



# Lutherans Today: American Lutheran Identity in the Twenty-First Century

*Richard Cimino*

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In the middle of the twentieth century, American Lutherans were newsworthy enough to find themselves on the cover of *Time* magazine. Their claim to fame? In an era when American churches were beginning to look and act alike, Lutherans' strong confessional nature and stress on theology as well as their liturgy and ethnicity set them apart. They were "Protestants with a difference" at a time when differences were supposed to be dissolving in the American melting pot.

Subsequent years have posed serious questions to Lutheran identity, as disputes about the true nature of Lutheranism and the meaning of the Lutheran confessions, the structure of ministry, ecumenism, sexuality, and multiculturalism have all left their mark on Lutheran denominations. In *Lutherans Today* several historians, social scientists, journalists, and other leading experts map out the place of Lutheranism in the landscape of contemporary American Christianity and explore the directions in which it is heading in the new millennium.

Presenting new and original research, the book is divided into two sections. The first examines change and movements within American Lutheranism. Distinguished church historian Mark Noll here sets the scene by arguing that the predicament of American Lutheranism has always been the struggle to remain faithful to the enduring witness of the European Reformation while also accommodating itself to the democratic pluralism of the New World. Six other chapters discuss the Missouri Synod, the "Lutheran Left," the Called to Common Mission agreement, the evangelical catholic movement within Lutheranism, the rise of "megachurches," and Lutheran charismatics.

The second section considers trends and issues related to Lutheran identity, including politics and the pastorate, the impact of immigration and multiculturalism, the loss of Lutheran identity at Lutheran colleges and universities, and conflicting patterns of commitment among Lutheran youth.

As a whole, *Lutherans Today* will be valuable not only to all Lutherans but also to those interested in the development and current state of religious life in America.

### **Contributors:**

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