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The Foreword of *Lehre und Wehre*, for 1862 (Vol. 8)

By C. F. W. WALTHER

Translated by WILLIAM F. ARNDT

FROM the very beginning of our venture the charge has been voiced in various quarters, and not long ago again in the *Kirchliches Zeitblatt* (1861, No. 7) of Ehlers by Pastor Fengler of Löwenberg, that *Lehre und Wehre* and the Missouri Synod lack "creative activity," that the fathers are quoted too much, and that even the old material is not offered in a new form entitled to be called original. It may therefore be worthwhile to look at this charge a little more closely. As we prepare to do so in the present foreword, our motive is by no means a high opinion of the merits of our journal. No one could be more convinced of the insignificance of the services it renders the church than are we ourselves. But since we wish to serve the church even in our minor way and cannot do it better than we have done in the past, we consider it our duty to give an account of our course, especially to our friends. Hence we ask them, in their judgment of the character of our past and, God willing, of our future theological activity, to bear in mind especially the following facts.

To begin with, we Missourians do not share the view of Montanists, Anabaptists, and enthusiasts, popular today among theologians, according to which the church, like a human being, advances not only in age but also in knowledge till in the period immediately preceding Judgment Day it has reached the stage of manly maturity. Furthermore, we do not at all share the papistic idea of a gradual development of the various dogmas which has found acceptance more and more in present-day Protestantism. Following the teaching of the fathers and of history, we rather believe with the fathers that the church is like the moon, that it has its phases, its periods of increase and decrease, and its eclipses, that at one time it flourishes and at others is buried under the debris of human doctrines and abuses. The times of a Moses,

when all people have to bless the church, saying, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Deut. 4:6), are always followed by the periods of an Eli described thus: "The Word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision" (1 Sam. 3:1). After blessed Davidic eras in which the Lord builds the walls of Jerusalem, there always come Elijah days, when the few remaining faithful servants, seeing the great destruction of the church, have to lament: "The Children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left," so that God has to console them by pointing to His hidden church: "Yet I have left Me 7,000 in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (1 Kings 19). The periods when the Word of God increases and the congregations are strengthened in the faith (Acts 6:7; 16:5) alternate with periods of defection, when people close their ears to the truth and take delight in fables (2 Thess. 2:3; 2 Tim. 4:4).

Hence, while we believe that the unceasing labors of theologians are necessary and important, we do not accept the view of a continuous organic growth of the church in the understanding of divine truth, to be brought about by the industry of theologians. We rather hold that pure and perfect understanding in the realm of God's Word is a gift of free divine grace and mercy which only from time to time is granted the church through special visitations of grace. Here, too, we have to say, "He to whom it is granted possesses it gratis." Pure doctrine and right understanding are not the fruit of man's free will. Learning and acumen dispenses them just as little as does the lack of these qualities. Man can indeed, in spite of all diligence, prove unfaithful to these highest treasures of the church, but he cannot equip himself with them. To grant them is a prerogative of the Holy Spirit, of whom we here, too, and here especially, say, *Ubi et quando visum est*, "where and when He will" (AC V). But whenever God bestows on the church an Athanasius, an Augustine, a Hus, then the days of great visitation of divine grace have dawned, not only for the particular time when God uses and fills these sanctified vessels but for all succeeding eras as well. Then the shout goes up:

"Buy while the market is at your door; gather the harvest while the sun shines and the weather is favorable; use God's gracious Word while it is at hand, for you must remember: God's Word and grace are like passing showers, which do not return to the place where they have been."

Without a doubt the Reformation beyond all others was such a period of God's gracious visitation. At that time, moved by free grace, God granted all at once possessions which the industry of theologians in more than a thousand years had not, and could not have, attained. The Apostolic era with its riches of spiritual gifts was there renewed. Immeasurable treasures of pure and deep knowledge of divine things were brought up out of the mine of the divine Word. The prophecy concerning the era of the New Covenant was fulfilled most gloriously: "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Is. 11:9). God manifested what high degree of spiritual understanding can be found even in a person who is merely indirectly or mediately illuminated by the written Word if it is His gracious will to fill that person with it. When it appeared as if the midnight hour had come and nothing remained but the arrival of the divine Judge, the prophecy of Zechariah was fulfilled, "It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light" (ch. 14:7). The mystery of iniquity of the Antichrist seemed to have become insoluble, the gates of hell to prevail against the church, and even the elect to be deceived, when unexpectedly the lawless one was revealed and consumed with the spirit of the mouth of the Lord (2 Thessalonians 2). The church resembled a barren old woman when through the Lord's promise she gave birth to an Isaac. John Hus had been silenced, and it appeared as if with him the last witness of the divine truth had died, but then the great vision of Revelation 14 came to pass: "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth and to every nation and kindred and tongue and people, saying with a loud voice: Fear God, and give glory to Him, for the hour of His Judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven and earth and the sea and the fountains of waters." What the angel proclaimed was not the temporal, fleeting message of vain human teaching, but the eternal Gospel, the pure, unadul-

tered, unchangeable, and imperishable Word of the Highest. It was his task not only to bring the Bread of Life to the small congregation in Wittenberg, but to teach the Gospel, which formerly had always been mixed with error in its ever-changing forms, now in its purity and unalterable character to all nations, generations, tongues, and peoples. Without a doubt he was the last messenger of God sent to all the inhabitants of the earth before the Day of Judgment.

But just as the time of the Lutheran Reformation was the era of great visitation of divine grace through bringing back divine doctrine in its Apostolic purity and truth and kindling the heavenly light of proper understanding of divine teaching in its original clarity, so we have to say that this time of visitation by no means is ended. That Reformation with its spiritual gifts was and still is the great general visitation granted the church *in hac mundi senecta* (in the world's old age) as the confessing princes in the foreword of the *Concordia pia et unanimes* call it. We, too, still live in this era of visitation, and according to divine prophecy it will continue to the end of days.

How keenly did the teachers of our church in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries recognize this time, in which they experienced God's gracious visitation through the coming, talents, and achievements of Luther! How humbly and sincerely did they all admit, the brilliancy of their own gifts and the success of their indefatigable labors notwithstanding, that they were merely poor disciples of Luther! In saying this they did not honor Luther, but Him who in deepest love for His devastated church had endowed Luther with a greater fullness of gifts than any other teacher since the days of the Apostles. With what longing for pure knowledge did they listen to Luther after they had experienced how through his instruction God's Word became an open book to them! With what interest did they look forward to every new publication of Luther's pen, and with what zeal did they read it! With what gratitude did they accept Luther's teaching, and with what faithfulness did they hand it on to others! All their magnificent gifts they employed to distribute what God through His servant Luther had put into their hands. It is true that the *Augustana* and the *Apology* bear the name of Melancthon as author, but both in-

comparable confessions do not teach anything else than Luther's theology. The fact must not be forgotten that it was really not Melanchthon but Luther who wrote the Augustana, that Melanchthon used as its basis a writing of Luther and, of course, in part became responsible for its form. With respect to the Apology, its contents are simply the result arrived at through study of the Holy Scriptures by both Melanchthon and Luther, and we may call it the faithful summary and eloquent defense of the pure evangelical doctrine granted by God to the church through Luther. Of course, this summary was furnished by a man who had very clearly and vividly grasped and appropriated this teaching. In the Apology more than in any other writing Melanchthon appears as a filial disciple of Luther; at the same time he in superb fashion interprets and champions his master's teaching. The same relation toward Luther is manifested by Martin Chemnitz, Johann Gerhard, and all the great teachers of our church up to the age of Pietism. Naturally as the generations succeed one another, we notice that the teachers more and more draw on Luther indirectly. What is the *Examen Concilii Tridentini* of Chemnitz, what are the *Loci theologici* of Johann Gerhard, what are all the immortal works of the best theologians of our church in the earlier periods if not structures of gold built with the precious metal which God permitted Luther to bring to the surface! They did not regard it their task to be "creatively active," but to recognize and utilize the day of their visitation, to gather and to harvest when God had granted rich crops, and to hold fast that which they had that no one would take their crown. And at the same time what brisk, stirring, theological life could be witnessed, what working, searching, digging in the Scriptures! What growth in spiritual insight!

Actually we cannot but regard it as our sacred duty today, before we undertake to be "creatively active," first of all to acquaint ourselves with, to appropriate and to distribute, the treasures of doctrine and understanding which God in pure grace has bestowed during the almost 2,000 years of the church's existence and especially 300 years ago in the Lutheran Reformation. If we were unwilling to do this and rather saw the blessings go to waste which are stored up in, as it were, well-filled granaries in the writings of Luther, if we neglected these rich provisions and made it our

only concern to look for something new, we should have to fear that the Lord, with respect to us, would once more utter the lament: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes . . . because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:42 ff.). What God 300 years ago revealed to Luther through His Word was revealed and entrusted not so much to him as to the whole church. It is a talent which has been handed over to all of us by the Lord with the instruction, "Deal with it till I come." If we should desire to keep this talent in the napkin of our libraries, we certainly could not hope to hear the word: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant! Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." (Matthew 25; Luke 19.) To let the gifts granted the church remain unused in order to be ourselves "creatively" active could be due to no other cause in us than horrible ingratitude and vanity. It would mean that we despise prophesying (1 Thess. 5:20). In that case the spirits of the prophets would refuse to be subject to the prophets (1 Cor. 14:32). If Melanchthon, Brenz, Rhegius, Chemnitz, Johann Gerhard, desired to be nothing but disciples of Luther and openly professed that their religious knowledge, next to the Scriptures, was due to him and his teaching, who are we that we should deny and conceal this discipleship and play the role of masters! "All things are yours," says the apostle, "whether Paul or Apollos or Cephias or the world" (1 Corinthians 3), and we both may and should add, "Whether Luther or Melanchthon, Chemnitz or Gerhard"—and how could we dare to regard and treat these God-given possessions as mere foreign ware! Or does the simple fact that we have put a certain volume into our bookcases make it our real possession? All gifts, that of speaking by the spirit, the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge, that of prophecy, of discerning the spirits, of interpreting of tongues (1 Corinthians 12 and 14), etc., gifts which 300 and 200 years ago God dispensed so richly, have all been given "to every man to profit withal," for the benefit of the church of all places and all future eras—and are we to keep these gifts unused and locked up? Or should we, while not seeking anything else than the treasures already found by the orthodox church, nevertheless

resolve to establish the church once more, and travel again the road traversed by our old teachers, hoping confidently that we shall arrive at the same goal and achieve the same results? Foolish thought! God does not bestow everything on everybody. He does not give the same blessings to every era. The one servant in the vineyard of the Lord receives this aptitude, the other that; visitations vary with the periods in which they are given. It is "one and the selfsame spirit dividing to every man severally as he will" (1 Cor. 12:7-11). Hence it is futile, and even an outrage, to attempt to force God as it were, to repeat the gracious visitation which He granted the church 300 years ago, because one is unwilling to receive from the hand of God's personal instruments the gifts He bestowed through them, and insists on attaining such gifts through one's own searching. After God through Luther and his faithful followers graciously has again presented to the church the treasure of pure doctrine, we must either in humility let them communicate this jewel to us, or we must forever remain without it and pass from one error to another. God has made the church to be one body which consists not of one, but of many members, whose eye dare not say to the hand, and whose hand dare not say to the eye, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, God has so arranged matters with respect to His church that always one member has need of the other, and thus the whole organization can exist solely through an interchange of gifts.

Strange to say, Pastor Fengler finds something sectarian in our filial attachment to our faithful fathers. He forgets that it is a definitely distinctive trait of a sect to break with the church of the past, to sever connection with it, to despise ministers who are called indirectly or mediately, to refuse to learn and to insist solely on being a teacher, to be unwilling to be a disciple and to presume to be the master and to aid the church through novel bits of so-called wisdom! A sect does not engage in a reformation, returning with Luther to the old church, but in a revolution, following the example of Carlstadt and Zwingli.

Perhaps no one denies that the church of the present day must appreciate and preserve as a treasure what God graciously has granted the church of the past, the mother, in stores of knowl-

edge, in insights as to the contents of Holy Scripture. And now we ask, Has the church of our day appropriated everything which the former one through God's grace has achieved? Sad to say, it is a fact that only few even of those who desire to participate in the building and extension of the church in general have a thorough knowledge of the classical literature of our church in its most blessed eras—of that literature in which the teachings of Lutheranism are most ably set forth, most clearly unfolded, and most convincingly defended, and the opposing errors most victoriously refuted and their hollowness demonstrated. Much less can it be said that there are many who have really studied these works in their rich contents, or at least the one or the other of them, in the various branches of theology which might serve *instar omnium* (in place of all) and who have truly absorbed what is there offered. It is considered sufficient to have read this or that quotation, presented perhaps even without regard to its context, and then one fancies to have obtained with true acumen a view of the whole system of doctrines and to be able to criticize it. Most of the modern theologians evidently consider it their chief task to exhibit everything in exalted philosophical language and altogether abstract modes of thought, with the result that often their most trivial views and worst fallacies create the impression of being profound wisdom. One of the consequences is the opinion of many people that if they can display learned phraseology, they belong to the oracles of the day. Especially younger theologians regard with loathing the writings of our old teachers, who, while they were deeply learned, remained humble and sought nothing but the edification of the church. Since these people at once apprehend the meaning of the words of the fathers, they hold that they have long known all this material.

Another consequence is that often rationalists like Carl Hase and Benedict Winer are better acquainted with the doctrine of our church and present it more correctly than some theologians who make the claim, as do the two men mentioned, not only of giving an historical account of this doctrine but also of setting it forth as representatives of our church. With what boldness today are teachings proposed as doctrines of our church against which the latter in its confessions and in the writings of its ablest sons fought

mightily as Antichristian errors! And with what genuine disgust, on the other hand, are teachings branded as un-Lutheran, anti-clerical, and as born of false enthusiasm, or as popish, which are simply fundamental teachings of the Lutheran Reformation! How much labor is needed to make the pure doctrine as it was brought before the world again 300 years ago the common possession of the leading Lutheran theologians, and, to begin with, merely the knowledge of it!

What great change is required before our Lutheran theologians and preachers, generally speaking, consider it worth their while to possess and to study at least the writings of Luther! Though our period manifests some awakening, what frightful symptom is it nevertheless that thousands of copies of the Erlangen edition of Luther's works crumble away in the warehouse and that on account of lack of interest the underraking still is unfinished! In vain men like Thomasius write: "Sometime ago we have begun, and rightly so, to go back to our older dogmaticians; but we shall do well to penetrate still more into the thinking of that man in whose heart the blood of the evangelical faith pulsated most warmly and lively. From Luther, so it seems to me, there is still to be obtained an immeasurable amount of material for the revivification and refreshing of our dogmatics, of which rightly the statement was made that 'it was getting to be somewhat cold.'" (*Christi Person und Werk*. First Part, pp. v, vi.) In vain a man like Rudelbach testifies: "Luther sums up in himself more than half a millennium and at the same time molds in advance the development of following centuries." (*Zeitschrift*, 1857, p. 381.)

We are by no means blind and ungrateful with respect to the rather considerable achievements of our time in the field of theology. We highly esteem what in more recent periods has been accomplished for a more thorough acquaintance with the sacred languages, for light on problems of church history, for the solution of exegetical difficulties, etc.¹ No one can with greater grati-

¹ Although even Winer has to admit: "The controversy among the exegetes has usually taken us back again to, and acknowledged as correct, the understanding arrived at by the Protestant Church in its early, initial stages." (*Grammatik*, 3d ed., Pref.)

tude and more heartfelt joy observe and appreciate every new, more profound substantiation and further correct development of an old truth from the Scriptures than can we. Nevertheless, in most instances we shudder when we view just this matter, the "creative activity" of our times. Things that are praised as new discoveries we find usually to be very questionable and suspect, and only too often what is offered is nothing but an old error in a new dress, a retouched heresy refuted by the church long ago. Or can one say, for example, that the new allegedly more correct presentation of the doctrines of inspiration, of Christ's person, of the efficacy of the Sacraments, of the church and church organization, of the ministerial office and ordination, of the Last Things, of man's condition after death, etc., do not belong to this class? Let us here quote a man in whose publications we formerly with joy found not a few grains of golden truth, Prof. Dr. Kahnis, who nevertheless writes:

Protestantism stands and falls with the principle of the sole authority of the Scriptures. But this principle is independent of the doctrine of inspiration as taught by the old dogmaticians. To take it over as it was taught formerly can be done by us only if we harden ourselves against the truth. . . . In the concept of the Sacrament the word which forms the substance does not permit the power inherent in the Sacrament to assert itself. This becomes evident especially in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in which, according to the old Lutheran doctrine, not the body of Christ, which is there communicated, constitutes the chief thing, but the word referring to the forgiveness of sins, of which forgiveness the body of Christ is the pledge. . . . This communication of God which constitutes the essence of the Sacraments did not in the old doctrine of our church touching the *verbum visibile* receive its full expression. Furthermore, with reference to the ecumenical teachings of the Trinity and the divine-human person of Christ we must say that our Confessions presented them not on account of the ecclesiastical authority on which they are based but on account of their being taught in the Scriptures. Nevertheless it is simply a fact that the Reformers, whose definite principle it was to make the appropriation of objective salvation the center of Christianity, took over the doctrines which are the objective

foundation of salvation, that is, those of the Trinity and the person and work of Christ, from tradition, without independently using the Scriptures as a guide.²

While it is certain that the Nicaean doctrine of the Trinity and the Chalcedonian of the union of the divine and the human nature in the person of Christ were favored by those who were best able to judge at that time, nevertheless, if a Protestant should view the success these doctrines achieved as a sign from above attesting their truthfulness, a student of the history of dogma would have to tell such a person that there is no church father in the first three centuries with whom there is to be found a teaching of the Trinity resembling that of Nicaea, and that the Chalcedonian teaching of the union of the two natures for a long time was a point of strong controversy in the church. In our day, when we possess more adequate means for the understanding of Scripture and can penetrate more widely, freely, and profoundly into spiritual matters than the fathers, the principle of Protestantism demands and brings about a renewed reproduction (this may be a euphemism for regeneration) of these teachings on the basis of the Scriptures.³

The definition, proceeding from the camp of the theology of mediation, conceiving of Jesus Christ as the personal culmination of the human race, which essentially is the same as that of Schleiermacher's archetypal human being, contains an important truth, but it does not bring forth a Savior whom a Christian can adore, saying, as Scripture teaches and demands, "My Lord and my God." On the other hand, it has been demonstrated, especially by Thomasius, that the theory of the church of a divine person who as human being continues to use fully his divine attributes and powers makes it impossible that either a true personal unity or

² Here we have an instance showing what attitude the Church of the Reformation assumed toward the true orthodox church of the past. What God had granted the church of the past, the Church of the Reformation accepted as a treasure handed over to it, and it did not desire to compel God (even if it should look upon things bestowed as if they had not yet been bestowed and should without preconceived convictions once more travel the way the fathers had gone) to let it arrive at the same or even a better or higher goal than they.

³ We see that even with respect to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity the controversy within the orthodox church is not concluded, the books are not yet closed, and it has been reserved for the learned theologians of today finally to set forth the correct Scripture teaching on this doctrine. The thought that we were in possession of truly ecumenical symbols was merely a sweet dream.

a genuinely human development of Christ should result. In the elevation of the human Jesus to the position of the ideal Son of Man, in this "emptying of Himself" of the Son of God, we find the premises for a conception of the person of Christ which is not only more profound and vivid but also more Scriptural.⁴

The factor that led the Reformers to the Augustinian teaching of sin and grace was the protest against the work-righteousness of their age, a protest caused by their deep personal experience of saving grace and their occupying themselves earnestly with Holy Scripture, especially the writings of Paul. But the Augustinian teaching of divine grace which effects everything has its shadows, which become evident through the Charybdis of predestination into whose disastrous whirlpool Calvin, led by doctrinaire views of consistency, cast himself, while the German Reformation happily circumnavigated the peril. . . . But when in opposition to the Calvinistic teaching of predestination it was openly asserted that the rejection of salvation was due to man's own will, no one could fail to see that this negative statement would have to have a positive counterpart and that, if only *that* faith which endures to the end takes us to the goal and this enduring cannot be thought of as existing with the co-operation of man, the conclusion is unavoidable that there is a human factor which conditions our salvation. Here the stark one-sidedness of the predestinarian doctrine becomes evident, which, assuming that the apprehension of salvation is altogether a work of grace, totally forgets that only he is crowned who strives lawfully, and that since striving admittedly involves human activity, man has a share in this matter.⁵

But just like St. Augustine's teaching of grace, so his teaching of the total depravity of human nature is based on an abstraction

⁴ What approach the theory of Thomasiaus in this point makes to a more "Scriptural" conception has been shown in early volumes of this journal, an approach which, if developed consistently, finally robs us of the consoling truth that it is God who lived and suffered for us.

⁵ Kahnis, otherwise a very acute thinker, seems to overlook entirely that the Scriptures in the first place say: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9). Furthermore: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again . . . to an inheritance incorruptible . . . reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (1 Peter 1:3-5; cf. Phil. 2:13). Here we have an incontrovertible denial of the view that the regenerate person possesses synergistic powers which enable him "to do his share." Dr. Kahnis, asserting that Calvin falls into a ditch, himself experiences this disaster, only on the other side of the road.

which runs counter to the Scriptures, experience, and psychology. That in natural man there exists a consciousness of God, a conscience, a tendency toward that which is true and good, a longing for salvation, both Scripture and experience teach us. Now, if we confess that man cannot through his own strength come to Christ, that the Spirit of Jesus Christ has to draw him, we do not exclude the truth that there is a tendency in man to which grace addresses itself,⁶ as it is written: "He that doeth truth cometh to the light" (John 3:21); and Peter (1 Peter 3:1) enjoins Christian women to win Gentiles for Christ without words through their conduct, an admonition which presupposes without doubt a predisposition of natural man in favor of the ethical spirit of Christianity. Hence here, too, we have to look forward to a new study and scrutiny of Lutheran teaching on the basis of the Scriptures, accompanied by the effort to utilize the rich results which the present-day interest in anthropology and psychology has furnished." Cf. *Der innere Gang des deutschen Protestantismus*, etc., by Dr. K. F. A. Kahnis, 2d ed., 1860; pp. 241 ff.⁷

⁶ Probably the way in which Jesus, when He raised Lazarus, addressed himself to some tendency in the corpse!! (Col. 2:13.)

⁷ According to this, there is probably no article in which Professor Kahnis more fundamentally diverges from the pure doctrine of the church than in the one pertaining to "free will." A wrong belief in this point may be the main root of all his other aberrations and, generally speaking, the *πρώτον ψεῦδος* of all modern theology. As long as this poisonous, Semi-Pelagian, synergistic germ has not been killed, most modern theologians will not have a more considerable share in the resuscitation of true theology than Erasmus had in the reformation of the church. Without complete purity in the teaching *de libero arbitrio* one cannot think of genuine Lutheran theology restoring its edifice. The true church of believers will always recoil from a theology which denies the "total depravity of human nature" and which does not both at the beginning and at the end of its message call out to man: "Where is boasting, then? It is excluded." (Rom. 3:27.) And in doing so it will not be frightened by a Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, which the synergists point to as a bugaboo. Every theologian has to pass through the strait gate which consists in recognition of the complete corruption of human nature; otherwise the cardinal teaching of the justification of a poor sinner before God will in his theological system be deprived of its proper setting and lack its true meaning. Would to God that the modern theologians could bring themselves to read without the prejudice caused by a "more free and profound penetration into spiritual matters," but in the humility becoming a disciple, Luther's writing *De servo arbitrio*, that masterpiece of genuine theological speculation and interpretation of Scripture! In that case this treatise would evidence its potency as a remedy, as a true panacea, against the present-day epidemic of Semi-Pelagianism and synergism.

Thus writes an author who himself passes the following judgment on the theology of our age: "On the one hand our scholarship manifests a dilettantism which is versatile and sprightly, but on the other we find in it a lack of sensitiveness with respect to the truth and of good common sense, of energetic logical thinking, of originality in its perceptions, and of a ringing method of presentation — all of which we suppose belongs to the sad signs of the times. Our theology has entered the Alexandrian era." (Ibid., p. 247.) In reading this we must exclaim: "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry!" If a Lutheran theologian of our day like Kahnis declares that the old Lutheran theology relative to the articles of the inspiration of the Scriptures, of the Trinity, of the person of Christ, of the efficacy of the Sacraments, of original sin, and of free will requires a reformation, what remnants of the old Lutheran theology may we hope to find in the writings of younger theologians of our church? At the most a few isolated stones; the structure itself has been torn down. We indeed shall be happy, and have always been happy, whenever we discover that a certain old gem consisting of gold, silver, or diamonds has been hewn and placed more properly, but we can never dwell in the new edifice with its partly shaken foundation and its walls constructed largely of wood, hay, and stubble. God granting His protecting grace, nobody will persuade us to leave the old building, where our soul has found a place of refuge from the divine wrath, judgment and hell, and from the winds of divers false doctrines, tossing people to and fro.

After Pastor Fengler in the journal of Ehlers has criticized us Missourians for furnishing "relatively little that is original," that we do not "create," he exclaims: "Thank God that here in Germany and with us, too, the situation still is more favorable! . . . God be praised! Recently a new journal was founded in our midst, and even our opponents will have to admit that usually what is presented constitutes a substantial contribution." We reply that we willingly concede to the authors in Germany, including some in the Prussian Lutheran Church, the distinction of being more learned and ingenious than we and that in their writings more brilliant gifts are reflected than those granted to us poor Mis-

sourians in our primitive and paltry conditions. We neither forget this, nor do we become envious when we contemplate our comparatively low rank. On the contrary, we highly esteem the gifts bestowed on our church in the land of our fathers and rejoice over them as ornaments of the body of which we are members. But we cannot refrain from asking the question: What is the fruit of the fact that the accusation of having furnished "relatively little that is original," of "not having created" admittedly does not touch our church in Germany? There are hardly any so-called *theological schools* left; there are as many different theologies as there are theologians; the church presents the appearance of an atomistic group. Instead of the old unity of faith there apparently prevails an unprecedented lack of unity, a truly Babylonian confusion of language and belief. The Prussian Lutheran Church, too, in this respect differs but little from the Lutheran state churches, a fact which became glaringly evident in the recent discussions on church government and the respective doctrines. This surprised all except those who had perceived that the common bond of the Prussian Lutheran Church was the negative one of joint opposition to the Prussian union more than the positive one of unity in the Lutheran faith and doctrine. Even the new journal, mentioned by Pastor Fenger, although its contents usually display ability, liveliness, and undaunted courage, nevertheless betrays conditions existing in the communion in which it was born. Alongside the pure doctrine of the church we find there, it is true, much that is new, original, creatively produced. But we are of the opinion that the Prussian Lutheran Church should heed what Dr. Muenkel wrote in the conclusion of his report when he had returned from the conference of Prussian Lutherans in Berlin, having served as a member of a commission: "This church least of all is entrusted with the task of seeking to inaugurate progress or new formations in the field of doctrine; every considerable step of this nature threatens to bring about a schism." Would to God the Prussian Lutheran Church had taken the path we have traveled (may this remark be pardoned which sounds vain, but does not arise from vanity) and had studied thoroughly the writings of our old loyal teachers, especially Luther, and had placed before the public what it found

there. In that case we are certain its development would have been different, and it would not now face an abyss which threatens its destruction. Indeed, if it will not first of all in humility be willing to learn of our believing fathers and only after such instruction undertake to teach and to be creatively active, its fate is sealed. Like a drop in the ocean it will finally disappear—we speak of the ocean of the great new church which ultimately will call itself by the old Lutheran name just as the Roman Church claims the name "Catholic," the United that of "Evangelical," the rationalistic that of "Protestant," and which will expel the old faithful Lutheran Church as a "sect."

But whatever the developments will be, we Missourians are not aware of having any other call or task than that of presenting again the treasures of the old truly "reformed" church. These treasures have long been a dead capital lying unused in the libraries which we inherited, unless the vandalism of the last 100 years destroyed them as worthless wastepaper. It is our endeavor through earnest study, accompanied by the heartfelt prayer that God may enlighten our eyes, to appropriate these treasures and then, with the talent thus obtained, to serve the church. If in our learned, witty, creatively active age this course is considered a lowly occupation, the service of a mere assistant or clerk, very well! May we in our insignificance be permitted to render the church this lowly service. We desire no higher distinction, but, on the contrary, do not consider ourselves worthy of rendering even this modest service. And we humbly thank God that in His grace He has until now permitted us to do this work and that He has blessed our endeavors here and in Germany abundantly above all that we did ask and think—a fact for which, if it served a good purpose, we could produce many witnesses.

Now, in reacting to the above, Pastor Fengler will say that he does not criticize that we reproduce the old Lutheran doctrine, but rather that we do not produce what is old in a form which might be called original, that we usually submit it in numerous quotations. The following is our response to that criticism. One notices that in our church numerous writers come forward with the claim to print nothing but the old truth, but who maintain that they

clothe it in a new dress, that they develop it more clearly, accurately, and profoundly, that they make it serve more adequately the needs and demands of our time, that they provide for it a more correct, or rather the lately discovered and solely correct, Scripture proof; and with regret one sees that while making the claim mentioned, these writers introduce a totally new doctrine, an altogether new religion, in the church. Some of them may be ignorant of the significance of their course; others, however, are evidently practicing a *pia fraus*. The latter look upon the Lutheran Church as a beautiful, old, strong, storm-defying building; hence they think it would be a pity to tear it down and to erect a less substantial structure, one that is not yet established in the consciousness of a people on account of its new style; and they consider it advisable to keep as much of the old walls and rafters as possible, to retain the old name, the old ceremonies, the old ornaments; the only difference is to be, that from now on a better doctrine, a system in which all branches of science are brought into one harmonious whole and which will finally appeal even to those that are philosophically trained, is to be proclaimed from the pulpit of the venerable cathedral. With this class of theologians we do not wish to have any truck. We are absolutely serious when we say that we consider the teachings of the old Lutheran Church as the teachings of the true church and that we do not desire to promulgate any other. To manifest this our conviction is one of the reasons why we so often quote the fathers.

In addition there exists today a frightening confusion, lack of clarity, and ignorance as to what is genuinely Lutheran. Hence it would be unwise for us, who are constantly regarded as poor, unreliable amateurs, to attempt to set forth genuine Lutheran doctrine in our own phraseology and, perhaps from motives of pride, to refuse to let our teachers and authorities do the speaking. This doctrine, it must not be forgotten, is still regarded with a certain piety by theologians and still more by our laity. We are firmly convinced that even if we could present the pure Lutheran doctrine with greater adequacy and urgency than our fathers (a thing which we are not able to do), our witness would discredit rather than commend and promote it. Our age indeed boasts of having eman-

culated itself finally from human authority, but it is only too evident that more than ever the great question nowadays is, *Who* is doing the speaking? A theological celebrity may without misgivings write things which, if penned by an insignificant author, would be ridiculed as plain folly, but coming from such an authority, they are confidently assumed to convey some profound truth. *Exempla sunt odiosa*. Who are we that in such an age as this we could hope to get a hearing in endeavors of our own, to win recognition as Lutheran teachings for tenets which in many a case are considered Lutheran neither by theologians nor by the common people!

Furthermore, the fact must be borne in mind that we here have opponents claiming to be the most loyal Lutherans who constantly in their anathemas persecute us as enemies of the Lutheran Church and teachings, branding us at one time as Papists, at another as unionists and enthusiasts. These opponents, while they always insist on Lutheran orthodoxy, believe and teach the very opposite of what Luther and his faithful followers believed and taught; and posing as old-time Lutherans, they deceive the people in sad fashion. Now, if we do not wish to remain idle when we see how our people are deceived by so-called Lutherans and are led to consider crypto-Papists as pillars of Lutheranism and to regard the old pure evangelical Lutheran doctrine professed by us as the dross of false enthusiasm, what else can we do than demonstrate black on white from the writings of Luther and his co-workers and followers what really was the teaching of these men of God whose tombs our opponents in their pretensions are now constructing? Since the latter use all manner of tricks which delude the ignorant and through which even the clearest statements of a Luther, a Chemnitz, a Gerhard, and others are tortured and twisted till they say the opposite of what the words express, how easy would it be for our opponents to make people believe we are heretics if, to avoid the charge of mechanically repeating the words of others or of merely "reciting a number of correct and excellent propositions" (terms used by Pastor Fengler), we should deduce our teachings from the Scriptures in our own individual way!

If we here in this country had not, as it were, resurrected the fathers of our church from the dead and enlisted them to speak

for us, there would long ago have arisen such a confusion that even the most sincere believers would have been misled and we with our poor, unalloyed Lutheran doctrine would have been avoided as apostates by thousands who now fully and joyously share our faith and profession. The blessing that descended upon our witness in this country has been great, let us say it in order to give glory to God, but we shall never forget that, owing to divine grace, the main cause of this blessing was the fact that we did not place ourselves, but our fathers in the teacher's chair, and these teachers, God be praised for it! still are confidently regarded by thousands upon thousands as faithful stewards of the mysteries of God—a confidence accorded them in a measure which is not granted to any living theologian.

Pastor Fengler is right when he says: "The writings of the fathers have to be assimilated," and "the profession must proceed from our inmost shrine where faith has its habitation." We are certain that this can be affirmed of us. We think that the very way in which we quote authorities for our teachings must have demonstrated that we did not look up these quotations in the indexes, but that we had appropriated the whole body of the old doctrine and laid hold of it in live fashion, that we had made it our very own, the treasure of our heart's faith—a treasure for which we not only have gladly suffered all the opprobrium hurled at us but also are willing to make even greater sacrifices. If anybody thinks that such quoting is possible without acquaintance with the whole system of doctrine, let him try it!

We wish to say by the way that in the more than 17 volumes of our *Lutheraner* we often had to deal with non-Lutherans. These volumes may render their testimony on the question whether through God's grace we know how to meet those that do not recognize any Lutheran authorities and who do not ask whether a certain teaching is Lutheran, but whether it is Biblical. Let the reader see whether we are able to prove Lutheran teaching to be Biblical and to refute the opposing error. On the latter point we should not have wasted any words if the presumptuous invectives and judgments of Pastor Fengler in the journal of Ehlers had

not compelled us to make these remarks.⁸ For what we in a sense gave as our own we consider as nothing in comparison with the grace God granted us to assist in raising Luther and his most important pupils from the dead and making them the teachers of our age.

⁸ Ehlers permits Fengler to write: "Christianity is always confession of faith, and confession proceeds from the inmost shrine where faith has its habitation. But in the case of the Missourians, Christianity is rather a recital of a number of correct, excellent doctrinal propositions." Even our worst enemies have not attacked us in a more presumptuous and arrogant manner. Such an insolent remark is not compensated for, but rather made more venomous when Pastor Fengler says, among other things: "The Missourians indeed possess learning and experience in the wisdom of the Lutheran fathers. . . . In the American journals, too, one can find many good things. Everything is very clear. The zeal for Lutheran doctrine which distinguishes the Missourians more than other people is worthy of imitation. For me an article in *Lehre und Wehre* for December 1859, presenting a comparison of Luther with Johann Arndt and A. H. Franke, was instructive. The treatment seems to me to be excellent." Apparently there are people in Germany, too, who praise the Missouri Synod, this thorn in the flesh of the pseudo-Lutherans, in order to be able, while posing as impartial onlookers, to damn it all the more thoroughly.