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WALTHER THE LUTHERAN.

(Continued.)

When Walther wrote the Preface to the third volume of *Der Lutheraner*, which we reproduced in our last article, events had occurred which can safely be set down as practical results of his testimony in behalf of genuine Lutheranism, and which foreshadowed Walther's activity as an organizer of the scattered forces of confessional Lutheranism in America.

And first, the immediate effect of Walther's outspoken defense of the original position of the Lutheran Church in doctrine and polity proved to be separating, disintegrating, disorganizing. Echoes of his testimony began to be heard in the councils of the Lutheran bodies operating at the time in the United States. There were mutterings of discontent on the part of men whose conscience had been touched by what they had read or heard of Walther's work. The confessional writings of the Church were being studied, present conditions and practices were being measured and tested by the standards of the Lutheran Church, and protests for conscience' sake were being raised against deviations from the Lutheran norm. Some of these documents deserve to be handed down to posterity, in order that our children who are growing away from the use of the language of their fathers may be enabled to recall at a later time what were the distressing conditions out of which the Missouri Synod ultimately arose, and what were the elements that contributed toward its growth and gave it the distinguishing marks that still characterize this Synod.

On January 24, 1846, Walther published the following article: "In No. 21 of *Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, dated December 18th *ult.*, we find a document which eight Lutheran pastors and one teacher have addressed to the President of the General Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Ohio. In this document they state the reasons which have compelled them to sever their connection with the Synod aforementioned. They say: "The *first* of these reasons is strictly of a churchly and confessional character, and rests on certain facts which have rendered it questionable to us whether the Synod is sincere and definite in its position and tendency as a church, and whether it takes a decided stand over and against the unionism of our times. These facts are as follows:

"(1) A year ago a conference in East Ohio had submitted to the Synod the question: Which synods are Lutheran? Synod deferred action on this question until the next year, but tabled the question at its last convention. In the mean time the spokesmen of the so-called Lutheran General Synod, which has but recently called itself the American Lutheran Church, are willfully treading the doctrine of our Church on the Sacraments under foot, and are setting up an anti-Lutheran practice, that of the Methodists, which is hostile to our Church.

"(2) Some of the undersigned had requested the Synod to remove the unionistic formula of distribution now in use among us at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, which formula begins: "Christ says," etc. Their petition was refused; on the contrary, it was recommended to the members of the Synod as being in accordance with their duty that in their official acts they use the Book of Forms introduced in 1842. This book is unchurchly and Calvinistic in all the formulas for absolution which it presents, and in its form for conferring ordination does not make the Confessions of the Lutheran Church binding upon the applicant.

"(3) An important petition had been addressed to the Synod by some of the undersigned. The petition asked,

“a) That the Synod officially accept all the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church;

“b) That the Synod raise a protest against the false teaching of the so-called Lutheran General Synod regarding the Sacrament;

“c) That the Synod thoroughly revise its method of examining candidates for the ministry;

“d) That the Synod, when admitting a candidate to ordination, make all the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church binding upon him;

“e) That the Synod do not permit its ministers to serve Reformed-Lutheran congregations, thus practically approving of the false unionism of our time.

“This petition was delayed and, because of insignificant technical errors of the committee reporting on the same, was recommitted. Finally, when the petitioners had withdrawn their petition, and had offered only this brief resolution: That the Synod henceforth accept all the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and solemnly enjoin upon its candidates for ordination to consider themselves bound by the same,—action upon this matter, in a session of the Ministerium, was again postponed for three years. It was plain to us, from these transactions, that the Synod, in the majority of its members, possessed no sincere willingness to staunchly represent our Church in its battle with the false unionism of our times.

“As a *second* reason for their separation the undersigned offer the fact, that the Synod has, in a faithless manner and contrary to the demands of justice, deprived the Seminary at Columbus, which is the only Seminary among the four Lutheran Seminaries in our country that is *German* by its constitution, of its German character.’

“The document concludes as follows: ‘Inasmuch, then, as the Synod has decidedly violated the original constitution of the Seminary, and—this being, indeed, the main reason for

our separation—inasmuch as the Synod takes the crying need of our Church and the inroads which a false unionism is making upon it so little to heart that it refuses to grant even the justest petitions for meeting the most grievous needs of the Church; and inasmuch as the Synod has no ears and eyes for oral and written explanations of these petitions, and at this moment can hardly be regarded as acting in sheer ignorance; therefore we consider ourselves in duty bound to quit the synodical organization to which we have belonged hitherto. In conclusion, we beg to offer the urgent and cordial request that the Synod may not continue in its present state, and we implore the Synod for Christ's sake, for the sake of the souls which were dearly bought by Christ, for the sake of the pure and unadulterated Confessions of our Church, and for the sake of the heavy responsibility resting upon the Synod, no longer, from fear or favor of men, to shun and flee from the good fight and from offering its sincere testimony against the false unionism and syncretism of our times.

“‘FRIEDR. WINKLER, *Lutheran Pastor at Detroit, Mich.*

“‘DR. W. SIHLER, *Lutheran Pastor at Fort Wayne.*

“‘A. SCHMIDT, *Pastor in Cleveland.*

“‘J. G. BUERGER, *Pastor in Hancock Co.*

“‘J. A. ERNST, *Pastor of the German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation at Neudettelsau, Union Co., O.*

“‘WILH. RICHMANN, *Lutheran Pastor in Bern Township, Fairfield Co., O.*

“‘ANDR. SAUPERT, *Lutheran Pastor in Evansville, Vanderburg Co., Ind.*

“‘AUG. SELLE, *German Evangelical Pastor in Columbiana Co., O.*

“‘E. A. SCHUERMANN, *Teacher of the First German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation at Pittsburg.*

“‘Cleveland, O., September 18, 1845.’

“It is with profound grief that we report these transactions to our readers. They show us, alas! that in America, too, no denomination has suffered such a grievous decay as the society of those who call themselves ‘*Lutheran.*’ There is greater eagerness among all the sects of this country to preserve the false doctrines upon which they were founded, and which have given them their peculiar stamp, than there is determination among the so-called Lutherans of our country to keep the holy and pure doctrine, founded upon the clear Word of God, which by the ineffable grace of God has been committed to them. Aye, we behold the American Lutheran Church dominated, not only by carelessness and indifference, but even by hostility to the genuine Lutheran Church. The Lutheran Church of our country has retained nothing but the name; it has lost the old truth and the spirit of the old confessors.

“However, from the above report we also see that there is no reason why we should despair altogether of the subsistence of the Lutheran Church in America. It is manifest that God has taken His fan in hand to cleanse His threshing-floor, and to winnow His wheat. God is plainly resolved no longer to wink at the secret thieving of false saints and their fishing in troubled waters. God is beginning again, here and there, to open the eyes of some who view with horror the defection of which the Lutherans have become guilty. God is again raising up men here and there who call aloud, summoning their brethren to return to their first love which they have forsaken. God be praised! after a long winter the voice of the turtle is again heard in our land. (Song of Sol. 2, 11—13.) Up, up, then, my brethren! let us not sit by idly while false brethren are becoming more firmly united all the time for the purpose of undermining and removing the foundation of our Church. These false brethren, fighting treacherously as they do under our name, are more dangerous than our declared enemies: they are allied with our enemies, and yet dwell in our camp. True, He that sitteth in the heavens laughs, and the Lord hath them

in derision; for, 'though the sea roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.' However, while it is impossible to force Luther's doctrine, that is, the Word of God, out of the *world*, it is easily possible that *we* may lose our treasure (2 John 8. 9), and may be rejected as unfaithful stewards, if we do not hold fast the faithful Word (Tit. 1, 9—11), and earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3). Therefore, let us, who do not make merely a hypocritical pretense of the Lutheran name, but mean to be and remain Lutherans in truth and deed, — let us close ranks, and rally again around the banner of the old, unalterable doctrine of our Church. Let us unite in prayer, asking God to arise for our help, that we may boldly teach His Word.¹⁾ Let us unite for the faithful confession of the truth. Let us unite for making war, with the sword of the Spirit, upon all falsifications of the truth. Let us unite for bearing the reproach with which the Lord is wont to distinguish His servants. Though we may not hope that by our united action the Church in these last grievous days will once more be brought to a flourishing and glorious condition, still we need not give up all hope that our testimony and our fighting will not be altogether in vain. We may be confident that we shall achieve praise for the Lord, and save many a soul from the error of its way."²⁾

On August 8, 1846, Walther published the following communication: —

"In the southern part of Michigan there are several colonies which were founded for the greater part by emigrants who originally were Lutherans. These people were first served with the Word and the Sacraments by the Reverend Schmidt of Ann Arbor, who later trained a few young men for the

1) See Luther's rendering of Ps. 12, 5.

2) *Der Lutheraner* 2, 42 f.

ministry and organized a so-called mission-synod with them. Their chief aim was directed toward establishing a mission among the Indians of Michigan, and they adopted the name 'German Lutheran Synod of Michigan.' Pastor Schmidt of Ann Arbor had also served the Lutheran congregation at Monroe. To the pastorate of this congregation Hattstaedt, a pupil of the Lutheran pastor Loehe in Franconian Bavaria, was called. Hattstaedt thus was brought into the membership of the Synod aforementioned. While he found in this Synod a great deal of ignorance as to what Lutheranism is, he found also that acceptance of all the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church of the pure confession was obligatory upon the members, and apparently there was the honest inclination to practice according to the Confessions. This induced Hattstaedt to call the attention of friends in the old country to this Synod and to its activity among the Indians in Michigan. As a result, the Franconians entered into a correspondence with the Michigan Synod, and, on receiving the definite statement that the Michigan Synod would carry on its mission on a strictly Lutheran basis, and would bind all its missionaries to adhere to all the confessional writings of our Church, the Franconians united with the Michigan Synod in a cooperative movement. The cooperation was begun in this way: The Lutheran candidates of the ministry Trautmann and Lochner were delegated to serve vacant German Lutheran congregations within the Synod of Michigan, and a small German Lutheran mission congregation, with its duly called pastor, A. Craemer, started from Franconia to aid in the mission to the Indians. Their plan was to locate somewhere on the Cass River, in the County of Saginaw, in the State of Michigan, and to carry on a mission among the Indians at Siboying, jointly with the missionaries that had come from Ann Arbor. Besides, Franconian Lutherans sent large sums of money for the support of this mission. In the mean time, Rev. Dumser, an alumnus of the Basle Mission Institute, had arrived to serve the station at Siboying. This gentleman had been ordained in the old

country, however, without having been bound to the Confessions of our Church. He declared later that he must regard an unreserved restriction to the Confessions of our Church as a violation of his conscience. In addition, the fact was revealed that at a former time the so-called Lutheran Synod of Michigan had openly served several union congregations *as such* with the Word and the Sacraments. Pastors Hattstaedt, Craemer, Trautmann, and Lochner at once united in a protest against these offensive practices. They insisted that the un-Lutheran missionary Dumser must be expelled, and that the Synod must vindicate itself from the charge of having served union congregations *as such*. However, at the convention of the Michigan Synod in June of this year, there was a miscarriage of the very first motion, to expel the un-Lutheran missionary Dumser, who persisted in his refusal to be bound to the Confessions of our Church without reservation. Accordingly, Pastors Hattstaedt, Craemer, Trautmann, and Lochner felt in conscience bound, not only to sever their connection with the Synod of Michigan and to protest against the action of the Synod in failing to vindicate itself, but also to deposit with the President of the Synod the reasons for their withdrawal in the exact form in which they are given below."

From the "Declaration of Withdrawal" which is appended at the end of the communication, we learn that the Franconian pastors had first offered their resolution to expel Dumser at a conference meeting called for that purpose, and that this conference had referred the entire matter to the Synod for action at its next convention. The Synod met on June 24th and the following days. The Franconian pastors renewed their protest against the membership of Dumser, but before the Synod took action on their protest, the Mission Board of the Synod had made a report, recommending that Dumser be confirmed in his office and sent to the post for which he had been intended.

The "Declaration" closes with these words:

"We part from the Synod with sincere grief because of the un-Lutheran position which the Synod maintains in spite

of the clear testimony which we have offered. We pray the Lord of the Church that He may soon lead the Synod of Michigan to see, and to be convinced, that its position is dangerous, especially amid the conditions prevailing among the churches of our country; and that it is necessary for our dear Church of the pure confession, and for the prosperous operation of Lutheran Synods, to be firm and decided in *doctrine* and *practice*.

“Ann Arbor, Washtenaw Co., Mich. On June 25, 1846, the anniversary of the presentation of the Augsburg Confession.

“W. HATTSTAEDT, *Pastor at Monroe, Mich.*

“A. CRAEMER, *Pastor of the Lutheran Mission congregation at Frankenmuth, Saginaw Co., Mich.*

“FR. LOCHNER, *Pastor at Toledo, O.*

“J. TRAUTMANN, *Pastor at Danbury, O.*”³⁾

While these events were taking place in the West, a voice of dissent and protest was also being raised in the East. Fr. Wyneken, after completing his famous missionary tours through Western Ohio, Northern Indiana, and Southern Michigan, had consented to become the pastor of the Second Lutheran Church at Baltimore. He thus came to affiliate with the Pennsylvania Synod and, through that, with the General Synod. The spirit of this man had been exhibited to the readers of *Der Lutheraner* in the first volume,⁴⁾ when Walther announced his stirring brochure which summoned aid from Germany to relieve the spiritual distress of the scattered Lutherans of America. Even at that early date, Wyneken had declared against the unionistic tendency dominant in the American Lutheran Church. What he saw in his own Synod, made him a still more determined opponent to the hybrid Lutheranism of his day. His testimony was offered in behalf of consistent Lutheran teaching and practice within his own Synod, and met with similar results as that of the brethren noted. He, too, was ultimately compelled to withdraw from

3) *Der Lutheraner* 2, 98 f.

4) p. 31.

a body that proved unwilling to adopt the true basis of our Church as a norm for its doctrine and polity. And the rebuffs with which Wyneken met in the East drew him into closer union with the stalwart defenders of genuine Lutheranism whom he beheld arising in the West.

In the communication describing the withdrawal of the Franconian pastors from the Synod of Michigan, the following remark occurs: "The brethren who have thus withdrawn will at once join the genuinely Lutheran Synod which is about to be organized at Fort Wayne, Ind." ⁵⁾ Thus, the sad disintegration which we had to note above was not a mere splitting up of the forces of Lutheranism in a senseless and selfish striving for individual ideas and pretensions. The disintegrating parts began to coalesce, and out of all the disunion with which the synodical bodies in those days were threatened there was to grow a union on a strictly confessional basis.

(To be continued.)