the sacrifice of placing the church in American history.


Two prominent American Lutheran theologians offer guide lines to Lutherans who must face the problems of the 1930's. Although they do not endorse any particular economic or industrial system, their indictment of unscrupulous capital is scathing. They state that it is the church's duty to raise her voice in "solemn warning against the peculiar dangers and temptations that arise from the present industrial system." The fact that respected Lutheran theologians make a statement of this kind in the thirties is significant to the historian.


A brief biography of an eighteenth century Lutheran clergyman who helped establish the Lutheran in New York. The biographer’s use of documents to establish the factual accuracy of his narrative makes this a valuable reference volume in the study of early American Lutheranism.


This collection of newspaper and magazine articles, case histories, and Congressional hearings on depression and relief problems offers the historian an easy way to obtain an overall picture of the devastation of the depression of the thirties. This is an eye-witness account since all of the material was written either by trained reporters or investigators.


---


---


These three volumes tell the story of the "Age of Roosevelt" from 1919 to the 1936 election. There is partisanship and bias. He scores Hoover's reluctance to battle the depression with radical legislative measures. Hoover in his Memoirs claims he was not reluctant at all. Schlesinger obviously admires Roosevelt and the New Deal attempts to bring about a better America. His accounts of how the depression ate away at America's social and political fiber is impressive — and it is documented.


The author labels this study "A Historico-philosophical Interpretation of the Church in Its Relation to Various Modifying Forces in the United
States." Unfortunately, he pays little or no attention to the political and economic developments of the nineteenth and twentieth century. The Lutheran church he describes seems to have resided in a vacuum. He is more concerned with the impact of the "liberalism" of other Protestant denominations upon Lutheranism's purity of doctrine and confession. He also expresses doubt about the purity of some Lutheran synods.


This is a brief history of the establishment of the Swedish Lutheran synod in Illinois.


The author gives the account of the origin of Missouri Synod Lutheran churches in the northern Illinois area.


--- Religion in the Development of American Culture. ---

Both of these volumes, although each has a different purpose, convey the feeling of the important part religion played in the growth of America. There are times when the reader feels that Sweet gives religion too much credit in America's nineteenth century.


One valuable feature of this history is the account of events in Lutheran history during the 1950's.


Warren is fair to Hoover, although Hoover-partisans may feel that he is unjust when he says that Hoover had a defeatist attitude toward the 1932 election. He describes Hoover's campaign arguments as "chain-of-circumstances" arguments. He also says that Hoover outpointed his opponent on the question of economic overexpansion.


Wecter's book offers the student of the thirties a general orientation of the causes, economic and political, of the depression. His descriptions of the plight of people, communities and states is documented. His section on the dust bowl is the historical counterpart to John Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath.*

No student of the Lutheran church in America can afford to overlook this book which has the modest adjective "basic" in its title. Wentz succeeds, as few church historians have succeeded, in placing the Lutherans into the middle of the events of American history. He is limited by space in developing some of the social and economic factors which affected Lutheranism. His bibliography is one of the most complete the writer of this thesis has read.

B. ARTICLES


Holstad, S.H. "Relief Work in Minneapolis," *Lutheran Herald*, XVI (October 11, 1932), 1050.

"The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod," *Lutheran Cyclopaedia* (St. Louis, 1951), 606-630.


Schroeder, Martin. "Where Do We Stand?" Lutheran Church Quarterly, VII (April 1934), 187-190.

Siljan, O.G.V. "The Church's Attitude to Labor," Lutheran Herald, XVIII (September 18, 1934), 815-816.


Approval Sheet

The thesis submitted by Alfred Paul Klausler has been read and approved by three members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

May 20, 1961

[Signature]

Date

Signature of Adviser