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WALTHER THE LUTHERAN.

(Continued.)

September 1, 1844, deserves to be recorded as one of the great days in the history of the American Lutheran Church. On that day Walther began the publication of *Der Lutheraner*. The very name chosen for this famous periodical, with the time-honored motto underneath, "God's Word and Luther's doctrine pure shall now and evermore endure," was significant. It came as a confession and a challenge. It fairly compelled notice. Here was a writer who had the courage of his convictions and proposed to speak them.

Walther explains his reasons for publishing the periodical, and the prospective aims and contents of his paper, in the prefatory article.

It is plain that the German population of Western America is daily increasing. In proportion to its growth the number of those is increasing who profess the faith which Luther in his day preached to the Germans. However, no church organization in our country beholds its members in such an orphaned condition as the Evangelical Lutheran. Possibly there are many here who still call themselves Lutheran; but they live scattered, and, as a rule, are destitute of means to such an extent, that in many places they are scarcely able to organize congregations, and to appoint a minister of their confession to serve them. Accordingly, the German Lutherans in our country are in no small temptation to forsake the faith of their fathers: they will either cast off all regard for the church, divine worship, etc., or they will seek to have their religious needs satisfied in other religious organizations already existing in this country. Hence, our dear brethren in the faith in this part of our

adopted country are, indeed, in need of encouragement to remain faithful to their confession. They need to be warned against the dangers of defection with which they are threatened in many ways. They need weapons of defense against those who dispute the correctness of that faith which they had learned in their youth from their Catechism. They need the comforting assurance that the Church whose faith they profess has not yet disappeared, and hence, that there is no reason at all why they should seek refuge in any other religious society.

These needs, which are, no doubt, felt by many, and also the conviction that it is our duty to give to our fellow-citizens in this country an account of the faith and doctrine of our Church, and of the principles according to which we act, — these were the motives which prompted the undersigned, together with a number of his brethren in the ministry and in the faith in Missouri and Illinois, to publish a paper with the above title. This paper is to serve chiefly the following purposes: 1. It is to acquaint people with the doctrine, the treasures, and the history of the Lutheran Church. 2. It is to furnish the evidence to prove that this Church must not be grouped with the Christian sects, that it is not a new, but the old, true Church of Jesus Christ, and hence, that this Church has by no means become defunct, yea, that it never can become so, because of the promise of Christ: "Behold, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." 3. Our paper is to show how a person, as a true Lutheran, may hold the true faith, lead a Christian life, suffer patiently, and die in the faith. 4. Finally, our paper is to refute and warn against the false and deceptive teachings which are being disseminated in our days, and, in particular, it is to expose those who falsely call themselves Lutheran, and under this name are spreading false beliefs, unbelief, and the notions of enthusiasts, and thus are creating the worst prejudices against our Church among the members of other parties.

After reading the above, possibly not a few will deny our ability to achieve the end which we have proposed for ourselves. Or they may become fearful lest our paper will breathe the spirit of intolerance, and will feed and nourish the hatred existing between the followers of different creeds. In reply to the former scruple we have only this to say: No one, indeed, recognizes more keenly than we do ourselves, our deficiency for discharging in their full scope the functions of an editor of a Christian journal. However, we know that in divine matters useful service which a person desires to render to his brethren does not depend on great learning and eloquence, but on a true, living knowledge of the saving truth and on a plain

testimony in its behalf. Moreover, it is our intention to let the most ingenious teachers of our Church, especially Luther, speak in our paper. We believe that this feature alone will make the contents of our paper so valuable that our readers will tolerate what little we shall offer of our own productions. As regards the latter scruple, that will soon vanish after our readers shall have perused but a few pages attentively and without bias. For quite a while we ourselves were held captive in sundry errors, and God bore with us patiently, and with much long-suffering guided us into the way of truth. Mindful of this fact, we, too, intend to exercise patience toward our erring neighbors, and by the grace of God shall refrain from all sinful judging and condemning of others. We shall attack errors rather than the persons of the erring. Nor do we intend to parade ourselves as persons who alone are Lutherans and who alone possess the truth; but we merely desire to testify that God has done great things for us, and has guided us to the living knowledge of the alone-saving truth. (Vol. I, p. 1.)

Such was Walther's program, and this program was strictly carried out, though with results far different and far greater than Walther had anticipated. We shall take a brief survey of Walther's editorial activity during the first year. According to promise, Luther becomes Walther's leading contributor. With a masterly insight into the needs of the times he reproduces the classical deliverances of the Reformer on vital points of the Christian faith, now in a brief saying, now in a copious extract. These citations are not the conventional material with which the perplexed editor fills *lacunae* in his paper; they seem to have been written for the day and the hour. Down the centuries rings the voice of Luther, and his followers in America surely must have marveled how apt, how pertinent his remarks proved still after the lapse of three hundred years.

Among the serial articles in this volume three, in particular, deserve especial mention. First the article on the name "Lutheran." With the utmost sincerity Walther in this article discusses the questions: Is it wrong to be called Lutheran? What does it mean to be a Lutheran? Why do we insist on retaining our Lutheran name? The writer bares to his readers his full confessional consciousness, his love and fidelity to the Lutheran Church. Spurning with his whole heart the possible

imputation of man-worship, which is so readily raised against the bearers of the name "Lutheran," Walther loyally accepts the name, as he accepts the name "Christian," both names being to him equal in origin, equal in meaning, equal in destiny. Whatever there still was of the Lutheran conscience in America must have felt itself powerfully stimulated by this earnest presentation of the Lutheran's right to exist and to perpetuate the faith of his Church.

The second serial article Walther secured from his friend Keyl in Altenburg. It was a Life of Luther, written in a lively and popular style, and accentuating step for step the divine mission of the Reformer. It is well known that Christian biographies find no readers more grateful than Christian laymen. In Keyl's compact delineation of the Reformer's character and narration of the important events in his life the Lutheran laymen beheld the chosen instrument of God, rugged, artless, plain, mighty in word and deed, with an absorbing passion for the truth of God's Word, urging, warning, cheering his colaborers, full of strife within and without, and, withal, humble and trustful. It was not a mere lesson in church history, but a lesson in practical Christianity which this Life of Luther conveyed to its readers.

As to the third serial article one wavers whether to mention the Contributions for the Defense of the Christian Religion against the Ordinary Objections Raised by the Scoffers and Blasphemers of our Day, or Loeber's articles on Arius, or Brohm's treatise on the Call to the Ministry. The first two are ably written articles, exhibiting the lines of defense which the Church must ever adopt against grosser heresies. But the Lutheran tendency of the paper is most strikingly maintained in the last article, which attacked a crying evil in the American Lutheran Church, the temporary call to the ministry.

Walther had promised his readers weapons of defense against assailants of the Lutheran Church. He had probably not anticipated that he would be called upon so speedily and so frequently to furnish these. His paper had reached the sixth

issue, when it had to take notice of an attack by a Romanist, Editor Oertel, who challenged Walther's statements in the second issue regarding the infallible marks of the Church, the Word of God and the sacraments. In Walther's reply to this opponent we obtain the first glimpse of the spirit and method of his argument in a polemical effort. Because of its intrinsic value we reproduce a portion of the argument:—

It remains, in the first place, to reply to the objection that the aforementioned marks cannot be true marks, because heterodox people, too, appeal to them. We reply: True, all sects boast that they have the true doctrine; does that prove anything? Does Mr. Oertel consider possessing and claiming that you possess the same thing? Did not the heretical Donatists boast that they were the Catholic Church, and are not the Greek congregations still boasting their apostolicity just as much as the Roman Church, which is determined in excluding the Greeks from its communion? Does the real possessor of a matter cease to be the possessor for the reason that some person delirious with fever imagines that he is the possessor? If only such things to which no one could set up a false claim are to be true marks, what possible marks could there be? Can you fix a limit to the arrogance of a lot of enthusiasts?—We claim, on the contrary, that for this very reason because *all* assert: We have these marks! our mention of these marks is not false, but this is rather a proof that they are the *true* marks. All sects know quite well that they can pass for the society of true disciples of Christ only on condition that they abide by the Word and ordinances of Christ; that is the reason why they are so bold to set up this claim and to repeat it after the true Church. The *false* prophet knows that the *true* prophet is recognized by his pure, divine teaching; for that reason the false prophet pretends such teaching. How now? Will the true prophet on that account fail to be recognized as such by his true doctrine? That would be a fine argument!—Accordingly, Augustine in his controversy with the Donatists writes: "There are divine books whose authority is not controverted among us; either side believes in them and submits to them. On this common territory let us seek the Church, and discuss our affair." (*Lib. de Unit. Eccl.*, c. 3.) The same author writes: "All heretics try to defend their false and deceptive opinions by means of the Scripture; but it is just by the perfectly clear and unanimous sentence of the divine testimonies that they stand condemned." (*Lib. 3, De Trin.*, c. 3.)

Granted, says Mr. Oertel; but in that case "the very point in controversy is made the basis and the criterion of the Christian faith while every scientific argument must be built up on certain and incontrovertible principles, if the entire system is not to be exposed as untenable." If Mr. Oertel ever uttered an unchristian thought, it is this. For his statement is a blasphemy, and charges God with having given us a dark, uncertain, vacillating Word, on which no one can take a firm stand, to which no one can confidently appeal in defiance of the whole world, and spurning all human notions. Alas! poor world, deserving of pity; for in that case even *God* should have deceived thee! He should have given thee an anchor that could not secure thee when thou art storm-swept and tempest-tossed! He would have directed thee to an *ignis fatuus* which thou couldst follow only hesitatingly, uncertain whether it would guide thee to high and dry ground, or tempt thee into an abyss! But can this claim stand, that the true doctrine must be untenable ground, because the sects question and oppose it? Must the Bible really be nothing but a nose of wax, because enthusiasts treat it as such, twisting it to suit their fancy? Must God's Word lack all argumentative force because men misuse and pervert it? Is it not awful to have to listen to such claims? Verily, such talk can only come from one of those unfortunates who coveted to drink from the intoxicating cup of the Antichrist,—only a papist who regards nothing, not even God's Word, as certain, unless it be stamped with the approval of the pope and the bishops. My poor, deluded friend, your statements are not the voice of the true Church. The Church does not consider the revelations of Scripture debatable matters; she says with David: "Thy Word is a light unto my feet and a lamp unto my way" (Ps. 119); and with Peter: "We have a more sure word of prophecy, wherunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts;" and with Isaiah: "To the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Is. 8, 20.) We Lutherans do not take the least notice of the multifarious faith of all sects of enthusiasts. The awful confusion of these last times does not disturb us in the least. We do not by any means attribute it to the obscurity of the Scriptures, or to the liberty of private interpretation of the Scriptures, but to the perverseness, blindness, and malice of men who will not simply and unconditionally submit to the testimony of Scripture, but attempt to correct the Holy Spirit according to the strange fancies of their corrupt reason or according to the sickly sentiments of their perverse heart. Let the sects, then,

continue to controvert and question the true doctrine, what is that to us Lutherans? Let others doubt and feel uncertain, waver and vacillate,—you cannot expect anything else where false doctrine reigns. We, however, are certain; for we know that the Word of God cannot deceive us; it affords a safe *hold* and a good *foundation*.

But Mr. Oertel will raise the objection: Who is to be judge in this matter? Who will show us the true meaning of Scripture? We reply: No one but Scripture itself; the Scriptures are self-explanatory. It is vain to say to us Lutherans: "Thus saith the Church; woe to him who will not listen!" We answer: Whenever we hear from your mouth what the Word of God says, whenever you prove your statements from Scripture,—very well! In that case we are hearing the Church, and we wish to be obedient sons of our mother. But whenever we hear a strange doctrine, we remember the word of our Lord: "Beware of false prophets!" And we say to you: Hush your ceaseless appeals to the Church! You are not the Church; it is not Christ, but the spirit of lies that speaks through you. Yea, we assert that a church which demands obedience, without offering Scripture proof for its claims, is not the Church of Christ, but the tyrannical church of the devil; for his custom it is to set himself up above God and His Word. Woe to the person who obeys such a church; she will lead him into eternal death!

The question is being asked, How can a layman find his way out of the maze of the different doctrines of the sects? How is he to decide which side has the truth? Is it not necessary for him to first find the Church to which he can entrust himself to be guided blindfolded, without fear of being misled? Thus only he can speak who does not know what *faith* is; for true faith may not be built on any man, no matter how holy or wise he is, or what exalted official position in the Church he may occupy. Even the humblest layman is in a state of true faith only when he knows and clings to this fact: Thus it is written; thus saith God; such are the promises of the faithful and truthful God of heaven.

It is, indeed, true that it is no easy matter, especially in these last sad times, to discover the true Church by means of the pure Word and the sacraments, inasmuch as so many sects are arising that surround themselves with the halo of Christian teaching and brilliant sanctity. But we point once more to the saying quoted before: "He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous" ("den Aufrichtigen laesst Er's gelingen," Prov. 2, 7). The Scriptures are clear in every point that concerns our salvation; let everyone who is trying to find the true Church grasp this touchstone, and humbly

call upon God for the guidance of His Holy Spirit, and he will soon find that society which assuredly has Jesus with all the treasures of His grace in its midst, because it clings to His Word and His unadulterated sacraments. It is a blessed mark of abiding honor in the Bereans that, even when Paul preached to them, they "searched the Scripture daily, whether those things were so." (Acts 17, 11.) They are a glorious example, by which all should be guided who are trying to find the true Church, and would not like to be deceived by a false church: they tried to discover agreement of the doctrine with the Scriptures, and when they found that, they gladly joined the new congregation of Christians:

True, natural man would prefer to have marks of the Church on which he could lay his hands even while sleeping, as it were; and we do not deny that the marks of the true Church, which *Der Lutheraner* has mentioned are not very convenient for the carnally sluggish mind of a person who is spiritually dead and blind. It is true that to find the pearl of truth entails labor and conflict; but, dear reader, this pearl is worth seeking for and digging for day and night, for it brings peace to the soul and the certainty of your eternal salvation. For this reason, however, you should not feel surprised that at this very time the Lutheran Church has the most faithless sons, that this particular Church is now the smallest, most despised, and most divided. Remember, the Lutheran Church must be known by the truth; however, it is now midnight throughout the world; love of the truth is almost utterly extinct; truth is considered the vilest merchandise: there is no demand for it, much less is there any serious intention to investigate the truth. Even those who still profess to believe the Bible consider purity of doctrine a chimera, and they regard it as inopportune and as an intolerable Lutheran stubbornness to insist on, or to esteem very highly, any article of our faith. Why, matters had to come to such a pass in times such as the Lord had in mind when He said: "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"

However, my beloved Lutheran Christian, though many at your right and at your left fall from the truth, let this be all the more reason for you to take a firm stand. Remember, the reason why many did not know Christ in the days of His flesh was, because He did not reveal Himself to the world by some outward token of splendor. The world desired Him to be an earthly king, and the world to-day desires His Church to be a visible and magnificent kingdom; that is the reason why the world of to-day cannot know the Church, because, like its Head, the Church is disfigured by the cross. Oh, let no one beguile you of your reward! Cling to this

truth, *viz.*, that the true Church is known by the pure Word and the sacraments. Grasp this sword firmly, and you will never be tempted to forsake your Church. You will continue to make it your habitation, even if it should grow still smaller, even if it should become as the stable at Bethlehem, as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers. (Is. 1, 8.) It sufficeth that God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. All the glittering domes which human ingenuity has reared shall fall; but even the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church. Hallelujah! (I, 23 f.)

This entire passage fairly throbs with fervid zeal for the cause of the poor, humiliated, and deserted Lutheran Church, and the whole pathos of the situation in which Walther's labors were begun rushes in on one's mind as one follows his reasoning and his pleading. We behold here the touch of the master of popular debate, — keen logic, apt repartee, the dreaded *reductio ad absurdum*; and from the discomfiture of his opponent the polemist proceeds to constructive efforts, and his great heart swells with touching, cordial affection for his brethren. There is a yearning note in his peroration; it lifts one up and rouses holy resolves and aspirations, and it rings out in a triumphant shout of victory.

Editor Oertel figures once more in the animadversions of Walther in this volume. Walther exhibits the notorious insincerity of Roman polemist in an article of March 8, 1845, and concludes his remarks with the following interesting statement:—

By the way, we must decline with most profound thanks the overtures made to us repeatedly and in no uncertain terms to unite with Mr. Oertel and his ilk in fighting those Protestants which we, too, regard as heterodox. In fighting the Methodists, Neo-Lutherans, etc., Mr. Oertel engages in coarse, cruel, unloving calumnies, void of ingenuity and conscience; we have absolutely nothing to do with him. We still know how to distinguish between those who are unwittingly misled by their own hearts, and those who—the Lord knows for what reasons!—endeavor knowingly and with intent to keep and confirm the poor people in superstition, idolatry, and denial of the only valid merit of Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and men. (I, 5.)

Transcontinental reminiscences of a spiritual misery from which Walther and the Saxon emigrants had fled when they quitted Germany, appear in a number of articles, most of them serial, against "the Evangelical Church in North America." This body was an undisguised reproduction of the German state-church, that hybrid product of a Hohenzollern king and his hireling counselors, which has fused the Lutheran and the Reformed churches of Germany into a nondescript something that is—confessionally—neither fish nor fowl, and has raised confessional doubt and cowardice to the dignity of a virtue. Walther's far-seeing judgment is discerned in the resolute stand which he took as soon as he was aware of the purpose of this European importation. In his criticism of this organization Walther exposes the evils of syncretism, and, in so doing, arrays himself openly against the spirit of the age and the typical unionism rampant in the Protestant churches of America. He says:—

If this union were a consolidation of churches that is based on a common faith and on a common acceptance of the truth,—if it were brought about by those who formerly were in error, acknowledging and renouncing their error and accepting the truth, no one, indeed, could be a Christian who would not with his whole heart wish these men the best success in their endeavor, and who would not be ready to unite with them and, if need be, to sacrifice with the utmost gladness his chattels and his life for the attainment of such a holy purpose? Aye, perish the hand that would dare to take up the pen to write against such a pious undertaking! For that would indicate envy in the writer,—envy of the honor due God, and envy of the salvation that is to come to souls dearly bought. For our part, we can state truthfully that we deeply mourn the divisions of Christendom, that we have no pleasure in strifes and quarrels, and that we are beseeching the Lord every day that He would put a stop to the schisms among Christians which are daily increasing, and unite all who have become divided, in truth and peace.

We see, however, from the paragraph quoted that the Evangelical Society in the Western part of our country has an altogether different purpose and character. This Society does not intend to effect a union between Lutherans and Reformed that is based on agreement in faith, but it desires its members to regard each other as belonging to one and the same church, although they hold entirely

different beliefs with regard to the most important articles of the Christian doctrine.

We can never advocate such a union with a good conscience; on the contrary, we must protest against it with the utmost emphasis and determination, and must earnestly warn our Lutheran brethren in particular against this union. We are far from condemning the entire Reformed Church on account of the errors which we behold clearly established against this Church. We are rather firmly convinced that also this Church has many dear children of God in its midst. Accordingly, we are gladly willing to maintain our existence alongside of the Reformed Church in Christian love; but it is contrary to our conscience, because it is contrary to the Word of God, to enter into ecclesiastical union with this body, as long as it clings to the errors of the Reformed Church. The command of the Lord, given to the Church through the apostle, 1 Cor. 1, 10, is clear: "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak *the same* thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in *the same mind and in the same judgment.*" Here we have an incontrovertible command of God, to the effect, that in a true Christian Church there must not be various minds, but *one mind* in regard to the doctrines that have been clearly revealed by God; yea, that the members of the true Church must not only be one as regards the faith in their *hearts*, but they must also reveal their unity in the Spirit and in faith by professing their doctrine in *the same terms*. Again, the same apostle says: "I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses *contrary to the doctrine* which ye have learned; *and avoid them!*" Rom. 16, 17. Here we are told that the chief division against which God warns the Church is a *division caused by contrary, false doctrine*; and on the other hand, that it is right, and commanded by God, to *avoid* those, or to separate also externally from those who have already become separate from us in their hearts by embracing a contrary doctrine. Accordingly, neither can a Reformed, who holds God's Word to be true and still believes the teaching of his Church to be correct, unite in a church-union with a Lutheran, nor the orthodox Lutheran with the Reformed. If the Lutheran unites with those whom he regards as errorists, he breaks his baptismal vow, he actually denies the faith which he solemnly professed at his confirmation, he perjures himself, and falls away from his Church.

Accordingly, the symbolical writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church state in entire accord with the Word of God: "To dissent from the agreement of so many nations and to be called

schismatics is a serious matter. But divine authority commands all not to be allies and defenders of impiety." (*Sm. Art.*, Append. 42, p. 346.) Again, in the Tenth Article of the *Form of Concord* we find this teaching, *viz.*, that we cannot, without denying the truth, unite with the adversaries of our faith even in external ceremonies and in indifferent matters, unless we "*are first agreed with them in doctrine.*" In the same place we find the following: "When such ceremonies are designed for the purpose, and therefore are required and received, as though by and through them two contrary religions were reconciled and became one body; or again, when an advance towards the Papacy and a departure from the pure doctrine of the Gospel and true religion should occur or gradually follow therefrom, — in this case what Paul writes must have weight: 'Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers! What communion hath light with darkness? Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord!' 2 Cor. 6, 14, 17." (*Sol. Decl.*, Art. 10, 5. 6, p. 644.) From this passage of the public Confessions of our Church the Christian reader can see that our Church, agreeably to the divine command, has long ago decidedly rejected such a union by which two churches, prior to their agreeing in the true doctrine, are to be welded into one body or unit.

There are two reasons, in particular, why we consider it our sacred duty to bear witness in all seriousness against the design to spread the united, or so-called Evangelical Church also in our country. Our first reason is, because this Church must in our country gather its converts in the majority of cases from the Lutheran Church. In order that the new Evangelical Church may subsist, our beloved coreligionists before others will have to be induced to forsake their faith and their Church, and enlist with this new body. Accordingly, we must regard this Church as our most dangerous opponent, — an equal menace to us with the German Methodist Church, which also lives by raiding other churches and by the faithlessness of their members. The Evangelical Church does not do either of two things: it does not proceed on its way quietly alongside of us, and it does not meet us in a decisive battle like other churches; it spreads its nets and sets its traps right in our own camp; it often robs our Church of its best sons and daughters: it makes them indifferent to pure teaching, quenches the confessional spirit in them, and thus renders them inactive in that united struggle in behalf of the treasure of the undiminished truth which is necessary in our times.

Another reason that moves us just on this occasion not to hold our peace, but to publicly raise our feeble voice is, because we are

convinced that this Society, though its beginnings have been small, threatens to become exceedingly pernicious to the permanent existence of our Church, especially in these Western parts. For this reason we believe that we owe it our brethren to warn them, not to despise the phenomenon of the rise of this Society as unimportant, but to rouse themselves and remember that on the Last Day we shall have to give an account of the precious treasure of the pure doctrine, gained by our faithful forefathers in many a severe conflict and frequently at the sacrifice of their possessions and their life,—transmitted to us, and then lost through our security, lethargy, and indifference. (I, 43 f.)

In the three issues following, Walther takes up and dissects the four reasons which the "Evangelical Church Society in the West" had offered in defense of the unionism to which it was committed. He shows the Society's misapplication of John 10, 16, and Rom. 16, 17, and the misleading claims of successes already achieved which the Society had advanced. He discusses such points as these: What constitutes the Church, the difference between the Church invisible and visible, the origin of sects, the means of maintaining and purifying the Church, etc.? All these points were elucidated still more when the Evangelical Society, through Rev. Nollau, replied to Walther's criticism in a brochure entitled: "A Word for the Cause of Union." In his review of this brochure Walther states where it can be purchased: evidently his intention was that the readers of *Der Lutheraner* should read it and judge for themselves. Walther's review abounds in masterful refutations of the sophisms of unionism. We would like to reproduce them, because such arguments never lose their value and might be applied with telling force in our own day. But our paper has been growing beyond the size which we had intended. For this reason we prefer to cull from Walther's reply to Nollau only one passage, which exhibits the remarkable candor and humility of Walther in his polemics. Nollau had indulged in insinuations, hinting that the spirit of Stephan had reappeared in Walther. Walther replies:—

Mr. N. has cast up to us the grave offenses of which we became guilty as Stephanists, or followers of the notorious Stephan. We

declare that every reminder of the offense which we have caused in both hemispheres is very salutary to us, because it is good for us to be deeply humiliated in the eyes of God and men. Accordingly, we declare that our bitterest *enemies have benefited us more* than our friends who would charitably cover all our sins. Moreover, we declare most sincerely that we are not angry at Mr. N., because in a public writing he has renewed the memory of our past errors, to our great confusion before the whole world. On the contrary, we seize this opportunity to publicly and humbly confess once more how deeply we feel the burden of our guilt. We confess that, while we were followers of Stephan, we blindly put our trust in a poor erring man, and without serious examination by the rule of God's Word allowed ourselves to be guided by him. We confess that we had made the ministers rulers over their congregations; we confounded secular and spiritual interests; we viewed the Church as bound up in a visible society; we passed uncharitable judgments on Germany and many of its inhabitants who are children of God; we ruthlessly denied that many who were erring were in a state of grace and would be saved; we separated from our brethren after the manner of sects; in a fanatical delusion we abandoned our calling and our native land without urgent cause, and in so doing severed most sacred ties; we honored the Confessions of our Church with our lips, but were not faithful guardians of the doctrine contained in them; we called ourselves Lutherans, while our doctrine and practice in many respects were utterly un-Lutheran; to be brief, by the pretense of genuine Lutheranism we allowed ourselves to be carried headlong into conditions into which only religious fanaticism can lead men; hence, we were on the point of becoming a most pernicious sect. However, we also confess that we are heartily sorry for all these great and grave offenses; we do not consider ourselves worthy to be called disciples, servants of Christ, and Lutherans; yea, we apply to the times when Stephanism had reached its highest development among us the words which Luther uttered when he referred to the time of his initiation into the priesthood: "It was not right (humanly speaking), and we owe it to the overweening long-suffering of God, that the earth did not swallow us up at the time." We are now wondering, especially the preachers among us and all the leaders of our late emigration, why the ocean did not swallow us up. We are heart-broken when we reflect how grievously we have insulted and provoked God, and have caused the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; when we reflect that probably not a few souls were mortally offended at us, a horrible blotch was affixed to the entire Church of Jesus Christ, and all believing children of

God who saw us proceed on error's path were deeply grieved and saddened by us. Once more, therefore, we ask all whom we have offended in the past to pardon our grave offenses for God's sake, and to attribute what we did in our blindness, not to the Word of God, not to the Lutheran Church, not to strict and firm adherence to the truth, but only to our perverseness and faithlessness.

However, while publicly repeating this confession and acknowledgment, we do not by any means intend to deny the grace of God which has been accorded us, etc. (I, 79.)

Any person engaging in censorial work before the public has need of a large measure of self-scrutiny, self-control, and the ability of objective reasoning. An honest critic feels his heart sink when things which he must attack in others are found on his own side, and the *Tu quoque* argument in a debate not infrequently renders the finest attack abortive. In Walther's polemics there is manifest the grace of sincerity, which always cooperated with his passionate love of the truth. There is also manifest the courage and confidence of faith in the divine grace which does not permit a confessor's mouth to become tongue-tied by the recollection of his past errors, yea, which is pleased to employ those who had been erring as guides, after their recovery, to others who are still in error. It was this belief, no doubt, that supported Walther in several trying episodes in his first years as editor; it made him cheerful where others would have been filled with dismay and unnerved.

(*To be concluded.*)
