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## Theodore Emanuel Schmauk—A Biography.<sup>1)</sup>

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"So far as Lutheranism itself is concerned, contrary to the prevailing American view of it, as divided into many sects, all our general organizations have done wonders within the last generation to bring order out of chaos, strength out of weakness, and the effective application of power out of a primal and individualistic confusion." (p. 131.)

These words are quoted by the biographer from Dr. Schmauk's "Call" for the General Council's convention in 1907. The students of American Lutheranism as it had developed during the second half of the nineteenth century will agree with Dr. Sandt's judgment that for the extent to which these words are applicable to the General Council and to the General Synod the subject of this biography has been more immediately responsible than any other man. During his entire career, Theodore Schmauk cast the great influence of his personality into the balance for the advancement of conservative Lutheranism. The man and his work are worth the labors which Dr. Sandt has expended upon this biography.

Dr. Schmauk possessed special qualifications that made him a leader in affairs of the Church. Dr. Abrahamson, editor of *Augustana*, said in 1915: "His forceful and magnetic personality are on a par with his good nature and adaptability, and his readiness to meet trying situations. Also, there can be no question as to his impartiality and straightforwardness in conducting the [convention] proceedings. His capacity for work is phenomenal. Besides being President of the Council, he is pastor of a large congregation, professor at Mount Airy, editor of the *Church Review*, the ablest of its kind in the country. He has wrought out a marvelously complete system of Sunday-school instruction, and published im-

1) Theodore Emanuel Schmauk, D. D., LL. D. A Biographical Sketch, with Liberal Quotations from His Letters and Other Writings. By George W. Sandt. Philadelphia. United Lutheran Publication House. 1921. 291 pages, 5¾×8¾. \$2.00.

portant historic and religious works, one after the other. In speech and writing he plants himself firmly upon historic Lutheran ground. May he be spared to serve the Church many years!" (p. 163.)

That marvelously resourceful, fruitful, and many-sided life was brought to a close when Dr. Schmauk expired on the morning of March 23, 1920. Nothing has so impressed us in the reading of his biography as the great capacity of the man for sustained mental effort. "He worked methodically and under fixed routine, and would be much disturbed when his routine was broken into. He never opened letters from others until he was ready to answer them, so as to have the advantage of a first impression. In the mornings, when preparing to take the train for the Seminary, he would hurriedly eat his breakfast, and, with a stenographer at hand, dictate letters while eating. He worked till late in the night, and sometimes allowed himself but five or six hours of sleep." (p. 219.) He wore out, he did not rust out.

The immediate forebears of the Schmauk family hailed from Wuerttemberg, Germany. In 1819 the grandfather of the future churchman emigrated to America, settling in Philadelphia. His father, Benjamin William, was born in 1828. While serving a parish at Lancaster, Pa., there was born to Benjamin William and Wilhelmina Catherine (Hingel) Schmauk a son who at his baptism was called Theodore Emanuel. Theodore's childhood years and his career as student at college and seminary are sketched by Dr. Sandt in sympathetic chapters, and his quick rise to distinction in the affairs of the General Council is told with welcome wealth of detail. Dr. Schmauk was literary editor of *The Lutheran* from 1889 to the year of his death, and for twenty-five years, edited the *Lutheran Church Review* and the *Graded Sunday-school Series*. He was member of many synodical committees, president of Trustees of the General Council, president of the Board of Directors of Mount Airy Seminary, occupant of the chair of Christian Faith and Apologetics in the same institution, and in the year of the Merger, 1917, chairman of the Committee on Constitution for the United Lutheran Church. In spite of the great multiplicity of tasks which entered into the public offices which he held, he never relinquished his pastorate at Lebanon, Pa., the first and only congregation which he served. No reader of Dr. Sandt's chapters can fail to be impressed by the earnestness and determination with which Schmauk cast himself into the fray on behalf of a conservative Lutheran theology and Scriptural practise. He was deeply apprehensive of a tendency among certain scholars within the General Council to yield some-

what to the rationalistic attitude of the negative critics toward the Scriptures. His soul was "stirred to the depth for fear of a drift away from the faith into the shoals and quicksands of rationalism." (p. 126.) Over against every effort to "bleach out" (to use his own expressive phrase) the principles of the Lutheran Reformation he held that the Scriptures "are inerrant in letter, fact, and doctrine," that "not only the revelation and its record, but the history and its record, *the whole Scripture*, in spirit and letter, is inspired." Nothing else than subscription to the *complete* Lutheran confession would do. (p. 128 f.)

Dr. Schmauk was one of the few men of prominence within the General Council who bore public testimony against the unionistic principle. He clearly perceived that loyalty to the confessional principle excluded fellowship with those out of harmony with the doctrinal stand of our Church. Dr. Sandt quotes more than one significant statement: —

"The Y. M. C. A., the common interdenominational Missionary Societies, the common forms of Christian Endeavor, in our modern university life, have their use as over against unbelief and immorality in university circles, but our Lutheran students cannot enter into alliances or relationships with this common Christian life in the universities without the greatest danger of weakening their Lutheran principles." (p. 155.)

The clear-visioned churchman speaks in the following: "The English Church is under a greater strain than the German in standing out for a sound Lutheranism. It is more tempted to imitate and follow the lead of the other Protestant denominations. Its young men and its students are under the greatest temptation to get ideas and convictions during their college and university career which weaken their hold on a genuine Lutheran practise." (p. 156.)

"He realized most keenly," says his biographer, "that on the question of safeguarding the faith by a consistent practise spots in the General Council were vulnerable," and as one of the weaknesses of the Council he mentions "that membership in secret societies and organizations where, in the worship, Christ's name was studiously excluded, was not discountenanced as was meet." (p. 159.) As late as 1920 Dr. Schmauk submitted to a committee of the National Lutheran Council a statement<sup>2)</sup> "On the Lodge and Pulpit-Fellowship," which asserts that the very secrecy of exclusive fraternities is "consonant neither with the principles of the Gospel nor with those of the American people"; furthermore, "if the Lutheran

2) Not accepted by the committee.

Church takes a position that in general its fellowship in pulpit and altar is not for non-Lutherans, that fact in itself has a direct bearing on the principle of secret societies" (p. 257) — the exact position taken by the Missouri Synod at its Detroit convention in the same year.

Unfortunately, Dr. Schmauk never comprehended the Synodical Conference position over against the secret orders. Says his biographer: "To those who feared that the Lutheran Church's position against secretism and unionism would be jeopardized, he writes that these dangers cannot be warded off by legislation and discipline, but by an earnest and conscientious educational process" (p. 208) — as if the earnest and conscientious educational process were excluded by the principle that Christian discipline must be exercised in the case of members who have joined a Christless order! The position of Dr. Sandt, who complains of the "legalistic hardness and rigidity of other Lutheran bodies" (p. 157), — reference to the Synodical Conference, — reflects the attitude of Dr. Schmauk himself. Even in an argument for the Galesburg rule, "Lutheran Pulpits for Lutheran Ministers," he complains of the legalistic method of *enforcing* the Lutheran principle (p. 253), and speaks as if the Synodical Conference, Ohio, and other bodies maintained "the old German theory of obedience to authority," the exercise of discipline "on the assertion of the pastor or of the Church," and then emphasizes (what no Synodical Conference or Ohio Synod man would think of denying) that "doctrine and truth must stand on their merits." Nothing is to a Missouri Synod reader so saddening in the perusal of this volume as the evident inability of Dr. Schmauk to capture the Synodical Conference point of view. The thought rises, time and again, how different the history of Lutheranism from 1910 onward would have been if this great leader had not been so warped in his judgment of our attitude over against questions of doctrine and congregational practise. It seems to us that if he had at an earlier period in his career so clearly understood and announced the "Limitations to Cooperation" (p. 270) as he announced his views on this subject in 1907, he would have come very close to the attitude maintained by the Synodical Conference over against union movements. Even so, we cannot understand his occasional polemics against Missouri when he so clearly says in the statement just referred to: "Refusal to cooperate is not condemnation. There may be reasons why my neighbor's business, without any reflection on him, should be kept entirely separate from my own. He realizes that, and respects me

for attending strictly to my own affairs; and Christian business men must be made to realize that religion is at least as serious a thing as business." And again: "Since cooperation with those outside of communion and fellowship is necessarily selective, refusal is not an indication of bigotry or narrowness. Dr. Trumbull has emphasized 'The Duty of Refusing to Do Good.'" (p. 270.) By this last phrase (a favorite one of Dr. Schmauk) is meant the cooperation on the field of charity and missions ("doing good") jointly with those from whom we are separated by differences in belief.<sup>3)</sup>

As a Lutheran theologian, the General Council churchman knew that "the Lutheran Church is a Church which makes each congregation the center of authority." (p. 145.) But while this true conception of congregational authority caused him to warn against the multiplying of machinery through missionary and other societies, "lest they come into clash with the machinery which the genius and spirit of our Church recognizes," it did not prevent him from asserting the characteristic General Council view of church government. About the year 1900 there was within the General Council a considerable party which advocated the "low-church, or congregational, conception of church polity." Dr. Sandt believes that this low-church party "did much to encourage the sectional and divisional spirit in the General Council." He quotes with approval from a letter addressed to Dr. Krotel by Schmauk: "The independence, and independent rights, and independent liberties of a single local visible Christian congregation, as over against the common consent of the churches of the same faith, duly and lawfully obtained, do not seem to me to have a just existence" (p. 143), a statement that escapes open disagreement with the Lutheran confessions only through the phrase "duly and lawfully obtained," which, however, constitutes a plain begging of the question. One of the features injected into the situation by the Swedish Synod's attitude a few years later was, again, the Augustana Synod's demand that "the Council function simply as an advisory body." (p. 165.) If Dr. Schmauk saw with something like dismay the defection of the Swedes when the Merger was becoming a reality, he had, to no small extent, his own "high-church" views of church government to blame for the result.

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3) By a strange inconsistency, Dr. Schmauk was at the time of his death, and had been for many years, a member of the (German) Allgemeine Lutherische Konferenz, which recognizes as in full fellowship the Prussian Union clergy. The lack of any reference to this connection of Dr. Schmauk's with the German State Church organization is one of several strange omissions in Dr. Sandt's book.

The failure of the General Council to hold the Swedish Synod impresses the reader of this biography, especially when he remembers the discussion in the *Lutheran* during 1916 and 1917, as the turning-point in Schmauk's career as a churchman. His influence had for some time been waning. By nature and by long-accustomed usage to positions of authority, Dr. Schmauk's temper was to no small degree autocratic, his manner sometimes dictatorial. Even a friendly biographer should not have failed to state this outstanding fault in Dr. Schmauk's character. It was this manner which offended some who agreed with him in principle. That his attitude against secret orders and against unionism with the Reformed sects roused opposition against him within his own body cannot be doubted. Unfortunately, those who stood with him on these vital issues were not always willing to accept his leadership, being repelled by his autocratic manner. There is a hint at the cause of his waning power in Dr. Sandt's statement that he "all through his presidential career favored more power for the General Council as such and less for its boards, committees, and voluntary agencies" (p. 144), a preference for centralization which never fails to alienate the respective boards, committees, and voluntary agencies. Most significant of all is the letter addressed by the General Council President to the newly elected President of the United Lutheran Church, from which the biographer quotes (p. 213 ff.), and which makes distinctly painful reading.

We have referred to the Merger. The story of the movement which originated in 1911 and culminated in 1917 in the union of the General Council, the General Synod, and the United Synod in the South, is told in several illuminating chapters by the biographer. A possible union of these synods had been referred to, more or less rhetorically, at various times by fraternal delegates at the conventions, and the movement came to a head in 1917, when a joint committee met for the discussion of Quadricentennial plans. The committee, of which Mr. J. L. Zimmerman of the General Synod was a prominent member, had been instructed to approve plans for a "worthy celebration" of the Reformation Quadricentennial. The committee met at Philadelphia, and the laymen "sprung a surprise on its chairman and the other clerical members,"—the laymen reported that they had a plan to unite the three bodies into one! It is clear from Dr. Sandt's story, as it was clear at the time to the readers of the *Lutheran*, that Dr. Schmauk looked with disfavor upon so precipitate a union. "Church-bodies should grow together and not be merely tied together." (p. 199.) But the move for this

“immediate and hasty merger” (Dr. Schmauk to the committee) was submitted to the church and a year later was an accomplished fact. The church-bodies which represented, according to Dr. Schmauk’s own classification, two oppositional tendencies, — “a complete Confessional Lutheranism” and a “nominal and accommodative and liberal Lutheranism” (p. 176), — were united into one church-body. A Lutheranism which was on a fair way towards recapturing the ideals of the Reformation Church was united with a Lutheranism which, “rather than subscribe to the Formula of Concord, would have her arm burned off at the stake,” — to quote, with change of pronoun, Professor Richard’s statement to the Philadelphia pastors. (p. 176.) Dr. Schmauk was not elected president. The body could not accept the leadership of a man whose views on church-fellowship were those expressed in the Theses of 1907, as, for instance: “External union of Christians will not bring about harmony of conviction on the one truth. It will simply transfer the points of divisiveness to a place within the common circle.” And again: “This unity will be the unity of the most persistent wearing down of those who are more retiring and yielding.” (p. 267.)

Much is said in Dr. Sandt’s pages concerning Theodore Schmauk as seminary professor, as executive officer, and as author, especially of the *Graded Sunday-school Series*, and much concerning the personal habits, the methodical routine, and the many-sided genius of this great man, of which we should like to quote if space permitted. We shall close this review by appending two quotations which illustrate the General Council leader’s wonderful felicity of style.

Speaking of controversy, he said: “In controversy, the victory is not always to the deserving. There are antagonists which a noble and fair mind cannot afford to engage. An unscrupulous and mean-minded combatant will always be seeking and seizing small advantages, evading direct issues, and gliding away under cover of personalities. He will be venturesomely wicked in the unblushing use of mendacious sarcasm, knowing that it is impossible for a noble man to stoop to similar retort. He will carry the issue away from the main question, to a very unexpected and perhaps a personal quarter. The tricky contestant can have the truthful-minded man completely at his mercy. It will be impossible to explain and unravel all his interposed innuendoes, without becoming so tedious and diffuse that the public will no longer be willing to listen. The more indignant you wax, the more assiduously will he continue the

worrimment. It is the old story of the fly and the elephant. Never argue with a mean mind." (p. 280.)

And concerning "The Common Ground," his Theses of 1907 contained this golden paragraph: "There is a common ground for all Christians in Christ. Those whom Christ recognizes, despite their errors and imperfections, are already one with us in Christ. They may not be one with us in mind and faith, they may not be one with us in those particular parts of our mind and faith which we feel divinely called to stand for and exposit, and hence we may be unable to feel and say that they are in a common brotherhood of faith, because we earnestly believe that, although Christ can receive them as they are unto Himself without danger to His truth, we cannot do so with the same safety. Christ can do all things. We must do in accordance with our convictions." (p. 266.)

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