

# THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY.

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VOL. XV.

APRIL, 1911.

No. 2.

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## WALTHER THE LUTHERAN.

“The Lutheran Church of this country mourns the departure of a spiritual father. . . . A very particular mission to the Lutheran Church of this century had been entrusted by God to this man”<sup>1)</sup>— pensively the eye rests on these simple, yet far-reaching statements, which suggest two splendid *Richtlinien* for reflection: Walther and the Lutheran Church of America; Walther and the Lutheran Church of the Nineteenth Century.

The words quoted were uttered on May 15, 1887, at Walther's bier, when the remains of the great American Lutheran were about to be transferred from Concordia Seminary, whose President and best-known professor he had been, to “old Trinity,” the Lutheran mother-church of St. Louis, whose beloved *pastor primarius* he had been up to the hour of his death. The speaker, Walther's pastor, was a man not given to excessive praising or idolizing of men. The statements which he made regarding his famous parishioner were a sober estimate of Walther's worth, and they were spoken reverently and in the fear of God. In the same spirit we study these words, now that the centenary of Walther's birth is upon us, and seek to verify their scope and applicableness.

The Walther memorial of this year is to witness no hero-worship on the part of Missourians, no fulsome eulogies, no injudicious and unreflecting exaltation of human achieve-

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1) *Lutheraner* 1887, p. 85.

ments. Missourians may think much of Walther personally, as a scholar, an author, an administrator, a friend. These are minor matters. But Walther's life and work can be viewed as a fact, a deed of divine Providence and Mercy. *As such* it deserves study. God *did* intend something particular when He raised up this man and guided him as He has done. It has been said by a non-Missourian that, in sending Walther, God took pity on the Lutheran Church of America.<sup>2)</sup> Another writer, not a Missourian, sums up his estimate of Walther in these words: "From every part of the Lutheran Church in the Old World and the New his death elicited the testimony: A great one in Israel is fallen! . . . His was, indeed, an epoch-making personality, and from his activity mighty impulses radiated to Lutherans in all parts of the world. 'I bow my head to him in humility,' said the President of the General Lutheran Conference, Dr. Kliefoth, at the convention in Hamburg, in 1887."<sup>3)</sup>—We have here exactly the same ideas as above, only differently worded: Walther's influence on the Lutheran Church of America, and of the Nineteenth Century. And this influence is dated back to God as the cause.

Whatever God accomplishes is to the child of God a matter of interest and an affair of moment, from which he draws wholesome lessons of enlightenment and comfort. Outside of what *God* achieved through Walther everything else is, at best, an interesting reminiscence, a gratefully cherished remembrance, but no more. These things will vanish, have already vanished to a great extent; the divine work for which Walther served as a tool will abide. It has become a historical fact. It has been worked into the texture and fabric of Lutheranism. Ingratitude may bury it in oblivion; bias may minimize its value; but it cannot be removed. It is there to stay. While God's Word and Luther's doctrine abide to rouse Lutheran consciousness and to quicken the Lutheran

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2) Dr. Kummer in PRE2, vol. 18, p. 695, quoting the General Council publication *Pilger durch Welt und Kirche*, vol. 5, p. 370.

3) Dr. Spaeth in PRE3, vol. 20, p. 848.

conscience, the work of Walther will again and again assert its value and exert its power. Since, let us say, 1844, the year when *Der Lutheraner* began to be published, it is simply impossible to write a true history of Lutheranism without taking into account the mighty influences that emanated from Walther.

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At the time when Walther began his public career as an expounder of Lutheranism, Dr. Schmucker was the acknowledged oracle of the Lutheran Church in America. His "Elementary Course of Biblical Theology, translated from the work of Professors Storr and Flatt" appeared in its second edition in 1836; and his "Elements of Popular Theology; with occasional references to the Doctrines of the Reformation, as avowed before the Diet at Augsburg in MDXXX" was running in its sixth edition in 1848. "Portraiture of Lutheranism," by the same author, was "a discourse delivered by request at the consecration of the First English Lutheran Church, Pittsburg, October 4, 1840, during the session of the Synod of West Pennsylvania, and published by resolution of said body." This discourse with a number of others, was expanded into "The American Lutheran Church, Historically, Doctrinally, and Practically Delineated," which came out in its sixth edition in 1853. A few selections from these writings will lead us to understand what a shock American Lutheranism received, when Walther's voice rang out in the land,—and how necessary it was that American Lutheranism should receive just such a shock.

"The Lutheran Church, in the United States, . . . has indeed always regarded the Augsburg Confession as the authorized summary of her doctrines, but has not required any oath of obligation to all its contents. The General Synod of the Lutheran Church has adopted only the 21 doctrinal articles, omitting even the condemnatory clauses of these, and also the entire Catalogue of Abuses corrected. No minister, however, considers himself bound to believe every sentiment contained

in these twenty-one articles, but only the fundamental doctrines. Accordingly, the pledge of adoption required at licensure and ordination is couched in the following terms:

“1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and the *only infallible* rule of faith and practice?

“2. Do you believe that the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God are taught, in a manner *substantially* correct, in the doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession?

“The Lutheran divines of this country are not willing to bind either themselves or others to anything more than the fundamental doctrines of the Christian revelation, believing that an immense mass of evil has resulted to the Church of God from the rigid requisition of extensive and detailed creeds. The Savior and His apostles have left no other creed than that contained in the Scriptures, and although experience and the nature of the case require some mutual agreement as to the doctrines to be inculcated by the ministry in any portion of the Church of Christ, lest one should demolish what the other is laboring to build up, yet we can see no sufficient warrant for any Christian Church to require as a term of admission or communion greater conformity of view than is requisite to harmony of feeling and successful cooperation, in extending the kingdom of Christ.

“What unshackled friend of truth can doubt that the introduction of so many minor ramifications of doctrine into Modern Confessions of faith, and the requisition of them all as terms of ecclesiastical admission and communion, destroyed the natural estimate which every unbiased mind would form of the relative importance of each? Who can doubt that men were thus led to regard and denounce as heretics the members of other communions, who held as cordially as they themselves did, all the essentials of the Christian system, and in the eyes of the great Head of the Church were perhaps more acceptable than their self-erected judges? In short, it cannot be denied that the enormous amplitude of the Protestant Symbols, and

the unqualified assent to them, which was for a long time required in all the churches, and is even now demanded in some, were and ever would be a bone of endless contention, and the prolific mother of *bigotry* and *sectarianism*. Had the early Protestants endeavored to select the principal and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, required a belief of them from all applicants for admission into their ranks, and agreed among themselves that discrepancy of views on matters of non-fundamental nature should neither be a bar to ecclesiastical communion nor fraternal affection, they would have saved the Church from the curse of those dissensions by which piety was in a degree destroyed, and, on several occasions, the very foundations of Protestantism shaken. What can be more painful to the true Christian than to witness those who love the Lord Jesus wasting their strength in mutual crimination for departure from some jot or tittle of a creed, not involving the grand scheme of Gospel truth, nor clearly determined in Scripture, which ought to be directed against the enemies of the cross, which ought to be expended in bringing sinners to Christ?

“But although the Lutheran divines are strenuous advocates for liberty of thought and free, untrammelled investigation of God’s Word, there is really as much doctrinal agreement and more harmony of feeling among them than is found in any other church in America. Indeed, we do not hesitate to record it as our deliberate opinion that full latitude of investigation within the bounds of fundamentals is better calculated to beget unity of faith than extensive symbolic restrictions. How can that man be an impartial inquirer after truth, how can he throw open his soul to the full influences of evidence, who knows that exclusion from his ecclesiastical connections, ejection from his pastoral charge, and the exposure of his dependent family to poverty and want, would be the consequence, if his investigations should result in the rejection of a single article in his confession of faith?”<sup>4)</sup>

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4) *Popular Theology*, pp. 49 ff.

The above remarks are from a work, "explanatory of the doctrines of the Lutheran Church, and undertaken by request of the General Synod of said Church." It was "designed chiefly for private Christians and theological students." Hence, this work comes backed with the authority of the leading Lutheran organization of the country, and it has a formative mission: its aim is to raise the Lutheran *comme il faut*, a suave, urbane, "Christian" gentleman, who says to you: "Brother, we agree to disagree. What profit is there to either of us in quarreling over non-essentials? We condemn no one, except persons who will trammel our thought and refuse to pay us our perquisites. It is a pity those old confessional standards were ever raised. If we have Christ and the apostles on our side, is not that sufficient?"

We are naturally desirous to ascertain what a Lutheran of this *genus* has learned from Christ and His apostles.— On the inspiration of the sacred writers the same author expresses himself as follows: "Matt. 13, 52; 10, 27. There certainly were instances in which the apostles were to speak without any preparation, Luke 21, 14, and in which their superior helper, who promised to supply the want of preparation, must necessarily do more than merely inspire them with intrepidity and presence of mind; since otherwise they could not dispense with previous reflection, so necessary to give value and effect to their communications. . . . But if special aid was given whenever it was necessary, it follows that when it was not given, it would have been superfluous; and, therefore, that when the apostles were left to the use of their own powers, their instructions were no less conformable to the will of their divine Instructor than when they were directed by His special aid. . . . The apostles doubtless thought for themselves, that is, exercised their natural faculties, and communicated their own thoughts, both in their oral and written instructions. . . . As far as the credibility of the apostolical instruction is concerned, it is a matter of perfect indifference whether we believe that the Spirit of God sug-

gested the very words in which those instructions were uttered or written, or whether the Spirit only guided and aided them, from time to time, so far as necessary. The former supposition, however, does not seem to comport with the diversity of style and arrangement in the apostolical writings."<sup>5)</sup>—  
 "That nothing may be advanced to which the most anxious and scrutinizing examination of Christianity can attach the least shadow of doubt, I shall seldom rely, exclusively, on proofs derived from the antilegomena of the New Testament; or on the authority of those books of the Old Testament which are not explicitly quoted in the New, as divine; or on books, the authority of which depends not merely on their historical credibility, but also on the divine authority of Mark and Luke."<sup>6)</sup>

That there is considerable rationalistic leaven in this exhibition of the formal principle of the Reformation goes without saying. The material principle fares little better. The imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity and the damnable-ness of man's natural condition under sin, the atonement of Christ, by which the sinner world has been reconciled to God, prior to any person's faith in the vicarious work of Christ, the doctrine of salvation by faith, exclusive of any human merit, are presented on the ground of copious and pertinent Scripture texts. Notwithstanding this, the author has no scruple in saying: "All this (the blessings of salvation) is suspended on the condition that we believe the doctrine concerning the salvation." The author acknowledges that faith "is by no means the meritorious cause of our salvation. . . . Nor has this confidence in the Redeemer so high an intrinsic value as to entitle us to the great salvation which is promised to believers, as a merited reward. Faith is not really a virtue or righteousness, by which we become worthy of so great a salvation; . . . faith in the promises of God presupposes the truth of those promises, and does not create it by first believing it." Nevertheless he insists that "the condition of sal-

5) *Biblical Theology*, p. 127 f. 144 f.

6) *Ibid.*, p. 177.

vation is, that we should believe; he urges the force of "if" in Rom. 10, 9, of *ἐπὶ πίστει* in Gal. 2, 16, and paraphrases Gal. 3, 11: "He who is justified on account of his faith" (in the unmerited pardon of God) "shall be saved."<sup>7)</sup>—His views of the relation of faith to predestination are on the same line. "For those, concerning whom He foresaw that they would belong to His people, He appointed a glory, etc. . . . We shall know, when the event arrives, what God foresaw concerning us; and until then it is enough for us to know, and of this we may be fully convinced, that it is the most sincere and earnest will of God actually to bestow the offered salvation on all those who are called; and on the other hand, that it is necessary for us to use our utmost and untiring exertions to accomplish this earnest will of God, in the attainment of which He Himself cooperates in the most active manner (2 Pet. 1, 3); and that our exertions must be continued even after we have attained a distinguished grade among the pious (*ἐκλεκτοί* in the more specific sense), and have made progress in the path of holiness. If we have not this conviction, we shall be in danger of being discouraged, or of falling into doubts as to our salvation, or of being indolent or indifferent, and thus, perhaps, not perform the condition on which our salvation is suspended. If we do submit to the condition on which alone God is willing to save us, and persevere unto the end, it will appear that God foresaw that we should continue in the faith and attain the promised salvation." And so as to leave no doubt that he holds the *intuitu fidei finalis*-view of predestination, the author adds: "But the reason why we fulfill or neglect to fulfill the condition appointed by God is not *because* God foresaw that we would do so."<sup>8)</sup>

In Sec. 69 the author defends the thesis: "Faithful obedience to the dictates of conscience is, in adults, the condition of participation in the salvation purchased by Christ;" in Sec. 72 the thesis: "The salvation of those to whom a

7) Ibid., pp. 565 ff.

8) Ibid., pp. 409. 411.



divine revelation was given, is suspended on their faithfulness in the use of it.”<sup>9)</sup>

The origin of faith is veiled in much obscurity in the author's account of Biblical teaching. Neither in what he says on the subject of the call, nor of repentance, nor on the influences of divine grace do we find a clear, unqualified statement that faith, as Luther says, “is a divine work in us.” It is plainly synergistic teaching when the author (p. 559) says: “Nor are those religious feelings which by the divine aid are excited and cherished within us for the purpose of assisting us in our conflict with the sinful propensities of our nature, either independent of our knowledge of divine truth, or contrary to the principles of our moral nature. On the contrary, they are in perfect accord with our religious knowledge, and are in one respect within the power of man; he can cherish and obey them, and act in conformity to those views of religious truth (Matt. 13, 23. 19) with which they are connected (Rom. 8, 4. 13), or by a different course of conduct he can neglect and suppress them.” In a Lutheran compend of Biblical Theology it is certainly startling to find the following: “It is not an objectionable phraseology to say that our salvation is bestowed on man in consequence of his change of mind and reformation of life, or, that it is the reward of his reformation.” The virus is not extracted from this un-Lutheran and un-Christian statement by the sentence which follows: “But faith, and the reformation of life necessarily connected with it, which is certainly the condition on which an undeserved salvation is graciously bestowed on man, must by no means be regarded as the meritorious cause of this salvation.”<sup>10)</sup> To preach salvation by grace thus is simply to render every genuine conception of grace chimerical and ridiculous.

One is led to question whether the author is really in earnest in teaching a necessity of faith in Christ, when reading the following: “Those who lived before Christ (or since

9) Ibid., pp. 395. 402.

10) Ibid., p. 588 f.

that time), and yet knew nothing of a Redeemer, will doubtless partake of that salvation purchased for every individual of the human family, if they have only cherished a faith in God as far as their circumstances rendered it possible, and acted in obedience to the dictates of this faith. Nor will the fact that they knew nothing of this atonement prevent its application to them." "That unbelief, *ἀπιστία*, which (according to John 3, 18. 36; Mark 16, 16) subjects its possessor to the sentence of damnation, is not even possible with those who have never heard the Gospel. John 15, 22; Rom. 10, 14. And those passages themselves presuppose in the unbeliever an acquaintance with the Gospel. Comp. John 3, 19. 32—34; Mark 16, 15; John 6, 40; 14, 21. . . . Rom. 8, 29, etc., does not exclude those who have not been called, from the hope of salvation. This remark, combined with Illustration X and §§ 69. 72, form a reply to the objection which has been urged to the Christian religion: 'that the ethical system of Jesus appears to degenerate into a narrow particularism (sectarianism), by teaching that we must first believe in Jesus Himself, in order to become truly reformed and acceptable to God and eternally happy.' And it likewise affords an answer to the question, 'What are the prospects of those who never had an opportunity to hear Jesus? Are they incapable of any virtue truly acceptable to God? And what is the situation of those who have indeed heard of Jesus, but have been unable, though sincere in their inquiries, to convince themselves of some of the doctrines which He taught, *e. g.*, relative to His person? Is faith in theoretical doctrines anything of a meritorious nature?"<sup>11)</sup> A view such as this is sufficiently broad to be mistaken, at least, for Universalism.

Strange, too, in a Lutheran, is what the author says in the chapter on "Influences of Grace." We meet here with the well-known distinction of enthusiasm. "The Scriptures clearly distinguish between the influence of the doctrines and the direct or immediate influence of God. 1 Cor. 3, 6. 7: 'I have planted,

11) *Ibid.*, pp. 395. 400.

Apollos watered, but God gave the increase,' etc. Here the divine influence (*ὁ θεὸς ἀξάνων*, God gave the increase) is distinguished from the labors of the preachers ('planting' and 'watering') and, consequently, from the doctrines themselves, and the influence of God on the preaching. Phil. 2, 12. 13: 'Labor at the salvation of others with modesty and respect for them' (?), *φρόβῳ καὶ τρόμῳ*,—for their salvation is not the fruit of your labor alone; but God must also exert an influence on them before they are willing and able to obey the doctrines of the Gospel; it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do (accomplish). In 2 Thess. 2, 15—17, the agency of God and Christ is distinguished from the influence of the apostolical doctrines (vv. 16. 17), Eph. 3, 16, that He (the Father) would grant unto you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might (powerfully strengthened) by His Spirit in the inner man. Even if this passage did not attribute the strengthening of the heart to the Spirit, in an immediate manner; if it described this effect merely as a mediate one, through the instrumentality of the Word, still it would clearly inculcate an influence distinct from the Word; for it contains a prayer to God, that He might cooperate with the Word (which was previously known), and render it effectual in confirming the heart. But a comparison of the 20th verse with ch. 1, 19 renders it probable that the words 'strengthened with might,' *δυνάμει κραταιωθῆναι*, refer to some internal influence of God, which internal influence produced faith in the Christians of those days (1, 19), and is still operative in the hearts of believers (3, 20), through the Holy Spirit. Rom. 8, 9. 11. 14. 16; 5, 5."<sup>12</sup>)

In Sec. 105 the author defends the thesis: "The commixture of good and bad in the Church does not justify us in seceding from it." In the course of the discussion he approaches the question of the necessity of church discipline, and says: "Although it is impossible entirely to prevent the occurrence of snares (offenses, Luke 17, 1), they are to be

12) Ibid., p. 554 f.

avoided as much as possible, for Paul, when speaking of the incestuous person, tells us that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (1 Cor. 5, 6); and Christ reproved the pastors or angels of the churches of Pergamus and Thyatira for tolerating certain seducers, Rev. 2, 6. 14. 20. Nevertheless, every individual Christian is to beware, lest he arrogate to himself an authority which belongs only to the Church and not to individuals, 1 Cor. 5, 2. 13. The incestuous person was condemned, not by an individual, but by the majority of the church members (who coincided with Paul in opinion); and Paul says (2 Cor. 2, 6): 'Sufficient unto such an one is the punishment which was inflicted by many.' Let no one make encroachments on the regulations of the church, but, 1 Cor. 14, 33, let all things be done decently and in order. (11, 16.) There are indeed certain measures which an individual may take, such as exhortation (1 Thess. 5, 14; 2 Thess. 3, 15) and shunning intercourse with unworthy members of the church (v. 14; 1 Cor. 5, 9—11); but those measures must not be taken in an irregular manner (Matt. 7, 6; Eph. 5, 16; comp. Col. 4, 5 and 6), or at an unseasonable time, or in such a way as shall interfere with the jurisdiction of the civil government. The civil government is now so intimately interwoven with the Church that we cannot judge everything by the standard of the ancient Christian Church, which had no connection with the government of the state, and therefore, could have more efficient internal regulations, without being in danger of interfering with civil liberty and rights. It is the duty of the Church to counteract all evils as far as possible, and, in short, to conduct all things as circumstances may dictate, so that their measures may not entail greater evils on the Church whose prosperity they were intended to subserve. Thus Paul advises the restoration of the incestuous person, because he feared that its procrastination might lead some to slander his character, by which means Satan would strive to alienate the affections of the people from him, and thereby from Christ.—In a future world, the Church

will attain the state for which she was intended, namely, that of entire purity and perfection." Witness also the author's great concern in behalf of errorists, in the following: "I admit, it is possible that those who depart from the public standard may have the more correct opinions, that, though they are considered to be in error, truth may be on their side (2 Cor. 6, 8) — I admit, that for this very reason it is the duty of those to whom the care of the Church is committed, and who are qualified for the investigation, impartially to weigh the truth and importance of the disputed doctrine, and if it be found true, to incorporate it with the acknowledged standard, or, if it seem doubtful which of the opposite opinions is more correct, to leave the adoption of either optional with the ministers of the Church."<sup>13</sup>) — Indifferentists and syncretists could easily find shelter under such views as these.

When a theologian holding views like those set forth above undertakes to "portray" Lutheranism, we would naturally expect to see a caricature. Such Dr. Schmucker has produced. We shall quote only one statement, which sufficiently characterizes the book and the man who did not blush to publish it under his official title, "First Professor in the Theological Seminary of the General Synod of the Lutheran Church, Gettysburg, Pa." Speaking of the "Progressive Development of the Lutheran Church," the author enumerates a number of "improvements." "The fifth item of improvement in the Lutheran Church is the more *systematic adjustment of her doctrines*. Luther was so incessantly employed in the great work of reforming the Church from the corruptions and superstitions of Rome that he had little leisure for abstract reflections on the reciprocal relations of the Scripture doctrines and on the entire and minute consistency of his views with each other. It is certain that in the earlier part of his life he believed the Augustinian view of predestination. His work, *On the Bondage of the Will*, published in 1525, must put this ques-

13) *Ibid.*, pp. 500. 505.

tion to rest. But he, at the same time, entertained other views inconsistent with this. Melancthon, who had embraced Luther's unadjusted views of doctrine, led the way in the process of harmonizing their conflicting elements, by the rejection of absolute predestination. Luther himself adopted these modifications, and, long before he died, preached and taught what have ever since been the doctrines of the Lutheran standards. The particulars of this interesting process are detailed in Dr. Plank's invaluable 'History of the Rise, Changes, and Formation of the Protestant System of Doctrines.' During the reign of infidelity in Europe, when an unbaptized philosophy had desecrated the sanctuary of God, and so far effaced all lineaments and extinguished all attachment to genuine Protestant Christianity that even a Buonaparte could contemplate as a matter of state policy the reestablishment of the Romish religion over all Protestant Germany, the doctrines of great reformers were forsaken by many. But thanks be to God, the cause of truth is again prospering, orthodoxy is again preponderant in Germany; and in the Lutheran Church in this country the great doctrines of the Reformation are taught as universally as in any other denomination of Christians in our land." (This grateful reflection might seem a psychological riddle. We bear in mind that the author's view as to what are "the great doctrines of the Reformation" is altogether at variance with the view which the Lutheran Church entertains on this subject. In reality, Dr. Schmucker's expressions of grateful admiration are extremely pathetic. They show to what extent he had lost his Lutheran sensorium.)

"The sixth feature of improvement is the adoption of a more regular and rigid system of church government and discipline in this country. The union between Church and State has prevented the adoption of an independent and thoroughly Scriptural discipline in the Lutheran, as well as in all the other established churches of Europe. Kings and princes are not willing to be disciplined by humble ministers and elders. Accordingly, the systems of discipline in different provinces

and kingdoms are different, and generally very lax. In this country our General Synod has adopted and recommended a system which, it is believed, contains all the prescriptions of the Savior and His apostles, and all that appeared most valuable in the systems of the different other churches. The government and discipline of each individual church is essentially like that of our Presbyterian brethren. Our Synods, also, in the structure and powers, most resemble their presbyteries, having fewer formalities in their proceedings, and frequently couching their decisions in the form of recommendations. Our General Synod is wholly an advisory body, resembling the consociations of the Congregational churches in New England. In addition to these regular ecclesiastical bodies constituting our system of government, we have special conferences for the purpose of holding stated protracted meetings. These are subdivisions of synods, containing ordinarily from five to ten ministers each, who are annually to hold several protracted meetings within the bounds of their district. The chief object of these meetings is, to awaken and convert sinners, and to edify believers by close, practical preaching. This feature mainly resembles the quarterly meetings of our Methodist brethren, and presents to pious and zealous ministers, who are thirsting for the salvation of souls, the most direct opportunity they can desire to glorify God and advance His spiritual kingdom. Yet all these meetings are to be conducted, as the Scriptures enjoin, 'decently and in order.' This system of government is not yet adopted by all our synods; yet its general features, with perhaps a greater admixture of Congregationalism, substantially pervade those synods also which have not yet united with the General Synod." (Some time prior to writing the above the author had become "extensively known, beyond the bounds of his own church, both in America and England," by his "Fraternal Appeal" to the American churches on Christian union. So state D. Harbaugh and J. B. Butler, who wrote the preface to the edition from which we are quoting. On the 20th and 30th of March, 1854, a short

time after Dr. Schmucker's book had appeared in its sixth edition, Dr. Philip Schaff lectured at Berlin "before a select assembly of ladies and gentlemen, as part of the course of weekly lectures held there on various topics by Drs. Hofmann, Nitzsch, Stahl, Hengstenberg, Tholuck, Mueller, Schmieder, Ritter, and other distinguished scholars." Dr. Schaff's topic was: "America: A Sketch of the Political, Social, and Religious Character of the United States of North America." In the second lecture the lecturer spoke of the American churches. He related the following incident: "When the Reformed Dr. Nevin, in 1846, vindicated the Calvinistic doctrine of a real spiritual presence and a real participation by faith of the body and blood of Christ, that is, the life-power of His humanity, the editor of the *Lutheran Observer* attacked and ridiculed this view as Romanizing, superstitious, and senseless. Dr. Schmucker adopts the Puritanic, essentially Zuinglian theory prevalent in America, and in a special article on this subject rejects not only the substantial, but even the dynamic or virtual presence of the human nature of the Redeemer, declaring that 'there is no real or actual presence of the glorified human nature of the Savior, either substantial or influential, nor anything mysterious or supernatural in the Eucharist.' Anywhere in Germany this would not even be called Zuinglianism, much less Lutheranism, but the purest Rationalism of common sense. Even Bretschneider and Wegscheider leave as much as this of that holy mystery of faith, that center of the Christian worship. But in America the lowest and coldest views of the sacraments and the church are not seldom joined with orthodoxy," etc. In the same lecture the speaker administered to American Lutherans this rebuke, uttered in the presence of European Lutherans: "The Lutheran Church has an important calling in the New World. This it cannot fulfill by being unfaithful to its genius and history, and casting away its doctrinal and practical peculiarities." pp. 187 f. 194. *Sapienti sat!*) — We return to the "Portraiture." "The last item of improvement to which we shall refer



is the practice of the Lutheran Church in this country not to bind her ministers to the minutiae of any human creed. The Bible, and the belief that the *fundamental doctrines* of the Bible are taught in a manner substantially correct in the Augsburg Confession, is all that is required. On the one hand, we regard it as certain that, if we would be faithful to the injunction of our text, 'not to receive any who come to us bringing another doctrine,' an examination of applicants for admission among us is indispensable. Such an examination is virtually a requisition of their creed, that we may compare it with our own. Now, whether the articles to which we require their assent be few or many, be written or oral, they are a creed, and obviously its reduction to paper presents some material facilities in the examination. A written creed, therefore, seems necessary to the purity of the Church. On the other hand, history informs us that for several hundred years after the days of the apostles no other creed was used in the whole Church than that called the Apostles' Creed, because admitted by all to contain the principal doctrines taught by the apostles. This creed embodied only the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel, which all the so-called orthodox denominations of the present day do actually believe; and yet the assent to these few doctrines did for centuries after the apostolic age secure admission to any and every part of the Catholic, that is, the universal, Church on earth. By what authority, then, did the several Protestant denominations after the Reformation adopt creeds ten and, some of them, a hundred times as long as that used in the earlier ages, and require assent to these interminable instruments as a condition of admission to their churches? The Bible certainly enforces no such authority. But does the experience of three centuries prove their influence to be salutary? Have they not rather been the occasion of endless strife in all the churches adopting them? Have they not proved wedges of dissension to split asunder the body of Christ? It is a matter of historical certainty that the orthodox denominations of the present day coincide as much in

doctrinal views as did the Christians in the golden age of Christianity. If they could walk together in love, and their minor differences created no difficulties then, why should not Christians in the present day unite in the same manner, instead of rending the body of Christ asunder, creating separate and conflicting interests among brethren in Christ, alienation and prosecutions for minor differences, which would not have been noticed in the apostolic, and primitive, and purest age of the Church? The duty of all parts of the Christian Church seems therefore to be to return to the use of shorter doctrinal creeds as tests of ecclesiastical, ministerial, and sacramental communion. This noble course the Lutheran Church has already virtually taken, by requiring assent only to the fundamental doctrines of the Augsburg Confession, together with an approval of our principles of government and worship. This course cannot fail to promote brotherly love and fraternal appreciation between different denominations, by giving prominence to their actual unity in doctrine, and restoring a proper unity of spirit among the disciples of Christ. Happy, thrice happy, too, is the Lutheran Church, that she, who was first to cast off the yoke of Roman superstition and oppression, should lead the way in breaking the bonds of Protestant sectarianism; be first in practically teaching the world that the apostolic injunction to 'receive a brother that is weak in the faith, but not for the purpose of doubtful disputation,' does not mean to prosecute and expel him. And happy are all in every denomination who raise their voice in behalf of the lacerated body of Christ, and teach Christians to remember the solemn injunction of the Savior to love one another, and not only to profess, but to practice the principle of our blessed Lord, 'One is our Master, Christ, and ye are all brethren.'—Such, my brethren, are the features of the Lutheran Church, of that church to whose service this chaste and beautiful edifice has been dedicated," etc.<sup>14)</sup>

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14) Portraiture of Lutheranism, in *The American Lutheran Church, historically, doctrinally, and practically delineated.* 6th ed., pp. 65 ff.

The man whose theological position we have sketched in his own words was, at the time of Walther's arrival, the leading instructor of Lutheran students of theology. He was in his day what Walther became later.<sup>15)</sup> If the Lutheran Church in America ever was on the verge of ruin, it was when her fortunes were entrusted to Dr. Schmucker. Rationalism, synergism, enthusiasm, syncretism—all found a spokesman in him. There is a fine sarcasm in Dr. Schaff's remarks before his audience at Berlin, when, speaking of Dr. Schmucker, he says: "The leader of the Low-church American Lutheranism, though he has translated Storr's Dogmatic into an English abridgment, and has studied the Supranaturalistic literature of Germany, is, in his theology, properly altogether Anglo-American, partly after the Puritanic Presbyterian stamp, partly after the Methodist, which appears in his Pelagianizing views of the freedom of the will and his theory of conversion and regeneration; but he would feel highly insulted to be classed with the German Rationalists, since he holds the divinity of Christ, as well as the divine inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures (?), as fundamental articles of faith. He has also endeavored to show that almost all the leading men of the Lutheran Church of America had no higher views of the sacraments than himself, and that even in the old Pennsylvania Synod very few rose above the Zuinglian theory, which may certainly, till within a few years, (!) have been the case."<sup>16)</sup> A Melancthonian, as regards doctrine and polity, a Plankian, as regards the history of Lutheran dogma, an ardent admirer of Mosheim and Reinhard—such was Dr. Schmucker, the genius of American Lutheranism about the middle of the nineteenth century, the unavowed author of the "Definite Platform," which purported to be the Augsburg Confession as understood by American Lutherans.

Night had lowered on the Church of the Reformation in America. Her children were weeping and wishing for the day to come. Editor Spielmann of the *Lutheran Standard* was

15) Dr. Spaeth in PRE3, 17, 664 f.

16) America, etc., p. 188.

bowing his head in shame at the disgrace of his church. He called upon his readers to put on sackcloth and ashes, and to beseech God to keep the Lutheran Church from utter dissolution.<sup>17)</sup>

Yes, it was high time that the Lord should "take pity on the Lutheran Church of America," and raise up the spokesman for her who would speak her true mind to her countrymen.

*(To be concluded.)*

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