

Concordia Theological Quarterly



Volume 76:1-2

January/April 2012

Table of Contents

What Would Bach Do Today? Paul J. Grime	3
Standing on the Brink of the Jordan: Eschatological Intention in Deuteronomy Geoffrey R. Boyle	19
Christ's Coming and the Church's Mission in 1 Thessalonians Charles A. Gieschen	37
Luke and the Foundations of the Church Peter J. Scaer	57
The Reformation and the Invention of History Korey D. Maas	73
The Divine Game: Faith and the Reconciliation of Opposites in Luther's <i>Lectures on Genesis</i> S.J. Munson	89
<i>Fides Heroica?</i> Luther's Prayer for Melanchthon's Recovery from Illness in 1540 Albert B. Collver III	117
The Quest for Lutheran Identity in the Russian Empire Darius Petkūnas	129
The Theology of Stanley Hauerwas Joel D. Lehenbauer	157

Theological Observer175
 Faithful Lutheran Pastor Defrocked: Active Persecution
 by the Church of Sweden
 A Whole New Can of Worms: A Statement of the Faculty of
 Concordia Theological Seminary on Religious Liberty
Book Reviews182

The Quest for Lutheran Identity in the Russian Empire

Darius Petkūnas

The identity of the Lutheran Church in the Russian Empire presents a complex picture, consisting of many ethnic groups of immigrants as well as the inhabitants of conquered territories. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the question of confessional identity was not pressing. The Lutheran Churches of the empire accepted the Unaltered Augsburg Confession of 1530, and later most accepted the other Lutheran symbolical writings. In the era of Pietism, however, Lutheran identity began to blur. The confessional writings were never denied, but they were no longer the active touchstone by which many groups identified themselves. The situation of confessional identity was soon further complicated by the spread of Rationalism, which regarded the Lutheran Confessions as merely indicating what was believed in ages past.

The present study examines the identifying characteristics of Lutheranism in the Russian Empire from the early days of the Reformation until the eve of the October Revolution of 1917. It provides a picture of the development of Lutheran consciousness in the churches that would eventually be united into one Lutheran Church in the Russian Empire until its dissolution in 1917. It examines the factors that led to the acceptance of all of the symbolical writings of the Book of Concord in these Lutheran churches, as well as the influences which jeopardized their identity in the time of Pietism and Rationalism. It also examines the events in the 19th century that led to a renewal of a Lutheran consciousness and of a new appreciation of the symbolical books and Lutheran traditions. The study is based on primary source materials including church orders and liturgical agendas that shaped and most clearly reflected the self-identity of these churches, as well as secondary source material that is primarily historical in nature.

This study will be of interest not only to students of church history but also to those who are concerned to see how patterns and trends of thought influenced the Lutheran Church in the modern era. One may see in present

Darius Petkūnas is a member of the faculty in the Baltic Studies Program of the University of Klaipėda, Lithuania, and a docent in the theological faculty of the University of Helsinki, Finland. He also serves as pastor of three Lutheran congregations in western Lithuania and is a member of the Consistory and the Presidium of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania.

social and philosophical trends something of a repetition of the experiences of the Lutheran churches in the empire in the 18th and 19th centuries. The question of Lutheran identity becomes acute in an era of growing ecumenism, secularism, and accommodation. This study provides insight as to how the church reacted two centuries ago and the consequences of the directions taken at that time. In this way, this study may prove helpful to churchmen today, for those who have learned the lessons of the past are best equipped to meet present challenges.

I. The Church on the Eve of the October Revolution

In 1914, on the eve of World War I, the Lutheran church in the Russian Empire was the third largest Lutheran church body in the world. According to statistics provided by the General Consistory in St. Petersburg, there were 3,674,000 Lutherans in the Russian Empire.¹ Its size was exceeded only by the Lutheran churches in Sweden and the German empire.² Of the non-Eastern Orthodox churches in Russia, it was second only to the Roman Catholic church, which included within it large numbers of Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians.³

The Lutheran church in Russia was of course not Russian at all. Russians were not permitted to convert, and any Lutheran pastor who accepted a convert from the Russian church or married a Lutheran to an Orthodox, or baptized the child where one parent was Orthodox would be severely reprimanded and, if caught doing it again, defrocked. This law was officially annulled in 1905, but that did not bring any influx of Russians into the Lutheran Church. In addition, no matter what was said

¹ Neither Poland nor Finland would be included in the statistics, since the Lutheran churches enjoyed some autonomy and were not under the jurisdiction of the General Consistory in St. Petersburg. Theophil Meyer, *Luthers Erbe in Russland: Ein Gedenkbuch in Anlass der Feier des 400-jährigen Reformationsfestes der evangelisch-lutherischen Gemeinden in Russland* (Moskau: Gedruckt in d. Rigaschen Typo-Lithographie, K. Mischke, 1918), 98.

² According to 1900 statistics there were 5,972,792 Lutherans in Sweden, and in 1905 there were 37,646,852 Evangelicals in Germany, the majority of whom were Lutherans. Those who took the census in the German empire did not differentiate between Lutherans and Reformed. *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church*, vol. 9 (New York: The Encyclopedia Press, 1910), 463.

³ A 1902 census of the Russian Empire indicates that there were 4,564,391 Roman Catholics in the dioceses of Mogilev (Могилёв), Vilnius (Вильнюс), Samogitia or Telšiai (Жмудь or Тельшяй), Lutzk-Zhitomir (Луцк-Житомир), and Tiraspol (Тирасполь). The Roman Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Poland was not included in these numbers. *Die Kirchen und das religiöse Leben der Rußlanddeutschen*. Katholischer Teil, ed. J. Schnurr. (Stuttgart: Selbstverlag, 1978), 24.

by officials in St. Petersburg, local officials and police might choose to maintain the old rules in their jurisdictions. Family circumstances were often such that it was not wise to encourage conversions.

Lutherans in Russia were people whose family backgrounds and origins lay elsewhere. Consequently, the Lutheran Church was very cosmopolitan. The largest single group was Latvian, numbering 1,293,000. Most of these were in Livonia and Courland, but there were also large numbers of Latvians in the regions of St. Petersburg and Moscow. The second largest group was Estonian. There were 1,100,000 of them, and the majority of them lived in Livonia and Estonia. There were also large numbers of Estonians in the St. Petersburg and Moscow consistorial districts. The third largest group consisted of the Germans, numbering 1,098,000. German Lutherans were widely scattered, but most of them lived in the St. Petersburg and Moscow consistorial districts. In the St. Petersburg district, there were 415,000 German Lutherans and in the Moscow district there were even more, 490,000. An additional 100,000 lived in Livonia and 75,000 in Courland. These three groups represented more than two thirds of all the Lutherans in the Russian Empire. In addition, there were 148,000 Finns, nearly all of them in Ingria, which was in the St. Petersburg consistorial district, 14,000 Swedes, most of them in Estonia or St. Petersburg, 12,000 Lithuanians in Lithuania, who along with 4,000 Poles were in the Courland consistorial district. Furthermore, there were 2,000 Livs (Lat. *Livones*), 1,000 Armenians, and approximately 1,000 Lutherans who did not fit into any of these ethnic groups.

To simplify matters, it can be said that Russian Lutherans and their churches fell in two main groups: those in the Baltic lands and those in Russia proper. The Lutheran Church in the Baltic lands consisted of three consistorial districts: Livonia with 1,280,000 members, Courland with 669,000, and Estonia 476,000. In Russia proper, there were 703,000 in the St. Petersburg consistorial district and 546,000 in the Moscow district. Both of these Russian districts comprised vast territories. Lutherans in Ingria and South Russia were administered from St. Petersburg and Lutherans as far away as Irkutsk and points even farther east were under the Moscow consistory. The Russian Lutheran Church consisted of 539 congregations with 832 church buildings and 996 prayer houses.⁴ Serving the church were some 553 pastors.⁵

⁴ *Luthers Erbe in Russland*, 98.

⁵ *Personalstatus der Evangelisch-Lutherischen und der Evangelisch-Reformierten Kirche in Russland* (Petrograd: Buchdruckerei J. Watsar, 1914), 3–108.

It could be said that Lutherans in the Russian Empire were either native Baltic peoples living in their traditional homelands or immigrants from the west who had come to Russia proper by invitation of tsars and tsarinas in the 18th and 19th centuries. Livonia and Estonia came under Russian control after the Battle of Poltava in 1709, when the Swedes lost their power in the region. The Third Partition of Poland and Lithuania in 1795 brought the annexation of Courland and Lithuania into the empire. Lutheran immigrants from German lands into Russia proper settled along the banks of the Volga River near Saratov, as well as in the region of St. Petersburg, in the governmental district of Volhynia in present day north-western Ukraine, and in the Southern Russian governmental districts of Cherson, Tauria, Jekaterinoslav, and Bessarabia, most of which are now in southern Ukraine.⁶ The greatest period of immigration came as a response to the 1763 invitation of Catherine the Great for Europeans to settle in Russia where land was plenty and freedom of worship guaranteed.

II. Confessional Character of the Lutheran Church in the Baltic Lands and Russia Proper in the 16th–17th Centuries

From the start, Lutherans in the Baltic lands understood themselves to be the church of the Augsburg Confession. Lutheranism spread far and wide mainly within the states of the old Livonian Confederation, which consisted of the lands of the Livonian Order, the Archbishopric of Riga, and the Bishoprics of Dorpat, Oesel-Wiek, and Courland, as well as the independent Hanseatic cities of Riga, Tartu (Ger. *Dorpat*), and Tallinn (Ger. *Reval*). These lands were largely under the control of German noblemen who were open to Lutheran doctrine and practice. Lutheranism first took root in the major cities of Riga and Dorpat in Livonia and Tallinn in Estonia and from there it spread to the surrounding areas. The public definition of the Lutheranism of these regions came to be necessitated by the collapse of the Livonian Confederation. The westward movement of the Muscovite armies in 1558 could not be effectively combated by the greatly weakened states of the Confederation. They ceased to exist with the dissolution of the Livonian Order by the Treaty of Vilnius in 1561. Already in 1559, the Bishop of Oesel-Wiek sold his lands to King Frederick II of Denmark, who found the church there to be unreformed. The king introduced the Danish church order and regulated life according to the Augsburg Confession.⁷ According to the terms of the 1645 Peace of

⁶ *Die evangelisch-lutherischen Gemeinden in Rußland*, vol. 1, Der St. Petersburgische und Moskowische konsistorialbezirk (St. Petersburg: Buchdruckerei J. Watsar, 1909), XV.

⁷ Alvin Isberg, *Ösels kyrkoförvaltning 1645–1710: Kompetensvister och meningssättningar rörande funktionssättet* (Uppsala: [Uppsala universitet], 1974), 14.

Brömsebro, Oesel (Est. *Saaremaa*) was ceded to Sweden. In 1561, Sweden took control of Tallinn and the west coast of Estonia. Now Estonia and the Estonian Church would be governed by Swedish rules which called for the formal acceptance of the Augsburg Confession and Luther's catechisms. The rest of the territory of the Confederation was divided into two regions: Courland, which bordered both Lithuania and the Baltic, and the new territory of Livonia, which spread northward from Courland through what is now central Latvia to include also large portions of present day southern and central Estonia.

In 1561, Gotthard von Kettler, the last master of the Livonian Brothers of the Sword, concluded an agreement with the Roman Catholic King Sigismund Augustus of Poland-Lithuania which made Courland a fief of Poland-Lithuania and officially declared that the Lutheran church would maintain the doctrinal position of the Augsburg Confession.⁸ The first Courlandian church order was adopted in 1570. It stated that the Church of Courland would hold the doctrinal position required by the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and their exposition in the three Ecumenical Symbols (the Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds), as well as Luther's catechisms and the *Augsburg Confession* of 1530. This would remain the foundation of all Christian doctrine and practice. The church order, which was printed in 1572, required that all pastors know this doctrine thoroughly and teach it to their people in a simple way.⁹

The picture of the new province of Livonia was somewhat more complicated. The agreement with Sigismund II Augustus, known as the *Privilegium Sigismundi* of 1561, subjugated the land to Poland-Lithuania but at the same time it permitted the churches to continue to confess the *Augsburg Confession*. Twenty years later at the end of the Livonian Wars, the *Privilegium Sigismundi* would be annulled and replaced by the *Constitutiones Livoniae* of 1582 which brought the counter-Reformation to Livonia. A Roman Catholic diocese was established with the seat of the bishop in Wenden (Latv. *Cesis*). This weakened the Lutheran Church substantially. Eastern Livonia, where the Lutheran Reformation had never

⁸ *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Emil Sehling vol. 5, Livland. Estland. Kurland. Mecklenburg (Leipzig: O. R. Reisland, 1913), 45.

⁹ *De doctrina et ceremoniis sinceri cultus divini Ecclesiarum Ducatus Curlandiae, Semigalliaeque etc. in Liuonia.*—*Kirchen Ordnung Wie es mit der Lehr Göttliches worts, Ausstheilung der heiligen Hochwirdigen Sacrament, Christlichen Ceremonien, Ordentlicher ubung, des waren Gottesdiensts, In den Kirchen des Herzogthumbs Churlandt und Semigallien in Liefflandt, sol stetes vermittelt Göttlicher hülf gehalten werden.*—Anno salutis 1570 (Rostock: Gedruckt . . . bey Johan. Stöckelman und Andream Gutterwitz, 1572), D.

permeated the local population, was now firmly in the hands of the Roman Church. The counter-Reformation also made inroads into areas which formerly had been Lutheran. Indeed, the Lutheran Church maintained its strongest presence in and around Riga and Dorpat. It was the coming of Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus in 1621 and the assertion of Swedish power that reestablished Lutheranism in Livonia.¹⁰

The three churches in the Baltic lands were confessional in that they accepted the *Augsburg Confession* and Luther's catechisms. The controversies that had necessitated the *Formula of Concord* had not touched them, and they saw no need to add it to their confessional subscription. Sweden now ruled in Livonia and Estonia, and these churches became part of the Church of Sweden. Controversy hit the Swedish church in the 1630s when Bishop Johannes Matthiae Gothus of Strängnäs began to advocate publicly significant changes in the theology, polity, and worship. Gothus was much impressed by German theologian Georg Calixtus, who advocated a reunion of the churches on the basis of the supposition that the church was united and controversy-free for its first 500 years. Gothus invited John Dury of the Church of England to come to Sweden to advocate the adoption of policies that would unite the Swedish and English churches in a common confession and polity. The proposal was brought first to the theological faculty at Uppsala; they rejected it as not truly Lutheran. It was taken next to the clergy. They thought no better of it, nor did the Swedish *Riksdag* when its turn came to consider the proposal in 1638. Bishop Johannes Rudbeckius of Västerås took the occasion to move that the Church of Sweden to adopt the entire Book of Concord, including the Formula of Concord, as its doctrinal basis. Gothus continued his efforts to revise the church's polity, order, and worship, but he was unsuccessful. In the 1663 *Bill of Religion*, the Church of Sweden accepted the Formula and other symbols of the *Book of Concord* as its confessional basis. This was ratified by the *Riksdag* in 1664. In 1686, the Church of Sweden approved a new church law in which the Book of Concord was expressly named. Now both the Livonian and Estonian Churches confessed the entire Book of Concord.¹¹

¹⁰ Ernst Hj. J. Lundström, *Bidrag till Livlands kyrkohistoria under den svenska tidens första skede. Från Rigas intagande 1621 till freden i Olivia 1660* (Uppsala; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1914), 10–13, 22; Hermann Dalton, *Verfassungsgeschichte der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche in Russland. Beiträge zur Geschichte der evangelischen Kirche in Russland*, vol. 1 (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1887), 75–80.

¹¹ Martin E. Carlson, "Johannes Matthiae and the Development of the Church of Sweden during the First Half of the Seventeenth Century," *Church History* 13 (1944): 296–305.

The first evidence of the acceptance of the entire Book of Concord in the Courlandian Church is found in the 1727 Latvian language Courland agenda. In the form for the installation of a pastor into his parish, the candidate was required to subscribe to the Ecumenical Creeds, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, its Apology, the Smalcald Articles, the catechisms of Luther, and the Formula of Concord. No specific mention of The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope is found, but it may well have been understood as a part of the Smalcald Articles. The German agendas of 1741 and 1765 list the same requirements.¹²

Two other Baltic churches need to be considered. One was a small church surrounded by Courland and centered in the area of Piltene. After the collapse of the Livonian Confederation, this region was under Danish control. The Danes sold it to Poland-Lithuania in 1585, and it was incorporated into the Commonwealth in 1611. It was agreed that the church should continue to adhere to the Augsburg Confession in doctrine and practice. No mention was made of the acceptance of the entire Book of Concord until the 1741 Piltene rite of ordination, in which a pledge like that found in the Courlandian agendas was now included. The same provision concerning the acceptance of the whole Book of Concord was repeated in the 1756 Piltene agenda.¹³

The story of the Lutheran Church in Lithuania is unique. It was always a minority church. Past experience with the Teutonic knights made the Lithuanians suspicious of all things German. In addition, the stringent laws of King Sigismund the Old (1467–1548) made it impossible to confess openly Lutheran doctrine. The penalty for doing so was the loss of all property and privileges and likely banishment. His successor, Sigismund II Augustus, was more tolerant. Calvinism spread with the rebellion against the Roman Church of the Lithuanian nobility under Duke Nicolas Radziwill the Black. Enough noblemen followed him that it appeared for a time that Lithuania would become the eastern bastion of Calvinism. Calvinists soon split into two churches, one remaining classically Calvinist and the other espousing anti-trinitarian doctrine. The latter group was formally known as the Polish-Lithuanian Brethren. It came later to be called Socinian after Faustus Socinus, who gathered under his control

¹² *Lettsche Neu verbesserte-und vollständige Kirchen-Agende Oder Hand-Buch* (Mitau 1727), 208; *Vollständiges Kirchen-Buch* (Mitau: Georg Radetzki, 1741), 154; *Vollständiges Kirchen-Buch* (Mitau: Christian Liedke, 1765), 306.

¹³ *Agenda Ministrorum Ecclesiae Evangelicae in Districtu Piltinensi* (no information is available) 1741, 31; *Agenda ministrorum ecclesiae evangelicae in districtu Piltinensi* (Königsberg: Johann Heinrich Hartung, 1756), 53–54.

formerly contending anti-trinitarian groups. The Lutherans were a minority from the beginning. In the 16th century, there were two strong German parishes, one in Vilnius and the second in Kaunas. Apart from these, there were only a few scattered congregations, mostly in Samogitia in northern Lithuania. None of these Protestant groups ever received any official status, and with the arrival of the Jesuits and the counter-Reformation Roman Catholic control was made permanent and complete. The Sandomierz Consensus of 1570, a political agreement between the Lutherans, Reformed, and Bohemian Brethren who had settled in Major Poland, attempted to establish a united front of Polish and Lithuanian Protestants in a bid for official recognition. The Reformed interpreted this document as an ecumenical manifesto proclaiming Reformed and Lutheran unity. Lutherans took a very different view of it, and in 1578 they repudiated it.¹⁴ The appearance of the Formula of Concord and the publication of the Book of Concord strengthened Lutheran confessional consciousness in Lithuania. As the power of the counter-Reformation grew, an attempt was made in 1585 to reconcile both groups in a colloquium in Vilnius, but Lutherans were no longer interested in allowing their doctrinal position to be diluted or subverted. This colloquium provides the first solid evidence that the entire Book of Concord was now the church's official confession.¹⁵ The confessional writings were specifically noted in the 1648 Vilnius church order.¹⁶

Lutherans in Russia proper in the 16th and early 17th centuries were few in number and consisted mainly of prisoners-of-war taken to Russia during the Livonian Wars (1558–1583), diplomats, and merchants. These were granted permission to build a Lutheran church in Moscow late in 1575 or early in 1576 in order to proclaim the gospel according to the terms set down in the Augsburg Confession. The Augsburg Confession is mentioned again in connection with the coming marriage of Johann, the brother of King Christian IV of Denmark, to Grand Duchess Ksenia (Xenia), the daughter of Tsar Boris Godunov. The king had given his

¹⁴ Darius Petkūnas, "The Consensus of Sandomierz: An Early Attempt to Create a Unified Protestant Church in 16th Century Poland and Lithuania," *CTQ* 73 (2009): 318, 335.

¹⁵ Darius Petkūnas, *Das Vilniuser Kolloquium von 1585 als Bemühung des Fürsten Christophorus Radziwilius des Donners, die kirchliche Eintracht zwischen der Lutherischen und der Evangelisch-reformierten Kirche des Grossfürstentums Litauen zu bewahren: Colloquium habitum Vilnae die 14 Iunii, anno 1585 super articulo de Caena Domini* (Vilnae: Institutum Litterarum Lithuanicarum Ethnologiaeque, 2006), 146.

¹⁶ D.T.O.M.A. *Des Wilnaischen Kirch-Collegii Kirchen-Ordnung* Den 22 July Vilna Anno M.DC.XLVIII. Lietuvos Valstybės Istorijos Archyvas (Lithuanian State Historical Archives, LVIA), LVIA F.1008, ap. 1, b. 402, p. 158v.

brother permission to wed her contingent upon a promise that the duke and his entourage would be permitted to worship and practice the Lutheran faith in accordance with the Augsburg Confession. Johan died in 1602 before the marriage could be consummated, but the Lutherans were permitted by the tsar to build their new church and belfry despite the strong objections of Russian Orthodox hierarchs.¹⁷ Additional impetus for building the church came with the request of Prince Gustav of Sweden, who visited Moscow in 1599 and asked that the Lutherans be permitted to build a new church of adequate size. Evidence of the confessional position of the Moscow Lutherans can be found in the 1678 church order written by Laurentius Blumentrost, M.D., who had come to Moscow from Thuringia where he had served as court physician to Duke Ernst I. Ernst had encouraged Blumentrost to go to Russia to assist in the propagation of Lutheranism. Blumentrost had a personal reputation as a strong confessionalist and stated in his church order that no one was permitted to preach who had not previously been examined and ordained on the basis of the pure Unaltered Augsburg Confession. Mention was made also of other symbolical books, though they were not specified.¹⁸

As the result of Catherine's 1763 *Manifesto*, congregations sprang up on both sides of the Volga River like mushrooms in the forest after the rain. These congregations were totally independent of external control by consistories or higher ecclesiastical bodies, and they ordered their worship and life as it had been back home—wherever that had been. The only control over them laid in the hands of the College of Justice for Livonian and Estonian Affairs in St. Petersburg (Rus. *Юстиц-Коллегия Эстляндских и Лифляндских дел*). The College was accustomed to consider these parishes as operating under the provisions of the 1686 Swedish Church Order according to which the whole Book of Concord was the doctrinal standard.¹⁹ They were supposed to maintain this standard, but the parishes were a law unto themselves.

III. The Influence of Pietism on the Confessional Position of the Church

A new movement was growing in the closing decades of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th centuries, one that would alter the way Lutheran churches viewed their confessions. This movement was in fact several

¹⁷ Dalton, *Verfassungsgeschichte*, 9–10.

¹⁸ Дмитрий Владимирович Цветаев, *Памятники к истории протестантизма в России*. Часть I. (Москва: Въ Университетской типографіи, 1888), 190.

¹⁹ Яков Дитц, *История поволжских немецко-колонистов*. 3-е изд (Москва: Готика, 2000), 292.

movements that differed in particulars but in general came to be called Pietism. It was in Germany, in Frankfurt am Main, that Philipp Jakob Spener published his *Pia desideria* in 1675. He called for a spiritual renewal of the church and a religion of the heart. Spener did not openly attack the Lutheran Confessions or any Lutheran doctrinal positions. He thought it was sufficient to state that formalistic doctrinal statements and worship were matters of the head. He encouraged cell groups in which Christians would devote themselves to the cultivation of religious attitudes and personal piety. Far more radical than Spener was August Hermann Francke, who taught the necessity of a religious experience of rebirth in time and space to which one could point as a guarantee of his conversion. The pious Christian's whole manner of life from the cut of his hair to the cut of his coat must bear witness to the fact that he is not like other men. He must be a pious and righteous man who walks in the narrow way, free of tobacco, free of alcoholic drinks, free of theater-going, and free of dances, all of which lead the weak to degradation and destruction.

In the earliest period, the reaction of most German churches to the Pietists was negative. Both Spener and Francke were forced to move from place to place, seeking refuge and accommodating patrons. It did not help that when they found a patron willing to support them they often found it necessary to point out to him the full extent of his profligacy. Both ended up in Brandenburgian Berlin, where Reformed rulers regarded them more congenially than had the Lutherans. Elector Friedrich III, like the Pietists, was not enamored with the orthodox Lutherans, who to his mind put entirely too much stress on doctrine, as though what a man believed were more important than his outward actions. Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm I used administrative channels to foster the spread of Pietism. He reorganized the University of Halle, calling to its faculty of theology Francke and other Pietists. To establish firmly the importance of Halle and Franckian Pietism, the king issued a decree in 1729 requiring that men who studied theology in any other university in Prussia must also spend several terms in Halle, just to make sure they understood things rightly and had been set straight.²⁰

Among the first to show strong Pietist influences in the Baltic lands was Johann Fischer, the general superintendent of the Church of Livonia. It was no easy matter for him to bring Pietist pastors into his Livonian

²⁰ Wilhelm Stolze, *Friedrich Wilhelm I. und der Pietismus: Jahrbuch für Brandenburgische Kirchengeschichte*. 5. Jahrgang (Berlin: Kommissions-Verlag von Martin Warneck, 1908), 195; Richard Gawthrop, *Pietism and the Making of Eighteenth-century Prussia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 218.

Church. In 1693, new regulations were passed in Sweden that banned the promulgation of Pietist ideas; one year later King Charles XI issued a decree banning all conventicles and the importation of heterodox books and similar literature. His purpose was to try to prevent the growth and expansion of the Pietist movement in all lands under Swedish control. Superintendent Fischer found a way to circumvent these restrictions. He brought to Livonia a Halle student of Francke named Michael Behrends. Behrends arrived in 1695 to serve as a private tutor for Fischer's sons. Two years later Fischer saw to it that he was entrusted with a congregation. This enabled Behrends to spread his views from the pulpit and among his clerical brethren. Soon other noblemen adopted the practice of inviting private tutors from Halle. Their methods of teaching were modern, their study materials were of very high quality, and this, together with their high moral character, made them increasingly popular. They served as tutors, but within a short time they left these positions to serve as organists, cantors, school masters, and pastors.²¹

Professors at Dorpat University soon became concerned about the increasing influence of Halle and its Pietist positions. They appealed to the king, and Chancellor Dahlbergh was asked to take action. In March 1698, an edict outlining the proper response of the university was issued. The university was given authority to control all private tutors, to examine them concerning their background, mental state, doctrinal attitude and faith, academic qualifications, and aptness to teach. Only with university approval could these young men be certified to act as tutors. This new regulation was later supplemented by other regulations meant to exert strong control over all foreign influences. In 1706, King Charles XII ordered that all students who studied abroad must upon returning be tested as to their reliability in matters of faith. They were to give a detailed account of where they had studied and what activities they had undertaken. Later that year regulations concerning book censorship were introduced. These proscribed the publication, importation, sale, or distribution of any publication deemed heterodox or theologically dangerous.²²

Swedish control of Livonia and Estonia came abruptly to an end with the defeat of the Swedish forces in 1709. Primary among the terms negotiated to the tsar of the Baltic territories and leading cities were the ongoing status of the Lutheran Church and the clear identification of what

²¹ Arthur Vööbus, *Studies in the History of the Estonian People: with Reference to Aspects of Social Conditions, in Particular, the Religious and Spiritual Life and the Educational Pursuit*, vol. 3 (Stockholm: ETSE, 1974), 68–69.

²² Vööbus, *Studies*, 75.

was understood to constitute Lutheran identity. Religious privileges negotiated for Livonia included the statement that the Evangelical faith was to be retained and practiced according to the terms of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the other Lutheran Symbolical Books. The Estonian privileges contained the same stipulation that the prevailing confession was to be that of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the other Lutheran Symbolical Books. The same requirements were stipulated also for the city of Tallinn. The Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the other Lutheran Symbolical Books were to be followed unhindered in all city churches and only Lutheran pastors were to be permitted to lead services in the Church. The religious privileges granted to Riga and Pernau stated only that the Unaltered Augsburg Confession was to be followed; namely, all pastors and school personnel were to follow its doctrine, ceremonies, and teachings.²³

Peter the Great was content to allow the Lutherans freedom of religion as long as they maintained their confessional grounding; he cared little about their internal decisions and disputes. It was up to the church to fight Pietism, and, in Livonia and Estonia, that fight was soon given up. Church leadership positions fell into the hands of Pietists and their supporters. Censorship ended, and soon Pietist literature multiplied. In 1736, Jacob Benjamin Fischer, an outspoken Pietist, was made superintendent general of the Church in Livonia. Exceedingly more Pietistic books, hymnals, and prayer books came off the presses.²⁴

In Courland, which was still under Polish-Lithuanian control, with the help of the duke and the territorial assembly, the church stood firm against the Pietists. In Lithuania, internal disputes broke out in the Vilnius congregation in the 1720s between Pietists and traditional Lutherans. The orthodox position prevailed.²⁵ A similar situation in Piltene had the same result.

²³ *Die Capitulationen der livländischen Ritter- und Landschaft und der Stadt Riga vom 4. Juli 1710 nebst deren Confirmationen*. Nach den Originaldocumenten mit Vorausstellung des Privilegium Sigismundi Augusti und einigen Beilagen herausgegeben von C. Schirren (Dorpat: Druck und Verlag von E. J. Karow, 1865), (The capitulation of the Livonian nobility) 37, (The capitulation of the city of Riga) 65; *Die Capitulationen der estländischen Ritterschaft und der Stadt Reval vom Jahre 1710 nebst deren Confirmationen*. Nach den Originalen mit anderen dazu gehörigen Documenten und der Capitulation von Pernau herausgegeben von Eduard Winkelmann (Reval: Verlag von Franz Kluge, 1865), (The capitulation of the city of Tallinn) 35, (The capitulation of the Estonian nobility) 59, (The capitulation of the town of Pernau) 96.

²⁴ Vööbus, *Studies*, 93.

²⁵ *Johann Jever Verzeichniss allerhand pietistische Intriguen und Unordnungen in Litthauen, vielen Stadten Teutschlandes, Hungarn und America* (Sebastian Edzardi, 1729), 1-20.

Pietism appears to have spread slowly in a few widely separated Lutheran congregations in Russia proper. There were only about ten congregations in 1717; the draft church order of Superintendent Barthold Vagetius gives no indication that Pietism was becoming an issue.²⁶ However, Francke wanted to bring Pietism into Russia proper. It is known that an emissary from Halle, Justus Samuel Scharschmiedt, arrived in Moscow from Halle to establish a center for Pietist activity and served as a direct pipeline from Halle. As a result, not only religious materials but also individuals from the Halle institutions traveled frequently to Moscow to expand the work of spreading the Pietist movement.²⁷

The Pietists themselves pleaded that they were innocent of any doctrinal irregularities. They stated that they were traditional Lutherans who had breathed in fully the spirit of the Reformation that revives the church and gives her new life. Nowhere is there any record of the Pietists' rejection of any of the writings of the Book of Concord. The single probable exception was Elector Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg, a member of the Reformed Church, who in 1656 decreed that candidates for ordination were no longer to be obligated to subscribe to the Formula of Concord. He stated that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the ancient symbols, and the Augsburg Confession were sufficient. Prussian king, Friedrich I, continued this policy and, in 1710, directed that in the general visitation pastors must be specifically asked if they realized that the Formula of Concord was not among the symbolical books accepted in Electoral Brandenburg.²⁸

There arose in Livonia and Estonia a Pietist movement that clearly eschewed Lutheran teaching and the Book of Concord. These Pietists came from Herrnhut, the estate of Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, who provided a refuge to persecuted Bohemian Brethren from Moravia and Bohemia. Zinzendorf lived in Lutheran Electoral Saxony, and the Brethren outwardly expressed their appreciation for Lutheran doctrine and even went so far as to state that they themselves were adherents of the Augsburg Confession. Both statements are not supported by the facts. The Brethren were not Lutheran and did not adhere to the Augsburg Con-

²⁶ Hermann Dalton *Miscellaneen zur Geschichte der evangelischen Kirche in Russland. - Beiträge zur Geschichte der evangelischen Kirche in Russland*, vol. 4 (Berlin: Verlag von Reuther & Reichard, 1905), 21, 33.

²⁷ Vööbus, *Studies*, 67.

²⁸ *Corpus Constitutionum Marchicarum . . . von Otto Mylius. Erster Teil Von Geistlichen-Consistorial- und Kirchen-Sachen . . . In Zwey Abtheilungen* (Berlin und Halle: Buchladen des Waysenhauses, [ca. 1737]), 366, 439.

fession. They had their own doctrines, their own clergy, and their own liturgy. They were a separate church. The Brethren did have a strong missionary spirit. They regarded the Lord's great mission mandate as a very workable program, and the fact that they were entering the fields of other churches gave them little pause. Christian David, a Herrnhut carpenter, and two coworkers traveled to Livonia in 1729 to evaluate it as a mission field. They visited with Pietist Superintendent General Jakob Benjamin Fischer, who did nothing to encourage them, since it seemed evident that they were intent on engaging in ministerial activity. They did find hospitality at the estate of *Generalin* Magdalene Elisabeth von Hallert in Wolmarshof, and they made her estate their base of operations. Zinzendorf himself visited Riga and Wolmar in 1736 and one year later, in 1737, a theological school was established to prepare missionaries.²⁹

Fischer and other Lutheran leaders were under the impression that the Brethren were simply interested in stirring up a spiritual renewal in the area. In the usual Pietist manner, they gladly called them "brothers," not realizing that the Brethren were intent on establishing their own separate church. In Estonia it was consistory members Albert Anton Vierorth and Christoph Friedrich Mickwitz who opened the doors to the Pietists. Herrnhut presbyter Friedrich Wilhelm Adolf Biefer began his work in Reval (Estonian: *Tallinn*) in 1738.³⁰ Here, too, the church leaders were initially under the impression that the Herrnhut Brethren were there to help them, and they paid no attention to the fact that Biefer's background was Calvinist, not Lutheran. He was the first Reformed preacher in this Lutheran territorial church. The Herrnhut made Brinkerhoff (Estonian: *Kriimani*) near Tartu in Northern Livonia the center of their activities among the Estonian-speaking Lutheran population. Many of the newly established Herrnhut communities intended to subordinate themselves to the Herrnhut leaders in Brinkerhoff rather than to Lutheran ecclesiastical authorities. The Brethren also established themselves on the island of Oesel where Lutheran Church Superintendent Eberhard Gutsleff became their enthusiastic supporter and involved himself in the religious revival they sponsored there.³¹

In none of these cases did church officials seem to realize that the growth of the Herrnhut movement would be at the expense of the church.

²⁹ Theodosius Harnack, *Die lutherische Kirche Livlands und die herrnhutische Brüdergemeinde. Ein Beitrag zur Kirchengeschichte neuerer und neuester Zeit* (Erlangen: Verlag von Theodor Bläsing, 1860), 27, 38.

³⁰ Harnack, *Die lutherische Kirche*, 47.

³¹ Vööbus, *Studies*, 105, 107, 143.

The Brethren drew people away from the Lutheran Church into their fellowship which had its own church order, liturgy, and a strongly regulated way of life. In many cases, they operated their own prayer houses. They divided the members of their congregations into three separate classes: those who had full fellowship, those who were closely associated, and those who were neophytes.

The work of the Herrnhut Brethren in Livonia and Estonia has been idealized by many. Some have even gone so far as to state that there was no real living Christianity among the native Latvians and Estonians until they came. The general impression is that the German Lutheran pastors did not know the native languages and ignored the native peoples. A very different picture is portrayed in the writings of Theodosius Harnack, whose Lutheran credentials can hardly be questioned. He stated that the assertion was absolutely incorrect that the pastors paid attention only to the Germans and ignored the spiritual needs of the non-Germans.³² The results of the activity of the Herrnhut Brethren was detrimental because they did not simply form small cells within the larger church (*ecclesiola in ecclesia*) but created a church within the church (*ecclesia in ecclesia*).³³ Lutheran doctrine and the Book of Concord were being left behind, and it seemed for a time that a sizable number of church members in Livonia, Estonia, and Oesel would be lost. By 1742, 13,000–14,000 had joined Brethren congregations, 3,000 of them in southern Livonia, 2,000 in northern Livonia, and the rest in Estonia and Oesel.³⁴

It was the German nobility who first realized what was happening and brought the matter to the attention of the imperial government in St. Petersburg. As a result, Tsarina Elisabeth issued an order on April 16, 1743, closing the Brethren prayer houses, confiscating their literature, and ordering their prominent members banished. In 1744, a further order forbade Zinzendorf and his associates from entering the Russian Empire.³⁵ Henceforth, the Brethren met in secret and stayed underground until Catherine the Great lifted the ban in 1764 as a part of her program to attract immigrants. By 1839, there were 48,000 Brethren in Estonia; if one includes all of those who attended Brethren services, that number would swell to 70,000, or about one in ten of all Estonians 14 years of age and older. The highest percentage of Brethren was on the Island of Oesel,

³² Werner Elert, *Morphologie des Luthertums: Soziallehren und Sozialwirkungen des Luthertums*, 2 vols. (München: Beck, 1952), 2: 213.

³³ Harnack, *Die lutherische Kirche*, 48.

³⁴ Vööbus, *Studies*, 109–110.

³⁵ Vööbus, *Studies*, 140–143.

where in 1854 as many as 16 percent of the people were Brethren. During this period there was a total of about 100,000 Brethren in Livonia and Estonia.³⁶ The movement ran out of steam in the 20th century, and attempts to revive it have met with little success.

Lutheran churches in the Russian Empire outside Livonia, Estonia, and Oesel made attempts to combat the corrosive influences of Pietism. Levels of success differed. Courland maintained its confessional commitment and remained firm. In Russia, the immigrant congregations in the Volga valleys pursued their own course with only the College of Justice in St. Petersburg to superintend them. Pietism may have taken root in some of them; elsewhere the lack of catechesis took its toll.

IV. Rationalist Rejection of the Church's Confessional Stance

In the second half of the 18th century, Rationalism as an alternative to Pietism spread, making it possible to preach virtue and morality without doctrinal foundation or metaphysical sanction.

Moving from the Reformed countries of Holland to France, its first appearance in Lutheran territory was in Prussia. The Reformed King, Friedrich Wilhelm I, presided over the spread of Pietism throughout his domain. He never called himself a Pietist—he wanted to be known only as a faithful member of the Reformed Church. His son and successor, Friedrich II, would not be known as a pious member of the Reformed Church. He rebelled against his father's faith and became indifferent to religion, making Prussia a place of refuge for atheists and free thinkers. The doors were now open to Rationalism. It soon found favor among the educated with the result that even the theological faculties came to be dominated by Rationalist thought. The formerly staunchly pietistic University of Halle soon became a center for Rationalist theology. The same spirit quickly spread through all Prussian universities. Theological norms were overthrown and theology was now free of the church and confessional commitment. Of all the Lutheran territories, it was in Prussia that the first steps were taken to establish the historical-critical examination of the Scriptures. Among the educated, Pietism now gave way to the cultivation of the modern virtuous man of the world. In place of Pietist thought, theology would now promulgate philosophy, the clearest example of which was Immanuel Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* of 1793. Examined from this perspective, religious worship and those

³⁶ Jouko Talonen, *Herrnhut and the Baltic Countries from 1730 to the Present: Cultural Perspectives. Estonian Church History in the Past Millennium*, ed. Riho Altnurme (Kiel: Friedrich Wittig Verlag, 2001), 100.

ceremonies formerly termed “sacramental” were now seen to have value only to the extent that they undergirded virtue and morality.³⁷ The new movement spread from Prussia to other German lands like the rush of a mighty wind. Even the territorial churches and secular rulers who had enjoyed some success in their resistance to Pietism no longer had the strength to resist this new intellectual movement. To fight the new philosophy was to fight against reason and modernity, and few were willing to be labeled anti-modern or irrational.

The Lutheran Church in the Russian Empire was no exception. Rationalism first arrived in the port cities of St. Petersburg, Riga, Tallinn like cargo, for they—along with Dorpat—were the centers of learning and culture. From there Rationalism spread through the upper classes and the Lutheran clergy who were always looking to be in the vanguard of forward-looking ideas. Rationalism inevitably affected preaching, catechesis, hymnody, and the shape and content of worship services and prayers. The clergy reasoned that all of these could be altered without leaving behind the substance of the gospel. They insisted that they were only adjusting the manner and style of the transmission of the gospel.

Rationalism knew no borders. Church leaders were always chosen from among those who were highly educated, and now the highly educated were all rationalists. Among them was Livonian General Superintendent Christian David Lenz. He was a man of the new age, yet at the same time was concerned about holding the church together. With this in mind he preached tolerance and understanding, since it was clear that there were many clergy in smaller towns and rural areas who either did not understand the new thinking or who understood it all too well and outspokenly opposed it. In many places, Pietism was not quietly dying as the new thinkers had expected it would. In 1793, Lenz made public his concerns. He announced to the church that the author of the Christian religion and his disciples knew nothing of liturgy and ceremonies. These had developed only in reaction to pagan idolatry; as a result, many ceremonies and practices that were idolatrous and superstitious had been introduced into the church. Luther, Melanchthon, and Bugenhagen had striven mightily to eliminate idolatry and superstition in all its forms, according to Lenz, but unfortunately they had kept some of these ceremonies for the sake of the weak. The time had now come, Lenz said, to eliminate these last vestiges of paganism, and the Enlightenment was the instrument by which this cleansing would be accomplished. He thought it

³⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundary of Pure Reason* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1838), 1–14, 203–217, 265–275.

unfortunate that many pastors and students who should have supported these efforts were instead refusing to accept the corrections. Lenz viewed the Lutheran symbolical books as historical documents that were valuable in their own day, but that day had now passed. These books should retain their honored place among treasured historical documents, but conscience could no longer be bound to them. Those who would require blind adherence to them would like to institute a Protestant inquisition.³⁸ The church, he said, must tread the narrow path, rejecting both those who would reduce Christianity to moral maxims and those who still intolerantly asserted the old orthodoxy.³⁹

Rationalism in Livonia found its center in Riga and Dorpat. Leading exponents in Riga were Pastors Liborius Bergmann, August Albanus, and Carl Gottlob Sonntag, the latter of whom was made Livonian General Superintendent in 1803. These three were responsible for the appearance of a new Riga Handbook in 1801 that recast the prayers and creeds in modern rationalist terms. Dissatisfied with the church's ancient creed and its ancient faith as well, they offered something more in tune with the spirit of the age:

We believe that God is, that he is Eternal, the Only, the Unending, the All-knowing and Almighty, the Holy and Just, the All-wise and All-good, the Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the whole world, and especially also of all men, that he is our most high Law-giver, and Judge, and Father, and that for our individual salvation he would be worshiped by us in none other way than through a genuine, steadfast, and childlike obedience to his commands.

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son and the one whom God has sent for all humankind, that he has reliably made known to us the will of God, that through his life, teaching, sufferings, and death he has freed us from the power and lordship of doubt, error, superstition, sin, and misery, and has given us a joyful childlike confidence in God and the certain expectation of eternal life; so that we may have our portion in the blessedness which he has promised us, which we can have in no other way that only by the faithful imitation of his example and through a steadfast, conscientious following of his instructions.

³⁸ The probable reference is to the 1788 Edict of Wollner which attempted to bolster the Prussian Church's defense against Rationalism.

³⁹ Christian David Lenz, *Antwortsschreiben an einen der Theologie Beflissenen, seine Gesinnungen bey dem itzigen neuen für Aufklärung gehaltenen in der Theologie und Religions-Lehre eingerissenen Meinungen betreffend mit einer apologetischen Vorrede und dem Briefe, der zu diesem Antwoorts-schreiben Gelegenheit gegeben* (Riga: George Friedrich Keil, 1793), 1-13.

We believe that if we truly desire to be wise, virtuous, and blissful, God gives us the assistance of his Spirit so that he may give, preserve, and increase to us all necessary powers, impulses, and means of assistance, and by this means lead us to the destiny he has created for us in time and eternity.⁴⁰

Here the historic Christian faith was abandoned and replaced by an entirely different religion. The Rationalist need not reject religion. Indeed he may long for it, but the Christ who is portrayed in this creedal statement is no longer the Lamb of God who takes upon himself the sins of the world, who suffers, dies, and rises for man's forgiveness, justification, and salvation. He is rather a teacher and warrior who does battle against superstition, sin, and misery and sets an example of joyful childlike confidence and promises eternal happiness in the sweet by-and-by.

Dorpat was important because it was the seat of the only Lutheran university in the empire. Here, too, Rationalism became the dominating influence in the faculty of theology. As older men retired from the faculty, they were replaced by younger men who embraced the spirit of the age.

The leading Rationalist in the duchy of Courland was Pastor Dr. Karl Dietrich Wehrt. Courland was not constrained to follow Swedish church law or use the Swedish handbook. In 1785, Pastor Christoph Friedrich Neander proposed a draft for a new church law and Wehrt used the occasion to produce a prayer and liturgical handbook that conformed to modern thought.⁴¹ His radical baptismal service contained no exorcism, no marking of the candidate with the sign of the cross (signation), no gospel of the blessing of the children, no renunciation of the devil, his works, and his ways. There was no confession of the apostolic faith. Instead, the minister asked whether the baptismal party committed itself to faith in God, the Father Creator and upholder of all things, Jesus, the Redeemer of the world, and the Holy Spirit, and whether they now wished that this faith be passed on to the child as a sacred bond or covenant. The traditional post-baptismal blessing gave way to a new one: "Blessed be your name, Almighty, here and in eternity."⁴² Here the pastor recited a poem asking God to grant this child to rest forever in his blessing, walk in a manner pleasing to God, enjoy good fortune, live a prosperous and happy life, and in the Lord's good time depart this mortal coil. There is

⁴⁰ *Liturgisches Handbuch für die Stadt-Kirchen zu Riga* (Riga: Julius Conrad Daniel Müller, 1801), 226-228.

⁴¹ *Entwurf zur Kirchenordnung 1785* (Mitau: J. F. Steffenhagen, 1785).

⁴² *Handlungen und Gebete bey dem öffentlichen Gottesdienst in den Herzogthümern Kurland und Semgallen* (Mitau: J. F. Steffenhagen, 1786), 127.

hardly any need to state that the Sacrament of the Altar is similarly reformed. It is simply a ceremony in which man gives himself to the Lord just as long ago Jesus resolutely faced the idolatrous leaders and Jewish mob and offered himself up as a model of resolute integrity.⁴³ He who participates in such a meal will leave the altar fortified and strengthened with a new and profound resolution to live the upright life, the order stated.

It was no longer clear what it meant to be a Lutheran. In earlier ages Lutheranism was defined in the terms of the Ecumenical Creeds, the Augsburg Confession, and other symbolical books. This was no longer possible. Now the creeds were rewritten and the Symbolical Books were left to gather dust on the shelf. Lutheran identity was more and more being replaced by a general Protestant identity ready to move ahead in the "Spirit of Luther," rejecting the past and ready to move forward as led by the Enlightenment spirit. To be a Protestant was to stand with Luther against Rome and its superstition, vain pomp, and ceremonies.

The effect on the church's worship life was chaotic. Everywhere pastors began arbitrarily to alter the church's forms of worship and insert prayers that conformed to the new criteria. In 1805, the College of Justice secured from the tsar a directive that the church's worship be reunified. The leading theologian in the commission was none other than Livonian General Superintendent Sonntag. He left behind a detailed record of the deliberations of the commission. There was no common agreement among the commissioners as to what worship is, what it entails, or what it ought to include. This led to tensions and dissensions. If the meaning and purpose of worship were not altogether clear, then the meaning and purpose of ceremonies was even less clear. Some would have liked to eliminate ceremonies altogether. The sign of the cross was particularly held up to criticism. Sonntag wanted to keep it. He said he loved the cross because the death of Christ must still be considered meaningful. He noted that death is never far away from any man and that the death of Jesus could be used as a point of meaningful connection when a father or mother or friend passes away. The cross, he insisted, was nothing of which to be ashamed. The Apostle's Creed he viewed more critically. He stated that this creed was falsely named since it did not come from the apostles. It was also his opinion it was not the best summary of the Christian faith. Despite his opinion, the committee decided to keep the creed.⁴⁴

⁴³ *Handlungen und Gebete*, 128–131.

⁴⁴ Carl Gottlob Sonntag, *Geschichte und Gesichtspunct der Allgemeinen liturgischen*

When the directives were published in 1805, they did identify the Lutheran Church as the Protestant Church and they included a statement of its purpose: "The Protestant Church has no other purpose than to help its members to reach the highest level of morality and satisfaction consistent with the present day religious and moral circumstances and needs of the community. To that end it recognizes no other effective means than the right use of the Bible and human reason."⁴⁵ Accordingly, the church is one of many earthly associations established to accomplish some high moral or ethical purpose. It differs from other organizations chiefly in that it invokes divine sanction to justify its purpose and its operation. Since the church is guided by the Scriptures and reason this must be taken to mean that the Scriptures must be interpreted according to human reason, since nowhere are the Scriptures declared to be the decisive voice in matters of faith and morals. The definition includes not one word about the divine creation of the church or the work of the Holy Trinity in preserving and extending it. Nothing is said about the teaching of the gospel or the administration of the sacraments as constitutive of the church. They are to be seen as church activities, traditional customs that the church chooses to observe. Their value is chiefly moral. Tsar Alexander approved the liturgical directives and now Lutheran clergy were obliged to follow them. Some enthusiastically embraced them because the directives articulated their beliefs and allowed them great latitude in constructing worship experiences. The law that bound them to the old agendas was now null and void. Others found the directives unusable and paid as little attention to them as possible. They were obliged to use the Prayer of the Church with its petitions for the tsar and his household, but apart from that they chose to continue to use the old agendas.

V. Governmental Reaction and the Restoration of Lutheran Confessionalism

As important as Riga and Dorpat were, of even greater importance was St. Petersburg, the capital of the Russian Empire, the intellectual and cultural center of Russia, and the home of the College of Justice, the secular governmental unit charged with the supervision of the Lutheran Church. Lutheran pastors in St. Petersburg were wholly committed to the rationalist spirit and sought to implement it wherever possible. In

Verordnung für die Lutheraner im Russischen Reiche (Riga: Wilhelm Ferdinand Häcker, 1805), 30–32, 41–48.

⁴⁵ *Von Sr. Kaiserlichen Majestät allerhöchst bestätigte Allgemeine Liturgische Verordnung für die evangelisch-lutherischen Gemeinden im Russischen Reiche* (St. Petersburg: Schnoorschen Buchdruckerey, 1805), 3.

preparation for the 1817 celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Reformation, they decided to emphasize that this must be more than a Lutheran celebration. It must have significance for the whole Protestant community, for it represented not just the striking of hammer blows on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, but the breaking of the yoke of Roman bondage and the first light of the new dawn of Rationalism. It was well known that Friedrich Wilhelm III in Prussia had set in motion his plan to join Lutherans and Reformed into one "Evangelical Church." St. Petersburg Lutheran pastors could see no reason why a similar plan should not be undertaken in Russia. They would make use of the festal celebration of the Reformation to accomplish it. They invited Reformed pastors to take an active part in the celebration and to participate with them in a common Communion service in St. Peter's Church.⁴⁶ A month later the Lutheran and Reformed congregations in Archangelsk took the step by uniting into a single congregation. The Lutheran and Reformed pastors signed the act of union.⁴⁷

The College of Justice saw both these events as solid indications that they should move ahead in their own plans to unite Lutherans and Reformed under a single common banner. Count Aleksandr Nikolaevich Golitsyn, Minister of Cults and Public Enlightenment, took the matter to the tsar, and on January 7, 1818, he announced that the tsar supported this program and henceforth the Lutherans and Reformed would be united under the single name, "The Evangelical Church." He expected that Lutherans throughout the empire would be delighted. This turned out to be an error in judgment. Strong negative reactions came from the Livonian High Consistory and the Courlandian consistory. Golitsyn found it necessary to back down and allow that if any insisted on calling themselves Lutheran, the government had no intention of forbidding it, for the tsar did not intend to interfere in matters of conscience or with anyone's beliefs, worship, and practices.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Полное собрание законов Российской империи сь 1649 года. Собрание первое.* Т. 35 (1818) (Санкт-Петербург: Печатано въ Типографіи II Отделенія Собственной Его Императорскаго Величества канцеляріи, 1830), 54 (hereafter *ПСЗ Соб.1*, Т. 35, 1830); Erik Amburger, *Geschichte des Protestantismus in Russland* (Stuttgart: Evangel. Verl.-Werk, 1961), 68.

⁴⁷ Hermann Dalton, *Urkundenbuch der evangelisch-reformirten Kirche in Russland: Beiträge zur Geschichte der evangelischen Kirche in Russland*, vol. 2 (Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes, 1889), 155-159.

⁴⁸ *ПСЗ Соб.1*, Т. 35, 1830, 54, 54-55; Amburger, *Geschichte*, 68. Reinhold Wilhelm Baron Staël von Holstein, *Zur Geschichte der Kirchengesetzes vom Jahre 1832*, ed. Arnold

In that same year, something occurred that would turn the tide against Rationalism in the Lutheran Church. Pastor Johann Heinrich Busse of St. Catherine's Church in St. Petersburg issued a new edition of the 1783 rationalist hymnal. It was no mere reprint; it was a new edition that went further down the rationalist road than the earlier editors had dared to go. When he presented his new edition to the College of Justice for its approval, it did not bother the members of the College that some of the hymns openly contradicted biblical teaching. Everyone knew that the St. Petersburg parishes had been using the old rationalist hymnal for several decades without incident. Reaction from congregations and their pastors from the region were entirely negative, and the College of Justice found that it was in the unfortunate situation of having allowed the publication of a hymnal which contradicted the position that the tsar was now taking against Rationalism. Earlier the tsar had been an enthusiastic supporter of Rationalism, but the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars had shown him that it led to the introduction of democratic ideas and encouraged revolution. Now he had become decidedly anti-Rationalism, and the College needed to move quickly to fall into line. They stated that they had been misled by Pastor Busse and they insisted that the hymnal be withdrawn and its use prohibited. Pastor Busse was unceremoniously removed from the pastorate of St. Catherine's he had held for 19 years.⁴⁹

Now the government decided that it had to take a firm hold of the Lutheran Church in the empire. On July 20, 1819, Tsar Alexander issued an order that repeated the condemnation of the new hymnal. He stated that it implanted impious notions that even pagan writers could not accept. His language was clear and firm. He stated that in accordance with the royal Swedish Church Order of 1686 the Lutheran Church was allowed to exist in the Russian Empire based upon its doctrinal position as stated in the Sacred Scriptures, the three Ecumenical Creeds, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, and the Book of Concord. Its existence and privileges depended upon its adherence to these foundations. No other position would be tolerated.

In addition, the order also included some positive references to the notion of an Evangelical Church containing within it both Lutheran and Reformed branches. The tsar used the occasion also to remind the Reformed that they were expected to abide by their own confessional writings. He announced his decision to create the office of "evangelical bishop" on the model of the episcopal office as practiced in Finland, Sweden, Denmark,

von Tidebühl *Dreiundvierzigster Jahrgang LII. Band* (Riga: Verlag der Baltischen Monatschrift, 1901), 133-134.

⁴⁹ Dalton, *Verfassungsgeschichte*, 260-261; Holstein, *Zur Geschichte*, 136-137.

and Prussia. This bishop would be responsible for the oversight of all Evangelical Churches, Lutheran and Reformed. In order to further strengthen his control, he announced his decision to create a General Evangelical Consistory in St. Petersburg that would be responsible for determining whether the church regulations were followed and to supervise the teaching of the church's principles as well as the supervision of the life and behavior of its clergy. Its first president was Count Karl von Lieven, curator of the Dorpat educational district and a strong Pietist and anti-Rationalist.⁵⁰

Soon after his appointment, the Consistorial Session of the College of Justice met under Lieven's presidency to begin the work of establishing the Evangelical General Consistory. In his opening remarks, Lieven made it clear that he was entirely opposed to Rationalism and decried what it had done to the Russian Lutheran Church. He stated that the rationalist theologians and preachers had completely forgotten that they were supposed to be servants of Christ, stewards of the mysteries of God, ambassadors for Christ to call all men to the reconciliation that he had accomplished. Instead, they were drunk with the spirit of the Enlightenment and deceived themselves and their hearers with vain philosophies and traditions of men that denied Christ. They regarded the word of God as filled with myths and fables that must be regarded as exaggerated Hebraisms. They turned the truth of God into a lie. They distrusted the word of God and arrogantly trusted in their own wisdom. They quibbled about the Word of God and perverted the gospel, stealing faith from the hearts of men and replacing it with a cold, calculating Rationalism and a heartless morality built on shifting sand. He said that it was a wonder that there was left in the Russian empire any Lutheran parish in which ten or twenty members could be found who had any knowledge of the church's faith. Now the time had come to return the church to its clear confession as proclaimed before the world in Augsburg in 1530. He reminded his hearers that every Lutheran pastor had taken an oath to teach according to this confession. Apart from it the church would always be tossed to and fro and carried about with any wind of doctrine. He concluded by stating his deep thanks to the tsar for showing such a fine Christian spirit and a desire to act with fraternal care for his Lutherans.⁵¹

⁵⁰ *Полное собрание законов Российской империи. Собрание первое*. Т. 36 (1819) (Санкт-Петербург: Печатано въ Типографіи II Отделенія Собственной Его Императорскаго Величества канцеляріи, 1830), 314–316.

⁵¹ Eduard Heinrich Busch, *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Statistik des Kirchen und Schulwesens der Ev.-Augsburg: Gemeinden im Königreich Polen* (St. Petersburg: Gustav Haessel, 1867), 23–31.

Lieven's speech was not empty words; it was a manifesto that he intended to act upon, and he did not delay in doing so. He gave his first attention to the theological faculty at Dorpat, where with the aid of Rector Gustav Ewers he picked off the Neologists one-by-one and replaced them with professors whose piety and adherence to the Scriptures and Confessions was beyond question. By 1823, there were three factions in the faculty: strict confessionals, Pietists, and those still under the influence of Schleiermacher and Hegel. No single school of thought predominated, but all faculty members were committed to the traditional Lutheran faith and confession.⁵²

The establishment of the Evangelical General Consistory was not completely accomplished for more than a decade. After a period of initial enthusiasm, the whole matter came to be bogged down with disagreements between Lieven and Baltic noblemen and consistories anxious to maintain their privileged positions. The whole process ground to a halt by 1825; the campaign against Rationalism, however, continued unabated. Earlier, General Superintendent Sonntag had thought himself to be unassailable when he published the second volume of his *Sittliche Ansichten* in 1820,⁵³ which was not in accord with Lutheran Orthodoxy. Lieven responded immediately. If it had not been for Sonntag's high position in the church and the support he received from the Livonian nobility, he would have been removed from office. When the bells tolled his death in 1827, they tolled also the death of Rationalism among the Lutherans.

A new order came from Tsar Nicolai I on May 22, 1828. He announced the establishment of a committee to unite the Russian Lutheran Church under a common law, liturgy, and administration. The government was concerned about missionary activity being conducted in the Caucasus and southern Russia by Ignaz Lindl and Johannes Evangelista Gossner. St. Petersburg pastors and Bishop Zacharias Cygnäus brought the matter to the tsar in 1827, stating that it was impossible to bring order among the Lutherans because there was no common administration under which all of them could be regulated. Thus, it was the tsar who decided that the Lutherans must be organized into a single community and he established a commission to accomplish it. Nothing further was said about uniting

⁵² Heinrich Seesemann, *Die Theologische Fakultät der Universität Dorpat 1802-1918: Baltische Kirchengeschichte. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Missionierung und der Reformation, der evangelisch-lutherischen Landeskirchen und des Volksirchentums in den baltischen Landen*, ed. Reinhard Wittram (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), 207-209.

⁵³ *Sittliche Ansichten der Welt und des Lebens für das weibliche Geschlecht: in Vorlesungen, geh. von Karl Gottlob Sonntag*, 2 vols. (Riga: Hartmann, 1818, 1820).

Lutherans and Reformed into a single Russian “Evangelical Church.” The Russian Lutheran Church would not suffer the same fate Lutherans had experienced in Prussia.⁵⁴

The new church law was signed by the tsar on December 28, 1832. There was to be no doubt that this would be a Lutheran church law. The law stated that the Lutheran Church in Russia was bound to the sacred Scriptures, the Ecumenical Creeds, and all of the confessions which comprised the Lutheran Book of Concord of 1580.⁵⁵ As had been the case with the 1819 order, this law was binding, and it was to be observed by all. Only the single united congregation in Archangelsk was exempted. It was supervised directly by the minister of the interior, as were the few scattered congregations in southern Russia. Now there were only two Lutheran Churches in the Russian Empire not under the direct supervision of the imperial General Consistory. One was the church in the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland, administered by the cathedral chapter at Borgo, Finland. The other was the Lutheran Church in the autonomous Kingdom of Poland, administered by the Warsaw consistory.

The 19th century brought with it a renewed appreciation of the Lutheran Confessions and the era of Lutheran orthodoxy, as was the case also in some parts of Germany. There were no more questions raised concerning Lutheran identity in Russia. It was known to everyone that the Lutheran Church was the Church of the Augsburg Confession and the Book of Concord. While there was no question in anyone’s mind that its statements were authoritative, there were many different and sometimes quite contradictory understandings of what the confessional statements meant. Tensions continued between Pietists and those who wanted a richer liturgy. Some concerns were mainly aesthetic, some were historical, and some were theological in nature.

The church law of 1832 called for pastoral synods that were inaugurated in 1834. These synods had no legislative power but provided occasions for important theological presentations and discussion. Presentations and discussions were lively, but it was well understood that proper boundaries must be maintained. There was no room for radicalism. By the end of the 19th century, certain individuals would put forward some

⁵⁴ Полное собрание законов Российской империи съ 1649 года. Собрание второе. Т. 7, 1832 (Санкт-Петербург: Печатано въ Типографіи II Отделения Собственной Его Императорскаго Величества канцеляріи, 1833), 956-957 (hereafter, ПСЗ Соб.2, Т. 7, 1832); Holstein, *Zur Geschichte*, 167; Dalton, *Verfassungsgeschichte*, 308; Amburger, *Geschichte*, 72, 75.

⁵⁵ ПСЗ Соб.2, Т. 7, 1832, 957.

rather radical notions. Pastor Julius Muethel of St. Petersburg insisted that a proper consecration of the Sacrament of the Altar required a special prayer of invocation of the Holy Spirit over the elements. It was this prayer, and not the *Verba*, he claimed, which consecrated the sacrament.⁵⁶ Pastor Alfons Meyer of Sarata in Bessarabia took a very different position. He stated that no consecration was necessary at all, since the elements had been consecrated for all time in the Upper Room.⁵⁷ The pastors discussed these and other matters on the basis of the Scriptures and the Confessions, and the radicals did not prevail.

Only in the opening years of the 20th century did some indication of the liberal theological spirit begin to spread from Germany into Russia. The theological faculty in Dorpat began to take a special interest in the psychology of religion, but this was understood not to contradict the theological position of the church. It directed its particular attention to religious experience.⁵⁸ The synodical protocols do not indicate that the clergy or the church-at-large were much concerned about this new discipline. Still some liberal tendencies were making their way into Livonia. Some pastors were well aware of new theological trends and were in tune with them. Among them were those who sought to replace the Apostles' Creed in the Confirmation rite with something more up to date and in line with modern views.⁵⁹ The outbreak of WWI brought to an end whatever interest in theological liberalism might have been incubating up until that time.

The Russian Empire was beginning to crumble, and the days of Revolution lay directly ahead. By the end of the second decade of the 20th century, the Lutheran Church in the former Russian Empire was effectively divided. A large portion of it remained within the borders of the Soviet Union and found itself in a hostile environment intent on its destruction. The majority of parishes, however, now lay in the three independent Baltic States, each with its own separate ecclesiastical administration. These Baltic Churches would enjoy freedom of faith, and each would have to face its own internal challenges caused by theological liberalism and ethnic tensions between Germans and local populations.

⁵⁶ Julius Muethel, *Ein wunder Punkt in der lutherischen Liturgie: Beitrag zur Liturgie* (Leipzig: Rudolf Hartmann, 1895), 2.

⁵⁷ Alfons Meyer, *Noch einige Desideria zur neuen Agende. Mittheilungen und Nachrichten für die evangelische Kirche in Russland*, begründet von Dr. C. C. Ulmann, ed. Th. Taube, vol. 52 (Riga: L. Hoerschelmann, 1896), 354.

⁵⁸ David M. Wulf, *Psychology of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Views* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1991), 15–16, 555–559.

⁵⁹ *Protokoll der 73. Livländischen Provinzial-Synode, gehalten zu Pernau vom 22. bis zum 27. August 1907* (Riga: W. F. Häcker, 1907), 17–19.

