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1. Walther on the Organization of the Missouri Synod.

In a letter to Dr. Sihler, written in 1847, Dr. Walther remarks:—

“I must confess that I have a kind of horror of a real representative constitution (*einer eigentlichen Repraesentativverfassung*). I do not find it in Holy Scripture. Now, it is true that we Christians may exercise our liberty as regards our constitution, but I cannot rid myself of this opinion: the more freedom a church government in a free state like ours affords, the more efficient it will be, provided that the Word is preached in all its power in the congregations. On the other hand, everything coercive that does not flow immediately from the Word easily causes opposition by refusal to comply and lays the foundation for frequent separations. Hitherto I have not viewed a synodical organization as a concentration of ecclesiastical power. I thought that it was only to exhibit the ecclesiastical union of the separate congregations, unite its resources and forces in a war upon the oncoming ruin in doctrine and life, and for carrying on operations for the common welfare of the Church, for preserving and advancing unity in faith and love, for aiming by way of commendation for the greatest uniformity possible in liturgy, for making a well-ordered disposition of the ministry possible, for setting up a court of arbitration for preachers and congregations to which recourse might be had, or not, etc. I was of the opinion that all matters pertaining to the internal administration of individual congregations should not be subject to the disposing and judicial power of the Synod.”¹⁾

1) From *Life of Locke*, p. 28.

2. Walther's Farewell to Loehe.

At the end of his travels in Germany in 1852 Walther wrote to Loehe:—

"I may and must confess that the unhappy prejudices which I was still harboring when entering your house have entirely vanished from my mind, that I take with me a cordial reliance upon your unalloyed fidelity to our beloved Lutheran Church and the most lively conviction of our unity in the spirit. . . . My most ardent desire now is that, if possible, also the differences in the development of doctrine which may still exist between us, although they are not important, may, by the grace of God, be composed; and if that is not possible, that they may never disturb the unity of the spirit which the Holy Spirit of God has wrought, nor cause obstacles to our common pursuit of the Lord's work. However, I have seen what a precious boon you consider the peace of the Church, and how deeply concerned you are for the welfare of our Church, which is largely a plant reared by your faithful hands. Hence there is no need of my requesting you to do all that your conscience permits you to do in order that our orphaned church in America may ever and anon be able to boast before all the world its most intimate fellowship particularly with you." 2)

3. Walther's Concern for the Upbuilding of Concordia Seminary.

From a letter of Dr. Walther to Dr. Seyffarth we obtain a glimpse of the status of Concordia Seminary in its infant days.

Concordia College, near St. Louis, Mo.,
December 29, 1855.

VERY REVEREND SIR.

MY DEAREST PROFESSOR:—

Your esteemed letter of the 17th inst. is in my hands. I cannot tell you with what joy I received it. Your protracted silence and failure to let us know your whereabouts had thrown me into most painful anxiety. I had already begun to fear for your life in this land of rascals and murderers. My perplexity was increased because I knew no way of securing definite information about your condition and your place of sojourn. This was intensified by the silence you had imposed on me. At last, however, I wrote to Pastor Brohm in New York, and asked him to try every possible means to secure information about your fate. God be praised that my

2). From *Life of Loehe*, p. 94.

sighings and prayers have been heard, and my fears have in no way been confirmed. Now may the Lord vouchsafe His further help that in due time we may see you in our midst.

As regards our college at this place, its status is as follows. It consists of two departments; a theological seminary (with nine students) and a college (*Gymnasium*) with about 50 pupils. In the seminary myself and Professor Biewend are engaged as teachers. The latter is at the same time Director of the College, in which, besides Biewend, Goenner is at work as teacher of the first class, with the title of Rector. He is to have an assistant very soon (*in diesen Wochen*), especially in the lower classes, with the title of Conrector. When this is accomplished, we shall for the present lack only a teacher for the seminary. Our greatest need is a professor for the historical branches. Oh, how we would praise God if you were willing, and it were possible for you, to come to us and take charge of the aforementioned branches of instruction, Biblical isagogics, archeology, and church history. But, alas! we are so very destitute of means! We could offer you at present only a very meager salary. However, we would also be satisfied if you could devote but the smallest part of your time to our seminary, and could secure what is lacking for your maintenance by literary work. However, most reverend sir, if this single circumstance should in the end render it impossible to secure you for our institution, I would try still another way that is open to me to remove the difficulty. Some years ago, when Wyneken and I were again in Germany, a promise of vigorous assistance for our institution was given us by the Supreme Consistory of Bavaria. Now that Dr. Harless is at the head of this body, I entertain so much less doubt that this body will make good its promise if we appeal to them for the purpose of securing aid to establish another theological professorship for the historical discipline. Accordingly, I herewith take the liberty of respectfully asking you kindly to let me know your mind as soon as possible: whether you are inclined to serve our Church at this place with the understanding that you devote to our institution one hour a day and, besides this, secure your means of subsistence in some other way; or whether we can count on engaging you still more in our seminary. Of course, the latter plan would eminently meet our wishes and our needs. However, we would also regard it as a very gracious providence of God, and a proof that He is caring for the welfare of our Church, if the former plan were adopted. Meanwhile I shall solicit God in prayer that He make

His will known to you, and that He direct the entire affair in such a manner that it may redound to His glory and to your joy and salvation.

I believe that I can cheerfully give you the assurance that your energies, verily, would not be wasted, but would be employed in the service of the Lord, if you were to devote a part of them to our institution. The influence which our laborers in the Word exert on our people and on the entire development of the Church in our country is just as apparent as it is, without question, salutary. I say this solely for the glory of our faithful God, who has chosen for Himself that which is nothing. Moreover, just at present we seem to have reached an exceptionally important development of our Church in this country. In anticipation of this I intend to issue, in the first number of our theological monthly during the coming year, a public invitation to all Lutherans of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession to meet in a general conference and to deliberate fraternally on ways and means for uniting all Lutherans of this kind from all synods in our country in one organization. If this is favorably received, I stake great hopes on this undertaking for healing our divisions in this country, and I see in your coming a good omen for our present endeavors.

I commend you, together with your esteemed wife, to the never-changing faithfulness of our God. In the Lord,

Your most obedient

C. F. W. WALTHER.³⁾

4. Relation of the Augsburg Confession to the Other Symbols of the Lutheran Church.

This subject is discussed in a bit of correspondence that dates back to twelve years after the organization of the Missouri Synod.

New Market, Shenandoah Co., Va., February 8, 1859.

REV. PROF. WALTHER.

DEAR SIR:—

Although I have no personal acquaintance with you, yet, I hope, you will, nevertheless, excuse me for the liberty which I am taking, at this time, in troubling you with this communication.

The object of my writing to you, at present, is this: I wish, if possible, to procure a copy of the constitution of your [the Mis-

3) The original is in Professor Dau's collection of letters of Walther.

souri] Synod. Will you please have the kindness to send me one per mail? If you have it, I would prefer an English copy. I do not know what it will cost. I will, however, inclose 24 cts. worth of post stamps, and if it costs more, let me know the amount, and I will send it immediately.

I also hope that you will excuse me for taking the freedom in asking the following question, upon a subject of importance and concerning which there has recently been some discussion in this section. The point in question is this: Are the collective Symbolical Books the Confession of the Ev. Luth. Church? Or, is the Unaltered Augsburg Confession emphatically *the Confession* of our Church, and the other Symbols an explanatory defense of the Augsburg Confession?

We would be thankful to you to be favored with your views on this subject.

Yours in Christ,

JACOB STIREWALT.

Dr. Walther's answer to this correspondent, who wrote also in behalf of others, was in German.

St. Louis, Mo., February 19, 1859.

Rev. Jacob Stirewalt,

New Market, Shenandoah Co., Va.

RESPECTED SIR.

DEAR BROTHER IN JESUS CHRIST:—

Complying with your wish, I have given our manager an order to mail you the constitution of our Synod.

You have addressed to me, furthermore, the following questions:—

“1. Are the collective Symbolical Books the Confession of the Ev. Luth. Church? Or

“2. Is the Unaltered Augsburg Confession *the Confession* of our Church in the proper sense of the term (emphatically, *kat' exochen*), and the other symbols an explanatory defense of the Augsburg Confession?”

To these questions permit me to submit the following answer.

The collective Symbolical Books *are* indeed the Confession of the Ev. Luth. Church, and are rightly *called* thus. For, although the purpose especially of the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord is to repeat, to explain, to supplement, and to vindicate the Augsburg Confession, still this special purpose

does not deprive them of the character of public confessions of the Church. There is no contradiction in saying that a document explains and vindicates a confession, and saying that it is itself a confession. On the contrary, it is highly important that we have symbols in which our primary Confession is *symbolically* explained and interpreted. Add to this the further fact that the two Catechisms of Luther are quite independent Confessions. A document becomes the Confession of a Church either by being written for this purpose by the Church, or, if it previously was a private writing, by being elevated to the dignity of a confession by the Church. Now, it is an established fact that the collective Symbolical Books have been acknowledged by our orthodox Church to be its public Confession of Faith, although for various reasons in some localities of the Lutheran Church only the Unaltered Augsburg confession is mentioned when its teachers are placed under oath and pledged to the Confessions. No Lutheran will deny that the Book of Concord contains the Symbols of the Lutheran Church. But, to be an ecclesiastical symbol and to be a confession of the Church is the same thing.

However, notwithstanding this fact there is a certain difference among the Symbolical Books of our Church. They are regarded by us in the same order as they follow each other in the Book of Concord. Our Church justly regards as being of the highest rank the Ecumenical Creeds. But the Augsburg Confession is valued as the basic Confession of our Church, or as our fathers used to say, as our Church's apple of the eye, and so on down to the Formula of Concord. So says John Benedict Carpzov, the renowned Leipzig theologian, for instance, in his Introduction to the Symbolical Books of the Lutheran Churches, of the year 1675. Since I do not know whether you are conversant with the Latin language, I offer a German translation of the words of Carpzov: "When the Symbolical Books are compared with one another, one is seen to *have the preference before the other, and they are by no means placed on an equality with one another*, as the Neostadtians [Calvinists] in their Admonition have claimed. The authors of the Book of Concord intended to indicate this fact by the *sequence* which they adopted in presenting the Confessions. For, although all are agreed that none of the Confessions is the norm of faith, but all must be tested by Scripture, still there are certain preferential points which one has before the other. For the *Ecumenical Creeds* excel the rest by reason of their antiquity and their

universal acceptation. In these respects the other symbols in the Book of Concord cannot be placed on an equality with them. The *Augsburg Confession* excels the Apology, because the former was presented to the Emperor, and also received by him. The *Apology* excels the *Smalcald Articles* in age as well as in reputation. The *Smalcald Articles* are given precedence before *Luther's Catechism*, because the former were compiled by order of the Protestant Estates and sanctioned by the theologians' affixing their signatures to them. Accordingly, although all these writings were approved and ratified, (confirmed, and declared valid) by our Church, still, *when they are compared with one another*, they have their *distinctive character*, which is indicated by their sequence and order. Lastly, there was added to the foregoing the *Formula of Concord*, so termed in the strict sense. Necessity required this addition, as the authors of the *Formula of Concord* state, p. 596: 'Now, although the writings named above exhibit in a perspicuous and lucid manner to the pious reader who glows with the love of divine truth those points in every article of our Christian religion which are to be embraced, according to the standard of the Word of God, namely, the writings of the prophets and apostles, and also those points which are false and which ought to be rejected and avoided; nevertheless we have desired to set forth our views, distinctly and without any ambiguity, especially in reference to those important and leading articles which in these days have been the subjects of controversy. And in adopting this course, our object has been that the truth should shine forth more clearly, be acknowledged more readily, and be distinguished more easily from erroneous opinions, so that nothing which could obstruct the truth might lie concealed under words or phrases too indefinite or general; and likewise in order that a public and positive testimony might be furnished, not only to those who are now living, but also to posterity, showing what the unanimous opinion and judgment of our churches had been.'" (*The Christian Book of Concord*, 2d Edition.) Moreover, the great theologian Hutter advances the same claim in his vindication of the *Formula of Concord*, which bears the title *Concordia Concors*. In this treatise we read on p. 758 thus: "Si declaratio ita ex asse respondet Augustanae Confessioni, uti sane respondet, ut quoad doctrinae puritatem ne minime quidem discrepantia monstrari possit: sane res ipsa loquitur, quod etiam (quod doctrinalia) neutra alteri sit praeferenda, sed pari orthodoxias passu utraque ambulet; licet anti-quitate et aliis externis gradibus Confessio Augustana Declaratione

potior merito censeatur"; that is: If the explanation (contained in the Formula of Concord) agrees with the Augsburg Confession as completely as in fact it does, so that not the least difference can be pointed out between the two as regards the purity of teaching, it is clear and manifest that (as regards doctrinal matters) neither must be preferred to the other, but either keeps pace with the other in point of orthodoxy, *although, as regards antiquity and other external points of preference, the Augsburg Confession is justly to be esteemed superior to the Explanation.* Furthermore, Dr. Gottlieb Wernsdorf, once upon a time General Superintendent of Wittenberg, in his treatise *On Indifference as between Religions* (published 1734), writes thus: "As the approbation [of a symbol] is now greater, now smaller, so, too, its *authority* and *validity* has its accidental gradations. And as in former times the Nicene Creed surpassed the Ephesian or even the Athanasian, so, too, in our times the *Augsburg Confession*, as regards antiquity and other external marks of eminence, is considered superior to the Declaration, or even the Apology, as Hutterus claims. *But for this reason they do not cease being symbols*, because it belongs to the essence of a *universal*, or ecumenical, but not of a particular symbol, such as our modern symbols are, that it be accepted and approved by all." (pp. 693. 694.)

True, the Declaration of the Formula of Concord states, p. 592: "Nor do we design in this or any other writing to depart an hair-breadth from said Confession, or to frame a different or a new confession." However, this is not meant as a denial that the Formula of Concord, too, is a confession, a *Bekennntnis*, but it simply means that by this new Confession the primary Confession has not been abolished and a new confession forced upon the Church in the place of it.

Accordingly, my conclusive opinion in this matter is that, no matter how great the preference to be accorded to the Augsburg Confession before the other Lutheran Confessions may be, nevertheless it would not be right to call it "the Confession of the Lutheran Church in the proper sense of the term," and to denominate the other Confessions mere explanations and vindications of the Confession, in the sense that the latter were excluded from the Confessions of our Church. However, I readily admit that a church can be genuinely Lutheran, even if it does not specially pledge its preachers to all the Confessions. A genuine Lutheran Church, indeed, will never contradict any symbol contained in the Book of

Concord. Yea, the fact that the symbols written after the Augsburg Confession are *not officially used* seems to me a *deficiency in the constitution* of a church and in its *confessional basis*. Still I am far from advising any one to make a violent attempt to force through the adoption of all symbols as the *legitimate* basis of doctrine. The most unsuspecting affair becomes suspicious when it is forced upon men.

Here you have my conviction. May my statement be of some use to you.

God grant that we become ever more intimately united on the eternal basis of truth, and of the entire truth. May He bless your dear synod, which in times when everything in America seemed to be tottering was given the grace by God to stand firm.

Yours in the Lord Jesus,

C. F. W. WALTHER.

At its convention last year our Western District Synod discussed the subject of subscribing the Confession, and adopted an exhaustive paper on this matter. Shall I send it to you?

IDEM.⁴⁾

5. An Autobiographical Sketch of Dr. Walther.

This sketch was written in America after Walther had been elected President of the Missouri Synod for the second time. I surmise that the greater part of it is from the *curriculum vitae* which Superintendent Siebenhaar of Penig demanded of him when he was proposed as a candidate for the pastorate of Braeunsdorf in Saxony in 1836.

Karl Ferdinand William Walther was born October 25, 1811, at Langenchursdorf, near Waldenburg, in the Kingdom of Saxony, where his father was stationed as Evangelical Lutheran pastor. After he had received his first elementary instruction from his father and at the local school, he was, in 1819, entered as a pupil in the town school at Hohenstein, near Chemnitz. In 1821 his father sent him to college at Schneeberg, in the Saxon *Erzgebirge*. He was a pupil of this school till 1829, in which year he entered the University of Leipzig. Up to this time he had kept his faith in the Holy Scriptures as God's Word, which had been inculcated in him in his parental home, and this, in spite of the fact that, with a single

4) The originals of the above letters are in Prof. Fuerbringer's collection of letters of Walther.

exception, all the teachers at his college were avowed rationalists. However, of a faith that conquers flesh, world, and Satan he had as yet no experimental knowledge. At the University of Leipzig, too, rationalism was in flower in those days, while the Christian faith was but feebly represented by Professors August Hahn and F. W. Lindner, Sr. However, prior to Walther's matriculation at Leipzig a little band of students that had been roused to a lively faith had by the grace of God made each other's acquaintance. Walther's older brother, Otto Hermann, belonged to this band, and he introduced his younger brother to this circle. The act was not without good results. Also in Walther's heart the Word of God, which was prayerfully studied in private by the members of this band jointly, proved a power unto a new life. However, just those students who had been most vigorously seized by the Word of God soon lapsed into a rather strong pietistic legalism. The devotional writings which they used were those of F. Arnd, A. H. Francke, Bogatzky, Spener, Werner, J. Caspari, Schade, Rambach, Steinmetz, J. Ph. Fresenius, and others. The younger Walther, too, followed this trend and was thus for several years merged into grievous troubles of conscience and soul-battles. After vainly seeking advice with believing pastors he was brought to the brink of despair until he at last attained to peace in Christ through a letter which he received, in answer to his request for counsel, from Martin Stephan, at that time pastor of the Bohemian Lutheran congregation at Dresden. In addition to his spiritual tribulations Walther during his student years had to battle with a lung disease that seemed fatal. This illness forced him to interrupt his studies during the winter semester of 1831—32 and to seek recovery under medical treatment at his parents' home. During this time Luther's Works in his father's library fell into his hands, and having nothing else to do, he began poring over them. It was during these days that there was begotten in him that lively conviction which has never since left him, that the doctrine of our Church alone is in accord with Scripture and that a determined stand upon our Confessions is a necessity. By a simple domestic remedy he regained his physical health, returned to Leipzig to complete his theological studies, and left the university in 1833. After passing his examination for the license to preach (*pro licentia concionandi*) at Leipzig, he accepted a position as private tutor at Cahla in the territory of Altenburg, in which he served till 1836. Having passed his second examination *pro candidatura* at Dresden, he was in this year called by the

minister of state, Count von Einsiedel, a sincere believer, to the pastorate of Braeunsdorf near Penig, over which the Count exercised the right of patron. On the Second Sunday after Epiphany 1837 he was publicly ordained and installed, taking charge of the office committed to him. He found himself placed under the jurisdiction of a blasphemous rationalistic superintendent, who used the unbelieving schoolmaster of the village as his spy and joined him in his hostile disposition and opposition to Walther. Because of his determined attitude, founded upon the Word of God, the Confessions (to which he had been pledged at his ordination), and the ancient usages of the Church, and because of his protests against rationalistic innovations in church and school, Walther was repeatedly sued in court, overwhelmed with official reprimands, and involved in costly lawsuits. The rationalistic *agenda* which he was to use, and the rationalistic text-books which he was to tolerate in the school, were a grievous burden to his conscience. During the second year of his pastorate the aforementioned Pastor M. Stephan called on all Lutherans, pastors and laymen, suffering from spiritual tyranny, especially in Saxony, to emigrate with him to America, there to seek and to enjoy that ecclesiastical freedom which was denied them in their native country. Accordingly, Walther with his brother, who was vicar in his father's parish, joined the Emigrant Society which was rapidly forming. On the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity in 1838 he resigned his charge, however, with a bleeding heart and after having passed through severe internal and external conflicts. For thirty years prior to his pastorate Walther's congregation had been spiritually devastated by a rationalistic pastor. Walther had not labored in this congregation without blessing; his farewell sermon was listened to amid loud sobbing. A few families from the congregation joined him in the emigration. In November of the year mentioned the emigrant ship on which Walther was a passenger set sail from Bremerhaven and after a stormy voyage arrived safely in America (New Orleans) in January, 1839. A few months later it was made manifest that the leader of the society of Lutheran exiles, consisting of about 800 souls, had been a hypocrite. In consequence Walther was once more merged in great trouble of conscience. After the leader had been stripped of his mask and removed, the Society, with very few exceptions, remained together spite of the deceptions which they had undergone and amid untold privations founded a number of rural congregations in the State of Missouri, while a small con-

gregation remained at St. Louis, the first objective of the society. But the experiences which the emigrants had in dealing with their leader, in whom they had placed overmuch confidence, had this effect, that all that had been settled when they were prompted to emigrate now seemed shaken, excepting only the Word of God and the Confessions of our Church, which the preachers and hearers now grasped all the more firmly because it was the only anchor remaining for them that could not be smashed. Walther at first became the pastor of a small rural congregation composed of people that had emigrated with him. But when his brother, who had served the congregation that had settled at St. Louis, died in the beginning of 1841, Walther was chosen his successor. He accepted the call and discharged the functions of the sacred office in this congregation till 1849. In this year he accepted a call to the Evangelical Lutheran Concordia Seminary that had been removed to St. Louis, and in this institution he has served till to-day as professor of theology and president of the institution, and has at the same time acted as primary pastor of his former congregation. Already in 1844 he had begun the publication of a paper designed for the Lutheran people, under the caption *Der Lutheraner* (The Lutheran). By the gracious providence of God this periodical became the instrument for acquainting with one another and bringing together the few people in America who were still resolved to abide by the faith of Luther and the creed of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as laid down in the Book of Concord of 1580. In the year 1847, after several deliberations by oral discourse and by correspondence, these persons united by forming a synod, which they named "The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States." Walther became its first president, until he was elected by Synod in 1849 (as already stated) to be professor of theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. In this latter capacity he could no longer discharge the office of the presidency, with which the office of visitor was at that time connected. But when the Synod had been divided into several Districts and the visitorship was combined with the office of the District presidents, Walther, in 1864, was again elected president of the General Synod which office he still discharges at the present time.⁵⁾

5) The original of this sketch in Walther's handwriting is in possession of Dr. F. A. Schmidt, of St. Paul, Minn.
