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The Influence of Calvinism on the American System of Education.

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PART I.

Introductory.

The topic assigned to me is certainly one of great importance, — in fact, so much so that justice can hardly be done to it within the allotted space of time and in an essay as brief as this must needs be. All that can be done is to suggest a bare outline of the topic, together with a few noteworthy characteristics of American education which are due to the influence of Calvinism.

Definition of Terminology.

In order thoroughly to understand the subject, it is necessary to define its component parts. In the first place, we must know what the term Calvinism implies and in what sense it is here used. As is well known, the term Calvinism is ambiguous, inasmuch as it is currently employed in two or three senses, closely related indeed, but of varying latitudes of connotation. First, Calvinism designates merely the individual teaching or teachings of John Calvin. Again, it designates, in a broader way, the *doctrinal system* confessed by that body of Protestant churches known historically, in distinction from Lutheran churches, as the "Reformed churches," or the "Calvinistic churches," because the greatest scientific exposition of their faith was given by John Calvin. Lastly, the term Calvinism designates, in a still broader sense, the entire body of conceptions — theological, ethical, philosophical, social, political — which under the influence of the master mind of John Calvin raised itself to dominance in the Protestant lands of the post-Reformation age and has left a permanent mark not

St. John's Church in Catawba Co., N. C., One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years Old.

CARROLL O. SMITH, Conover, N. C.

(Conclusion.)

III. Joins the Missouri Synod.

St. John's remained a member of the Tennessee Synod until she became a member of the English Missouri Synod by reason of the following course of events:—

To the fifty-fifth session of the Tennessee Synod, held in Mount Calvary Church, Page County, Va., 1875, Rev. J. M. Smith, in a letter, reported that, in a meeting held in St. John's Church for that purpose, "the congregations in Catawba County, North Carolina, had decided to establish a high school of strictly Lutheran character." Synod approved of that move and heartily commended the enterprise.

The sixtieth session of the Tennessee Synod, held in St. Peter's Church, Catawba County, N. C., passed the following resolution:—

“WHEREAS, The trustees of Concordia High School, Conover, North Carolina, have made a proposition to Synod to take this institution under her care and supervision; and

“WHEREAS, It is the desire and wish of this Synod to have an institution of learning in her connection; therefore be it

“*Resolved*, That a committee of three, on the part of Synod, be appointed to confer with the trustees of said school and prepare an agreement which may serve as a basis upon which said school may become the recognized institution of Synod, and that this committee be required to report to the next session of Synod.”

At the next session this committee was not ready to report. However, it did make its report to the sixty-third session, held in the “chapel of Concordia College, Conover, North Carolina, October 13, 1883”; and the following resolution was passed by Synod: “That we, as a Synod, accept the propositions made to us by the Board of Trustees of Concordia College, and that . . . we will lend to said institution our fostering care, influence, and moral support.”

It will be noted that Concordia High School had (in the year 1882) become Concordia College, and was now under the fostering care of the Tennessee Synod. The President, in his required annual report to Synod, spoke of the “flourishing” condition of the college. At its sixty-eighth session, Synod took action in regard “to the endowment of Concordia College,” and at its sixty-ninth session a committee was appointed to secure \$10,000 for the purpose of erecting new college buildings for Concordia College, declaring that the necessary endowment could not be secured with “the school conducted in the present building.” However, about this time, through Mr. J. G. Hall, trustee of the Lenoir estate “in and near the town of Hickory,” N. C., Synod received an offer of a new site for a college. A special session was called, and the proposition was discussed with much animation for “several days,” and “Synod decided, by a small majority, to locate the college at Conover, N. C.”

However, there were certain men in the synod who were fully convinced that Mr. Hall's offer must not be turned down. Among these was the entire faculty, which resigned in a body. The president of the college pulled down his privately owned house at Conover and moved it to Hickory, where he became president of a new institution, then called Lenoir College in honor of the donor of the site; now, Lenoir-Rhyne College.

This left Concordia College without a faculty. It was the duty of the Board of Trustees to provide one. Where could a faculty be found? They remembered that Dr. P. C. Henkel, who had come back from Missouri to North Carolina to become the first president of Concordia College, had, while in Missouri, helped to organize the English Missouri Synod. They knew, furthermore, that the president of the English Missouri Synod, at that time the Rev. F. Kuegele, was pastor of one of the congregations which formerly belonged to the Tennessee Synod. They knew that this English Missouri Synod was thoroughly orthodox. This synod was asked to take hold of the institution and run it. A committee, consisting of the Revs. William Dallmann and F. Kuegele, came to North Carolina and investigated Concordia College and the work connected with it. In consequence of a favorable report by this committee the Rev. Prof. W. H. T. Dau, D. D., was called to be president of the institution, and the Rev. Prof. G. A. Romoser was called to be a second member of the faculty. They began work with the opening term in September, 1892.

The next year St. John's pastor, the Rev. C. H. Bernheim, resigned, and the congregation called Professor Dau, who took charge of the congregation in July, 1893. This immediately opened the question of the congregation's synodical relation. Professor Dau was a member of the Missouri Synod, while the congregation belonged to the Tennessee Synod. Should they join the Missouri Synod with their pastor, or should their pastor join the Tennessee Synod with them?

Professor Dau said he was willing to join the Tennessee Synod with them, provided certain hindrances to his doing so could be removed.

What was wrong with the Tennessee Synod? Had it not withdrawn from the North Carolina Synod because it wanted to confess and practise four-square according to the Confessions of the Lutheran Church?

The trouble was that the Tennessee Synod, which had so laudably left the North Carolina Synod because of that synod's loose position with regard to confession and practise, had begun to drift back into that synod and had already taken action which left the Tennessee Synod in a compromising position.

Pursuant to "encouraging responses" and the fact that "common consent indicates the general desire," the "two Lutheran church journals in the South" called a diet of the "Lutheran synods of the South" to meet on November 12, 1884. This diet

met and was composed of delegates from the North Carolina Synod, Tennessee Synod, South Carolina Synod, Virginia Synod, Southwestern Virginia Synod, Georgia Synod, Holston Synod, and, later, the Mississippi Synod. As a Confessional Basis of "organic union" they declared "the Holy Scriptures, the inspired writings of the Old and New Testaments, the only standard of doctrine and church discipline." As "a true and faithful exhibition of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures" they mentioned by name the "three ancient symbols" and the "Unaltered Augsburg Confession of Faith." This Confessional Basis mentioned the other books of the "Christian Book of Concord" of 1580 as "true and Scriptural developments of the doctrines taught in the Augsburg Confession and in the perfect harmony of one and the same pure, Scriptural faith." Every delegate present, including those from the Tennessee Synod, voted for this Confessional Basis, although Dr. P. C. Henkel "requested that it be stated in the record of the diet that he approves the Constitution" (which was doctrinally, word for word, the same as the Confessional Basis) "so far as it goes, but that he declines to vote for it because it is silent in regard to pulpit- and altar-fellowship, secret societies, and chiliasm." In 1886, at Roanoke, Va., another diet was held, composed of delegates from the same synods, and the "votes by synods on the question of union" was taken. The Tennessee Synod gave 18 votes for and none against forming this union. All the other delegates voted for it. Then it was resolved that the name of this new body should be called "The United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South." The next day the United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South met for its first convention, with the delegates of the Tennessee Synod sitting as constituent members of that body. But the report of these delegates to this new body contained the following significant words: "The Scriptural *premises* have in this way been laid down and agreed to, and by prudence, brotherly love, and the influences of the Holy Spirit the conclusions must be, ultimately, inevitable. But it will require patience and much judicious work to attain that higher and more churchly plane in regard to doctrine and practise." The delegates of the Tennessee Synod to the United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South in a later meeting, in reporting back to their synod, use these words: ". . . and it may require proper advice and instruction on the part of our Synod, at its next meeting, which should convene at a suitable time before the next meeting of the United Synod. There is a principle of the

highest interest to the Church involved in that regulation. Theory without consistent practise can avail little."

The fact is that there were men in the Tennessee Synod who felt that they were in bad company. They hoped that good would come of their walking with those with whom they were not really agreed, but at the same time they saw the danger with which they were surrounded and entertained fears as to the consequences. They knew that they were working with men in the North Carolina Synod and other synods of the South whose doctrinal position sounded good enough, but whose practise ran far behind their confession. These were, for the most part, the older men of the synod. The younger men, generally speaking, saw things in a different light. They had, no doubt, come under the influence of men from the General Synod with which these Southern synods had filled their pulpits because, on account of the lack of schools, they had few men from their own circles. In one thing they all, with the exception of the Revs. J. M. Smith, C. H. Bernheim, G. E. Long, and, later, A. L. Crouse, seemed to agree, and that was that they had some kind of an aversion for the Missouri Synod. They had heard it said that the Missouri Synod taught Calvinism, and some literature which had fallen into their hands seemed to prove this assertion. But, worst of all, the Missouri Synod was an inter-loper; it had come into a field where it had no business to be — into *their* field. By so doing it was endangering the success of Lenoir College, which, at first unofficially, later officially, was their school. Attempts were made to show them that they were wrong in their attitude toward the Missouri Synod. Private conferences were held, joint public debates were engaged in, literature was given into their hands — all to little avail, to say the most. The current had started to flow toward the United Synod in the South, and as time went on, it flowed more and more strongly, until finally the North Carolina Synod has swallowed up the Tennessee Synod and left it not even a name of its once glorious heritage!

Consequently, Professor Dau, the new pastor of St. John's Church, could not and would not join the Tennessee Synod. So there was but one thing for St. John's Church to do, and that was to join the Missouri Synod, which it did, true to its tradition of standing, for more than a hundred years now, for "God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure."

These hundred and twenty-five years of the existence of St. John's Church in Catawba Co., N. C., have been a proof of the grace and mercy of God. Although for a century she has held her

services in the same church where, once every month, a congregation of a different faith met for public worship; although, in several instances, the more subtle road to error has opened up for her under the form of a Lutheranism of a laxer sort, yet a guiding Hand has led her, so that, while to-day, in her cemetery, there lie the ashes of David Henkel and others who were uncompromising teachers of true Lutheranism, in her pulpit she has a man, Prof. C. F. Fredericks of Concordia College, who will know no other faith than that once delivered to the saints, and her members still sing:

Let me be Thine forever,
Thou faithful God and Lord;
Let me forsake Thee never,
Nor wander from Thy Word.

Lord, do not let me waver,
But give me steadfastness,
And for such grace forever
Thy holy name I'll bless.

Yes, with St. Paul she says: "By the grace of God I am what I am."
