

order of service. Completed at Christmas, 1821, it was adopted for services in the army and at the Berlin cathedral the following year. The king hoped to get it adopted by all congregations of their own free will, and thus achieve a uniform service in the Prussian Land church. However, the pressure to use the new service book aroused a storm of controversy which was termed the "service book quarrel" (*Agendestreit*). Not only was there opposition from theologians to the new book's content and ritual practice, but legalists also raised their voices in protest. Did the king have any right to interfere in matters relating to church doctrine and liturgy? In fact, did he have any rights over the church at all? By May, 1825, out of 7,782 churches in Prussia, 5,243 were using the new service book.¹⁷ The following July the churches were given an alternative. A church could either use the new service book or follow without alteration one that had been approved previously by the authorities and had been used in that particular congregation. Compromise was under way, and with the approval of the king, provisional service books were issued which in parallel formularies took into consideration local customs and practices.

Controversy, however, did not cease, and secessionist movements threatened to make headway. In an effort to forestall them, the king in 1834 issued an explanatory cabinet order.

The Union does not intend or mean the surrender of a previous confession of belief, and the authority which the confessional statements of the two confessions have hitherto had is not annulled. Through joining the Union, only the spirit of moderation and humility is expressed, which no longer permits the differences in certain teachings of the other confession to furnish an excuse to refuse external church ties. Joining the Union is a matter of free decision, and it is therefore wrong to believe that it is necessary to accept the new service book to join the Union, or that acceptance of the service book means indirectly joining the Union.¹⁸

Frederick William IV (1840-61) on his accession confirmed the policy expressed in the cabinet order of his predecessor. In 1852 he expressly declared that he was of the opinion that Frederick William III, in inaugurating the union of the churches, never wanted to bring about the change of one confession to the other or to bring about a third confession.

The result of this policy of compromise was (and still is) that in the United church there were congregations which retained their original Reformed or Lutheran character, and there were others in which these confessional differences were merged into a common Evangelical Protestantism.¹⁹ The Prussian government itself treated the churches as united, and the United church was the official Land church of the old provinces. When new territories were added following the successful war of 1866, the Land churches of these new provinces, thanks to Bismarck's wisdom and moderation, were retained, and were treated as separate church bodies by the Prussian government. They were placed directly under the Ministry of Church Affairs and were not subject to the Supreme Church Council (*Oberkirchenrat*), the highest administrative authority of the United church.

While according to the Prussian king the acceptance of the new church union was to be a voluntary matter, in the hands of his bureaucracy it was treated as a governmental order and pressure was actually brought on ministers and congregations to accept it. The three hundredth anniversary of the Confession of Augsburg, June 25, 1830, was considered a proper occasion to push forward the final acceptance of the United church. Cabinet orders of April 4 and 30, 1830, proposed that the anniversary be celebrated by a common celebration of the Lord's Supper by Lutherans and Reformed, and that the Union ritual of the Breaking of Bread be used.

The general superintendent of Silesia, where the Union was not generally accepted, instructed all the clergy under his supervision to celebrate the anniversary by using the common ritual of the United church. Johann Gottfried Scheibel, pastor at Saint Elizabeth's Lutheran Church in Breslau, had long opposed the Union and the new service book. He now protested vigorously, and in a written communication to the king said that for reasons of conscience he could not use the new ritual. The royal reply was curt: "there could be no talk of reasons of conscience; it was his duty as a subject to obey the ordinances of the king."²⁰ The pastor's plea that members of his congregation should be spared this coercion was also rejected. He undertook to print a protest, whereupon the church superintendent suspended him from his pastorate. A good number of the congregation, including important professors at the university, rallied around the pastor and proclaimed that they would remain true to the faith of their fathers. They formed a congregation and begged the king for legal recognition.

The movement spread and other congregations seceded. Government authorities steadily refused to recognize these churches, suspended and imprisoned their ministers, refused to recognize their ministerial acts, and even used the police and military against them. In 1834 the congregation in Hönigern refused to surrender their church to authorities when their pastor was suspended because he would not use the new service book. For over three months the congregation held the authorities at bay by assembling before the church building. Then on the morning of December 24, 1834, 400 infantry, 50 cuirassiers, and 50 hussars cleared the square before the church and forced open the doors. The church was freed for ministers of the United church to conduct Christmas services, but the congregation remained away.

This incident aroused attention throughout Germany; it caused the crown prince of Prussia tremendous concern. The events of 1834 had led the government to issue the conciliatory statements on the matter of using the new service book. But the government officially refused to recognize the so-called Old Lutheran groups, lest it reflect on the Lutheranism of the many members of the United church. The seceding congregations, however, went their way and soon established ties with like-minded congregations throughout the Prussian kingdom. On September 15, 1841, a general synod, after careful deliberations, drew up a

church constitution for this conservative group, known as the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church in Prussia (*Evangelisch-lutherische Freikirche in Preussen*), which continued to serve these congregations through succeeding decades. This was a landmark, for it constituted the first attempt at a synodical constitution of a Lutheran church in Germany. It provided for a supreme church board made up of clerical and lay representatives, and for a general synod representing the congregations which was to meet every four years. The king in 1845 by a general concession granted recognition to these congregations and granted them rights of incorporation. The ministerial acts of their ministers (baptism, marriages, etc.) were now recognized, but they received no financial aid from the state. They were to have their own independent government apart from the regular ecclesiastical authorities. Their meeting places, however, were not accorded the name *Kirche*, a distinction the Old Lutherans sought unsuccessfully to acquire right down to 1918.²¹

The Old Lutheran secessionist movement had established a church body which by 1860 numbered 55,000 members, with congregations scattered throughout the kingdom, and with strongholds in Silesia and Pomerania. But it had even more significance, since in the period when the conflict was most acute a large number of the more stalwart confessionalists emigrated to Australia, where they were instrumental in founding the Australian Lutheran church. Another group, under the leadership of Johann Andreas August Grabau, went to America (1839), and there eventually founded the Buffalo Synod. Emigration was in the air at this time. In the previous year a group of devout Lutherans had left Saxony for the New World, and these eventually formed the strong Missouri Synod. It was this latter body which lent support to a Lutheran group which seceded from the Land church of Saxony in 1871. The example of the Old Lutherans in Prussia was followed in other German states, notably in Hesse, Hanover, Baden, and Hermannsburg-Homburg, where recognized Lutheran Free churches were established. Elsewhere isolated congregations separated themselves from the established churches and struck up ties with the Free church Lutherans in other states. Small Evangelical Reformed Free churches of somewhat different historical background also existed; the Confederation of Reformed Congregations of Lower Saxony, and the Old Reformed church in the province of Hanover.

The religious complexity of Germany, which continues to this day, was thus increased rather than lessened by the attempts at church unity of the early nineteenth century. There were established Lutheran, Reformed, and United Land churches, and of course the Catholic church, all of which were regularly considered public corporations in all states and had special privileges which were not granted to other religious bodies.²² There were also the Old Lutheran and Old Reformed churches which were usually classed as "Free churches" (*Freikirchen*). Jewish synagogues were regularly tolerated and had corporation status in all states.

In addition to these bodies, there were other small groups scattered

about Germany which were usually recognized only as "religious associations" (*Vereine*), although some had the status of public corporations. Among these were the Mennonites and Moravian Brethren, dating back to the sixteenth century, and the Herrnhuter, a small group which, under the influence of pietism, arose in the eighteenth century as an offshoot of the Moravian Brotherhood. Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760) was the guiding spirit of this latter group, which established itself at Herrnhut in Saxony.

The nineteenth century saw a marked increase in sectarianism in Germany; many of these churches were the result of contacts with groups in the United States. Among them were the Baptists and Methodists (1830s), the Swedenborgians (1848), the Irvingians (1848), and the Evangelical Association (*Albrechtsleute*) (1850).²³ In 1840 the church authorities in Prussia took disciplinary action against Pastor Wilhelm F. Sintenis of Magdeburg who had maintained in a newspaper article that prayer to Christ was superstition. A group of rationalists rallied to the support of Sintenis and founded the Association of Protestant Friends, also known as the Friends of Light (*Lichtfreunde*). They formed congregations outside of the established church and were at times subject to excessive police regulations. In 1859 they joined with a small secessionist Catholic group (*Deutschkatholiken*) to form the League of Free Religious Congregations (*Bund freier religiöser Gemeinden*), comprising 53 congregations in 1859, 155 in 1874, and 50 in 1913, with 35,000 members.²⁴ There were still other smaller groups, such as the Templars, who advocated a return to the Holy Land and established settlements in Palestine (1868),²⁵ the Plymouth Brethren (Darbyists), Adventists, Nazarenes, the Salvation Army, Christian Scientists, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses (1897).²⁶

Regulation and practices varied among the states, but while the Free churches and the sects did not enjoy all the rights and privileges of the Land churches or of the Catholic church, they nevertheless were not persecuted. Their ministerial acts were usually recognized by the state, and they had freedom of worship within their meeting places. They might not always be permitted to use a bell or conduct public processions, restrictions which were prevalent in Prussia, but they had the essential freedoms of propagandizing their faith and making converts. Children from Free church and sectarian families normally attended the Protestant religious classes in the public schools.

The establishment of the Free churches and sects was a product of the liberalism of the nineteenth century, of the renewed interest in religion, and of greater contacts with churches in foreign countries, particularly in the United States and Great Britain. It was also an expression of the growth of the conception of a religiously neutral state which found its roots in the ideas of the Enlightenment. In response to this concept, but also under pressure from church leaders, the state authorities began to share church administration and government with bodies elected by the churches themselves. Everywhere in Germany synodical organizations were established which were associated with the old consistorial

30 bodies, giving rise to a unique synodical-consistorial form of church government.

The Synods and Interchurch Cooperation

Presbyters and synods had always played a more important role in the Reformed than in the Lutheran churches. In Lutheran areas synods were not unknown, but where they existed they were meetings of the clergy and never achieved any power against the governmentally constituted administrative bodies. For many years some church leaders, particularly under pietist influence, sought to quicken the moribund and stodgy Lutheran church government by introducing presbyterial forms at the congregational level. However, no significant progress was made. The changes brought by the Napoleonic upheaval gave impetus to this program of regenerating the administration of the Land churches by the introduction of synodical institutions. It was essential to bring about the participation of individual church members not only in the affairs of the local congregations, but also in the higher echelons of church government.

In 1807 Friedrich Schleiermacher, then the most influential clergyman in Berlin, proposed a new governmental order for the Protestant church in Prussia which would give the church more independence from the state.²⁷ The latter was to concern itself only with property questions and strictly external matters, leaving the regulation of internal church affairs to the churches. Congregations were to receive presbyters, and synods were to be created to take over general church government. At this time Schleiermacher envisaged synods made up only of clergy, but by 1817 he was advocating synods with both clerical and lay representatives. Yet the attempt in that year to organize synods as part of the governmental structure of the new United church of Prussia met with no success.

Bavaria, however, in 1818 introduced synods of clergy in the Palatinate as well as in its territories right of the Rhine, to which lay delegates were added in 1848. Baden established synods in 1821. After years of difficulties a new church governmental order was adopted in 1835 for the Rhineland-Westphalian districts in Prussia. It was a combination of the old presbyter-synodical order of the Reformed church and the consistorial bodies of the Prussian church government. It became an important precedent in the elaboration of later church constitutions. Frederick William IV came to the throne imbued with a desire to vitalize the Prussian church. In 1846 he called a general synod of notables, but no progress was made. The new Prussian constitution of 1850 provided that the churches of the realm should order their own affairs. It was not, however, until 1873-76 that synodical organizations were established for the United church in the old provinces. Meanwhile synods were established in Württemberg (1854), in Hanover (1864), and in Saxony (1868). Subsequently synodical organizations were inaugurated in the

churches of most other states and by World War I had become regular features of church government throughout Germany, except in Mecklenburg and in some smaller Thuringian states.²⁸

The synods were always made up of both clerical and lay delegates, elected to the circle synods by the elected governing boards of the local congregations. These local circle synods then elected representatives to the provincial and Land synods. In addition the ruler of the Land usually appointed some delegates to the higher synodical bodies, and there were also delegates from theological faculties of the universities where such existed. The synods always existed alongside the consistorial or other church administrative establishments of the governments. They were meant to be organizations to coordinate and help regulate church affairs, and their competence varied slightly from Land to Land. Their approval was usually required for new church laws, and they also had a part in the administration of church funds. They gradually gained in influence, and exercise by the prince of his rights as *summus episcopus* increasingly became dependent on the cooperation of the synods. On the other hand, they never became independent institutions of church self-government, for up to 1918 there was no inclination on the part of the civil authorities to remove their controlling hands completely from the church. In makeup and power the German synods were quite different from the synods of Calvin's Switzerland, Knox's Scotland, or of many of the churches in America.

The synods met infrequently—the general synods every four, five, or six years—and were usually dominated by the religious festivities of the occasion rather than by administrative and governmental duties. It was the executive bodies elected by these synods which worked hand in hand with the government authorities in regulating the affairs of the church. Thus in the old provinces of Prussia the administration of the United churches was in the hands of the Evangelical Supreme Church Council (*Evangelischer Oberkirchenrat*), consisting of a president, vice-president, and ten members—some lay, some clerical. These were appointed by the head of the government and were considered members of the civil service. In addition the seven members of the executive body of the Land synod were also special members of the Supreme Church Council and at times were called in to deliberate with that body. Once a year the expanded council met with another eighteen-member board elected by the Land synod, and known as the General Synodical Council (*General-Synodal-Rat*). Here the governmental officials together with the synodical representatives discussed church problems and decided on guiding principles of government and administration. The Land synod also sent representatives to the governmental board that had charge of church educational institutions and seminars.²⁹

Interchurch Societies

While the churches were gradually winning a share in the administration of their affairs, they also took steps towards cooperation among themselves. The Land churches naturally concentrated on af-