



October 26

Commemoration: Philipp Nicolai, 1608, hymnwriter

Nicolai, Philipp, D.D., son of Dieterich Nicolai, sometime Lutheran pastor at Herdecke, in Westphalia, and after 1552, at Mengerlinghausen in Waldeck, was born at Mengerlinghausen, August 10, 1556. (The father was son of Nicolaus Rafflenbol, of Rafflenbol, near Hagen, in Westphalia, and in later life had adopted the Latinised form Nicolai of his father's Christian name as his own surname.) In 1575 Nicolai entered the University of Erfurt, and in 1576 he went to Wittenberg. After completing his University course in 1579 (D.D. at Wittenberg July 4, 1594), he lived for some time at Volkliardinghausen, near Mengerlinghausen, and frequently preached for his father. In August, 1583, he was appointed Lutheran preacher at Herdecke, but found many difficulties there, the members of the Town Council being Roman Catholics. After the invasion by the Spanish troops in April, 1586, his colleague re-introduced the Mass, and Nicolai resigned his post. In the end of 1586 he was appointed diaconus at Niederwildungen, near Waldeck, and in 1587 he became pastor there. He then became, in Nov. 1588, chief pastor at Altwildungen, and also court preacher to the widowed Countess Margafetha of Waldeck, and tutor to her son, Count Wilhelm Ernst. Here he took an active part on the Lutheran side in the Sacramentarian controversy, and was, in Sept. 1592, inhibited from preaching by Count Franz of Waldeck, but the prohibition was soon removed, and in the Synod of 1593 held at Mengerlinghausen, he found all the clergy of the principality of Waldeck willing to agree to the Formula of Concord.

In October, 1596, he became pastor at Unna, in Westphalia, where he again became engaged in heated controversy with the Calvinists; passed through a frightful pestilence (see below); and then on Dec. 27, 1598, had to flee before the invasion of the Spaniards, and did not return till the end of April, 1599. Finally, in April 1601, he was elected chief pastor of St. Katherine's Church, at Hamburg, where he entered on his duties Aug. 6, 1601. On Oct. 22, 1608, he took part in the ordination of a colleague in the St. Katherine's Church, the diaconus Peshora, and returned home feeling unwell. A violent fever developed itself, under which he sank, and died Oct. 26, 1608 (*D. Philipp Nicolai's Leben und Lieder*, by L. Curtze, 1859; *Koch*, ii. 324; *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* xxiii. 607, &c).

In Hamburg Nicolai was universally esteemed, was a most popular and influential preacher, and was regarded as a "pillar" of the Lutheran church. In his private life he seems to have been most lovable and estimable. Besides his fame as a preacher, his reputation rests mainly on his hymns. His printed works are mostly polemical, often very violent and acrid in tone, and such as the undoubted sincerity of his zeal to preserve pure and unadulterated Lutheranism may explain, but cannot be said to justify. Of his hymns only four seem to have been printed.