

A Brief History of Lutheranism in America

Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint from which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:15-16

Terminology:

The Faculty Majority: 45 faculty members who walked off of the campus of Concordia Seminary

The Walkout: The event which happened on February 19th, 1974, when the majority of the Concordia Seminary faculty (45 of 50) and the majority of the students who walked off of campus.

Seminex: Refers to the educational institution that came from those who left Concordia Seminary. Formally known as Christ Seminary – Seminex. The last St. Louis commencement was held in 1983, though Seminex continued to exist at the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago until 1987.

A brief history of the events prior to and including the Walkout:

1917 – Launch of American Lutheran Publicity Bureau. LCMS moving towards English language

1930 – American Lutheran Church is formed. They begin discussions with the LCMS.

1932 – Publication of *A Brief Statement*. This document sets forth the doctrinal position of Missouri.

1935 – Election of John Behnken, first American born president of the LCMS

1945 – “Statement of the 44,” signatories include many Concordia Seminary professors.

1948 – Bad Boll conference held in Germany. Many in the Missouri Synod attend.

1958 – Martin Scharlemann publishes essays addressing ‘errors’ within Scripture.

1962 – Cleveland convention of the LCMS. Martin Scharlemann apologizes and retracts essays.

1966 – Lutheran Council in the USA (LCUSA) formed. John Tietjen serves as executive director.

1969 – In May, John Tietjen is elected president of Concordia Seminary (CSL). Denver convention of the LCMS. JAO Preus is elected, unseating Oliver Harms as president. The Denver convention, contrary to President-Elect Preus’s recommendation, declares full altar and pulpit fellowship with the American Lutheran Church (ALC).

1970 – Preus appoints a Fact Finding Committee (FFC) to ascertain what is happening at CSL.

1970-1971 – Between December 11th 1970 and March 6th, 1971, the five members of the FFC interview seminary faculty members. Written report is submitted to Preus on June 15th 1971.

1972 – In February, in response to the report of the FFC, Preus tells Tietjen that a member of the faculty, Arlis Ehlen, is not to teach higher critical views concerning the Bible. In March, Preus releases *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles*. In September, Preus releases the ‘Report of the Synodical President,’ known as ‘The Blue Book’. Tietjen releases ‘Fact Finding or Fault Finding,’ known as the Brown Book. Later, the faculty release a fuller version of the Brown Book: “Faithful to our Calling, Faithful to our Lord: An Affirmation in Two Parts.”

1973 – New Orleans Convention. Adopts three resolutions. First, that it understands the Synodical constitution as allowing for the adoption of doctrinal statements as ‘binding upon its members’.

Synod in convention then adopts *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* as just such a binding statement. Finally, the Synod adopts Res. 3-09: “To Declare Faculty Majority Position in Violation of Article II of the [Synod’s] Constitution.” Namely, their position is contrary to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

1974: On January 20th, the Board of Control suspends Tietjen. A majority of students declare a moratorium on attending class. The faculty announce that they consider themselves suspended.

February 17th- 18th – The Board of Control votes to terminate faculty unless they resume teaching

February 19th – A majority of the faculty and students symbolically walk off of campus.

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What does it mean to be Lutheran in America? What does it mean to be Lutheran?

1546 – Martin Luther dies. Smalcald war begins. The Emperor invades Saxony.
1580 – Publication of the Book of Concord. Serves to unite much of Lutheranism.

- The Augsburg Confession of 1530, The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531)
- The Smalcald Articles Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope (1537)
- The Small Catechism of Martin Luther (1529), The Large Catechism of Martin Luther (1529)
- Epitome of the Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord (1577)

1618 – The Defenestration of Prague, 30 Years War between Protestant Estates and Habsburgs
1648 – Peace of Westphalia, greater autonomy for states such as Bavaria and Saxony
1694 – University of Halle founded. Known center of Pietism. Later sends missionaries to America.
1817 – Prussian Union established. Saxon Lutherans, under guidance of Martin Stephan, begin to consider emigrating to the new world to avoid unionism with the Reformed church.

1664 – First Lutheran congregation chartered in North America, in present day Manhattan.
1742 – Henry Melchior Muhlenberg establishes a confessional basis for his congregation
1748 – Henry Melchior Muhlenberg organizes a ministerium in Philadelphia. The Pennsylvania Ministerium pledges fidelity to the Augsburg Confession. They drop the reference to the confessional documents from their constitution in 1792.
1786 – New York Ministerium is founded. No confessional subscription. Frederick Augustus Conrad Muhlenberg, son of H.M. Muhlenberg, is a member of the Continental Congress.
1820 – The General Synod is formed. First national Lutheran body formed in the U.S. from the Pennsylvania Ministerium, the North Carolina Synod, the New York Ministerium, and the Synod of Maryland and Virginia. Constituting documents do not include a confession basis.
1820 – Tennessee Synod formed by Paul Henkel and his son, David. Strong confessional position.
1826 – Samuel Simon Schmucker heads up first American Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg (PA)
1838 – Martin Stephan and the Saxon immigrants leave for the New World.
1839 – Founding of Concordia College (the log cabin) in Perry County.
1847 – Formation of the Missouri Synod in Chicago. Pledges fidelity to the entire Book of Concord.
1851 – Henkel publishes first English translation of the Book of Concord in American history.
1855 – Schmucker's *Definite Synodical Platform*, American Recension of the Augsburg Confession
1867 – General Council formed primarily from Pennsylvania Ministerium., opposes General Synod
1872 – Galesburg Rule in America – Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran pastors, Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants. Charles Porterfield Krauth is key theological leader for General Council
1872 – Synodical Conference formed from Wisconsin Synod, Missouri Synod, and others
1882 – Ohio Synod withdraws from the Synodical Conference over the predestinarian controversy
1882 – Henry Eyster Jacobs publishes a new English translation of the Book of Concord.
1918 – General Synod merges with the General Council and the Synod of the South, forms ULCA – United Lutheran Church in America. Formed largely from German speaking church bodies.
1921 – Missouri Synod publishes the Concordia Triglotta (Book of Concord) with introductions
1930 – Ohio, Buffalo, Iowa, and Texas synods joined to form the American Lutheran Church (ALC)
1959 – Theodore Tappert edits a new English translation of the Book of Concord.
1960 – ALC, United Ev. Luth. Church (Danish), Ev. Luth. Church (Norwegian) form new ALC
1962 – Formation of the Lutheran Church in America from the ULCA, the Suomi Synod (Finnish, formed in 1890), the American Evangelical Lutheran Church (Danish, formed in 1872) and the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church (Swedish, formed in 1860).