

b. The Lutheran bodies:

(1) The General Synod..its kindred members.

Picking up from the work of Muhlenberg, the General Synod was formed in 1820, Simon Schmucker being one of the principle parties. Schmucker tended to be "liberal" (as defined earlier) and in 1855 issued a plea for Lutheran unity along the lines of a "Synodical Platform." This was rejected by the more "conservative" Lutherans and a General Council developed from their numbers in 1866 along with the development of a United Synod of the South in 1960 where the chief issue was slavery and States' Rights. Both of these bodies expanded...Gettysburg Seminary was the big institution of the former and Mt. Airy Seminary of the latter and both made use of the term "evangelical" in naming themselves. In 1918 they reunited to form the United Lutheran Church which in 1962 became the United Lutheran Church in America with the amalgamation of a number of smaller and nationalistic bodies. Of the smaller bodies, the largest (how is that for confusion of language) was the Augustana Synod dating from 1860 and one of the more openly evangelical synods (pietistic) of that time.

(2) The American Lutheran Church was formed in 1930 with the merger of the Iowa Synod (1854), the Buffalo Synod (1845) and the Ohio Synod (1818). (They all had longer names!) This body has sponsored Capitol Seminary and University in Columbus Ohio as well as the Wurtburg Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa...plus a number of other schools

(3) These two major bodies (with some smaller ones) merged in 1988 to form the Lutheran Church in America with a membership of about 5,000,000 members. The working out of this merger is still in progress...there have been some splinter elements and the final disposition has not been achieved although the merger is accomplished and the united church a fact.

(4) The Missouri Synod (The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod) is the other major Lutheran force. It is fiercely confessional and high-churchly holding to the ancient creeds and the book of concord. It has attempted to police itself against theological liberalism and in 1976 suffered a small schism when a modernistic element left after the dismissal of neo-orthodox (and other deviant ideologies) from Concordia Seminary. The dissenting party called itself the Association of Evangelical Lutherans and joined in the merger mentioned in 3 above. The Missouri Synod claims a membership close to 3 million persons. It developed in 1847 after the leadership of F. W. Walther (its youth group is still known as the Walther League) and its most prominent expression in our age has been The Lutheran Hour, a strongly gospel oriented program developed by Walter Maier.