

Dr. Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther.

[*The American Luther.**]

A HUNDRED YEARS AFTER Heinrich Melchior Mühlenberg closed his eyes (1787), the man died, through whom the LORD has blessed the Lutheran Church the most in the nineteenth century, indeed quite profusely, C. F. W. Walther. († May 7, 1887 in St. Louis).

Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, descending from an old preacher family, was born at Langenchursdorf in Saxony on October 25, 1811. His father was Pastor Gottlieb Heinr[ich] Wilhelm Walther, his mother was named Johanna Wilhelmine, née Zschenderlein from Zwickau. Ferdinand was the eighth child of eleven; the fourth of the sons. His childhood training in the house of his parents was strict but not harsh. His father, although having been raised in rationalism, taught his children that the Bible is God's Word, and a wealth of Scripture texts and hymns, which the boy made his own, and which came alive within him later while, as a student at Schneeberg amid resolute rationalistic teachers, he didn't have a life of faith worth mentioning. "I was eighteen years old when I left the *Gymnasium* [University preparatory school] and had not yet heard a single phrase taken from the Word of God coming out of a believing mouth. I never had a Bible, nor a catechism, but only a miserable textbook which contained heathen morals." When he graduated from the *Gymnasium*, he wanted to become a musician. He had outstanding talents for music and was a skillful organist all his life, and was happy when he could indulge in playing on a good instrument. But his father was averse to this career: "If you want to be a musician, see how you manage, but if you will study theology, I'll give you a Taler weekly."

Not just this promise, but the great impression which the biography of Johann Friedrich Oberlin (by G. H. Schubert) made upon him, which his brother Hermann, who was studying theology for two years, brought with him during vacation, destined him to the study of theology. He saw in Oberlin how blessed the sphere of activity of a pastor can be. "From this invaluable little book, I have absorbed . . . an unshakable faith in God."

In October 1829, he entered the university of Leipzig. His very good *Gymnasium* marks secured him "one cord of wood" for support; otherwise he was dependent on the "weekly Taler." He didn't own a Bible yet; he would have liked to buy one, but lacked the money.¹ "One day he had only a few pennies. He had no idea what he would live off of in the following days, if he spent them on a Bible. He finally said to himself: 'I am certainly spending the money for God's Word; He will help and will not leave me in a lurch.'" The Bible was purchased [by him]. In the following days, a peasant from Langenchursdorf visited student Walther and related that before his departure for Leipzig he had inquired at the parsonage whether his papa perhaps had something for his son. At first his father had said he couldn't think of anything, but then he reconsidered and gave him a letter which he'd like to hand over now. The peasant left. Walther opened the letter and discovered a Taler in it." Such an extra gift from his father occurred never again. On December 9, 1829, Walther wrote into his journal: "Today I read the Bible, namely the Acts of the Apostles in order to, first, orient myself in it, since I know very little about the apostles yet and I can hardly recite their names; second, in order to be edified by the examples of the effects and demonstrations of an unshakable faith." One may draw one's own conclusions from these words about the religious instruction at the *Gymnasium*.

A confession in Christ, God's Son and Savior of sinners, was not heard from the professors of theology at the university at that time; they were avowed rationalistic or rational believers with the exception of F. W. Lindner, Sr. and August Hahn. It probably happened in those days that students of theology carried a Bible in procession singing: "Now let us bury the corpse."

But by the gracious guidance of God, young Walther came in contact with a group of students of whom he later wrote²: "This small body of men met at certain days of every week for joint prayer, for common reading of the Holy Scriptures for the purpose of edification and mutual exchange of the one thing which is needed. For a time,

am, to be able to publicly testify to this here once more! But I am looking forward even more so to be able one day to thank her with a perfect heart on high before the throne of the Lamb and in the presence of all angels and the elect, for what she once had done for me, the one most wanting.”

And a further comforter and helper in his spiritual distress, he found at that time in Pastor Martin Stephan, the future leader of the Saxon emigration. He had turned to him, asking him for advice and direction from God’s Word. “When he received the reply, he didn’t open the letter before he had fervently implored God to protect him from accepting false consolation should such be contained in the written reply. But after he had read it, he felt as though he was suddenly removed from hell into heaven. The tears shed for such a long time of anguish and misery were now transformed into tears of true heavenly joy.” (*Bünger’s Biography*, p. 29)

Walther left the university around Easter 1833. Due to serious chest trouble, he had to seek convalescence at the parental home in the winter of 1831-1832 and there he discovered Luther’s works in his father’s library, which he started to read and into which he immersed himself.

In September 1833 in Leipzig, he passed his first examination (*pro licentia concionandi*), in the year 1836 in Dresden, his second (*pro candidatura*). About the intervening years, we only want to remark that, like many others, he spent them as private tutor. He held this position at the home of counselor Friedmann Löberat Cahla in the Altenburg area, faithfully and in blessedness busy with his pupils, yet in contact by constant correspondence with his like-minded university associates, who as believing preachers have in part received their first dressing-down from the high church authorities, and who had their first experience in seeing that the Gospel is a stumbling block and foolishness to the natural man—to the highborn as well as the beggar.

Walther, too, had the same experience, after he (1837) was called by the believing secretary of state Count von Einsiedel to the pastorate at Bräunsdorf near Penig in Saxony. In what great spiritual ignorance and moral degeneration he found the congregation there neglected by rationalism for forty years, and how he strove to provide reforms by preaching above all the fundamental doctrine of God’s Word clearly and

simply; further, how he was vehemently persecuted by his rationalistic superintendents, by his unbelieving schoolteacher because of it, how he guarded against and resisted the use of rationalistic books introduced into church and school (*Agende*, hymnal, *Schulfreund*); Günther’s book describes all of that vividly and extensively. I refer the reader to it and mention only that these experiences in office were largely it which let the notion mature in the brothers Walther and several of their university friends that it was their dictates of conscience to take part in the emigration, which Pastor M. Stephan had announced for some time already to be likely forthcoming, and for which he gave the signal in 1838.

Before I tell about it, I want to express myself, at least briefly, about the leader of this emigration.

I will never believe that Martin Stephan was a deliberate hypocrite the entire time during which he was pastor of the Bohemian congregation in Dresden, hence from the year 1810 on.

When he, by trade a journeyman linen weaver, applied himself to the study of the Holy Scripture in order to become a preacher, he certainly wasn’t suited any more for the philological knowledge of such, and the Latin examination had to be forgone. But his extensive reading of good devotional literature of our church was not meager and really became second nature with him, so that he lived and breathed the theology presented therein. In the years 1825 and 1826, he published a complete annual set of sermons on the Gospels, which he had preached to his “Bohemian Congregation of St. John” in Dresden in 1824 and 1825. The motto of the first volume is Col. 2:8: “See to it that no one spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” The motto of the second part of sermons is Eph. 4:14: “Don’t let yourselves be tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.” He gave his work the title “The Christian Faith.” In the moving dedication prayer “for blessing for the present book,” which starts with the words: “Lord Jesus Christ, true head of Your church!” he closes: “It is my sincere desire and prayer to You, that this book will

bring many salutary fruits; but I cannot effect this, You have to do that through Your power. Now, bless it, O Jesus, to all who will read it. When those, who already believe in You, will read it, help that their faith will grow and that they will be truly fruitful for a godly life by this reading, too. Should deeply grieved and deeply troubled souls read it, grant them to taste solace which I hold up to them from Your Holy Word! Are they erring ones who will seek truth in it, grant them Your divine light, that they accept the words of truth which I present here and that they attain an unshakable faith. Should this, my testimony, get into the hands of the most wretched of my brothers, namely into the hands of those who reject and despise You and Your Word, who seek their salvation in their unbelief, alas, move their hearts that they may well consider the warnings which I have cried out to them, that they come to You and worship at Your feet and find mercy before God! – Grant unto me the joy of learning that I have not labored in vain! Whatever is good in this work is Your gift. The imperfections, however, are my own. Let this, my testimony, be a living voice in many souls which calls them unto You, and a bond which keeps them near You! When I, early or late, tired from my daily task, will seek my last and greatest rest by You, O my salvation, then, You, God of Peace, let me find this eternal rest before your countenance, acknowledge me before Your Heavenly Father; let then discover to my salvation what I have preached here, and let me blissfully fall asleep in the faith in You which I describe and confess here! I will then testify more perfectly of You. With Your select, I will then praise You not with imperfect writing but with transfigured tongue and proclaim: ‘The Lord has made everything well! Praised be His name forever! Hallelujah!’ – Now, Lord of Your Church, bless this book, bless my readers and also me! Amen!”

When one reads Martin Stephan’s sermons, one finds them to a high degree rousing, edifying, instructive. Everywhere one finds the wealth of Holy Scripture employed for meditation and illumination of the individual text. The introduction of the topic and of the sections is mostly followed by a short, fervent prayer. These prayers, if compiled, would, with only slight changes, make an excellent prayer booklet. The

instructions are simple and unaffected. All of these sermons have a testimonial character. Errors are not lacking from them, but essentially it is actually the “Christian faith” that is preached here with a power, certainty and insistence, that I have not again come across in a “devout” sermon book between 1820 and 1830. Devout sermon books of this period of the still prevailing rationalism certainly are not very numerous; nearly all exhibit something timidly fearful which begs, as it were, forbearance. Stephan always addresses his sermons to “through the blood of Christ dearly purchased listeners;” he addresses them thus all the time, and what Christ has done for us, is the sum of his teaching.

He didn’t preach about the miracle of the feeding [of the five thousand] like the rationalists of his time, “how hard it is to keep order of several thousand people at a remote area without police supervision,” nor about “the quiet control which virtue maintains over people by its presence” (Reinhard), but on the 7th Sunday after Trinity, he preached on Mark 8:1-9: Christ cares for our body and soul. Let us 1. properly consider this truth; 2. bear in mind how we have to apply it to our bodily and spiritual cares;” and on Sunday *Laetare* [fourth Sunday in Lent] (John 6:26-40), he points out: “We find that which can satisfy our heart for eternity only in Christ; for we find in Him: 1. perfect holiness which is sufficient for all demands of God for righteousness; 2. peace that even death and devil cannot destroy; 3. solace which sweetens all suffering of this time; 4. salvation which lasts for eternity.”

Karl August von Hase relates: “I have heard him preach in 1825, in bad German, but with natural, touching eloquence. He was considered at that time as strictly Lutheran. His favorite subject was original sin and the expiatory death [of Christ]. “ And contrary to [Carl Eduard] Vehse, whose works he, however, didn’t read carefully enough, Hase remarks: “It doesn’t seem likely to me that his entire life was a deception. He was serious about his orthodoxy; his proud desires were aroused and released only in later years probably by absolute veneration and power, surely in Saxony already.”* (III, 2, 428) This is exactly my conviction, which is based on testimony of those who have heard Stephan throughout the years, without being members of

his congregation and without following him; and the liberal church historian has here judged psychologically more accurately and more justly than most of the pious and godless adversaries of the "Stephanists;" who portray Stephan as a perfect hypocrite at all times, through whom they had seen from the start, and to have let themselves be betrayed by him, speaks badly of Walther's and his associates' knowledge of human nature. Of course, Walther's brother Hermann seems to have been more trustful than other "Stephanists;" that this, however, is not the case with C. Ferdinand W. Walther, becomes most clearly evident by the fact that Stephan called him "his Judas" and would liked to have prevented his coming along to America. (Compare, Johann Friedrich Köstering, *Auswanderung der sächsischen Lutheraner im Jahre 1838* [*The Emigration of the Saxon Lutheran in the Year 1838*], St. Louis, Mo. 1866, page 39.)

When one examines the interesting subscription list printed with Stephan's book of sermons, it allows a glimpse into a wide area of activity and correspondence of Stephan. Besides Dresden and environs and besides all larger and smaller towns of Saxony, there are also represented: Berlin, Breslau, Brunswick, Cologne, Cöthen, Gnadefrei, Ludwigslust, Merseburg, Niesky, Peterswalde, Vienna, Wernigerode. His sermons are equally in demand in Anhalt, Lippe, Mecklenburg, Silesia and Thuringia as in Saxony and Bohemia. It is mostly artisans who want to have his sermons in two, four, six and even more copies, but also a number of higher and lower officials, rarely booksellers, here and there teachers., pastors, councilors of the consistory and a good many aristocrats. There is countess Bernhardine zur Lippe, burgrave and count zu Dohna, count Anton zu Stolberg-Wernigerode, count Reuß [Reuss] Heinrich LXIII, grand duchess Augusta von Mecklenburg-Schwerin and her royal household, Protestants, Moravians and Catholics like Don Ignaz Thomas at St. Michael [cathedral] in Vienna. There people have heard of him and his witness of Christ everywhere and they were desirous to hear more. And he didn't let the threads of ecclesiastical communication break off. Hundreds have turned to him as spiritual father, seeking advice and comfort to spiritual

questions for the soul which remained empty because of their rationalistic preachers; and he at times had considered his duty to answer so many letters that his Bohemian congregation in Dresden, which of course had first claim to him, began to complain about neglect. Naturally, the advice requested of him had often defied unfaithful ministers, hirelings, gluttonous parsons (*Bauchpfaffen*) [literally, belly parsons] and false prophets, and the number of his "ecclesiastical" adversaries increased also with the number of those who desired his advice. Regrettably his spiritual self-conceit and haughtiness increased provably thereby too, and his closer company suffered also in wholly external, non-spiritual things under his utter brutal dogmatism. But when in Saxony, the first complaints about his unhappy family life and about the female following, which was often found in his retinue by day and also at nightly walks, made themselves heard, it wasn't difficult for him to portray the vile gossip aimed at him and his domestic disintegration, as having to put up not only with good but also "with bad rumors" and as new proof that "man's," namely the Christian's, "enemies will be persons belonging to his own family."

Those who followed him have regarded his suspicion as suffering for Christ's sake and didn't believe the accusations by a part of his congregation concerning dishonest conduct any more than this, that the king had been induced to suppress the accusation of immoral behavior only because of undue influence. They relied on that nothing was proved against him during the investigations and that "repeatedly conducted judicial investigations had always ended in Stephan's exoneration." Stephan, after all, said, when he announced his resolute declaratory act in the first months of 1838 that they have to depart that year: "God, perhaps, intends something big for me yet, therefore I had to experience here yet so much disgrace and humiliation. Whom God wants to make great, him He humbles first, in order that he will not exalt himself later."

However, we are not dealing with the Stephanian emigration at all. Whoever wants detailed information about it, may look up the description by Köstering and possibly the one by Vehse [*Die Stephan'sche Auswanderung nach Amerika* (*The Stephanian Emigration to*

America)] which mentions many a detail not reported by the former, but which puts very important occurrences from the time of the exposure of Stephan in a very absurd light. We are dealing with the life of C. F. W. Walther.

He and his brother, besides Pastors Ernst G. W. Keyl, their brother-in-law, and Gotthold H. Löber, Ernst. M. Bürger and various candidates of theology, belonged to who had joined Stephan *bona fide*, in good faith, when he gave the order to depart for America in order to establish the church of the Lutheran confession in that country of political and religious freedom, because it was impossible to retain the pure Lutheran Christianity in Germany. C. F. W. Walther resigned his office with a heavy heart on the fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, 1838; individual families of his congregation went with him. The meeting place of the approximately eight hundred emigrants was Bremen. There was no more room on the ship "Amalia" with which he was to sail, so he sailed on the "Johann Georg." Of the five ships, which were to bring the emigrants to New Orleans, the "Amalia" sank.

After the passengers of the other four ships had reached New Orleans and had been reunited again, they sailed up the Mississippi and reached St. Louis on Feb. 19, 1839. The members of the emigration congregation remaining in St. Louis called Pastor Otto Hermann Walther as preacher; the others settled in Perry County and separated into several smaller congregations which called the remaining emigrant pastors. C. F. W. Walther, who had come to Perry County in the month of May 1839, took charge of Dresden and then Johannisberg.

"Despite the existence of abject poverty," and despite the dreadful scandal which M. Stephan's exposure caused, which will be briefly discussed later on, "Candidates Ottomar Fürbringer, Theodor J. Brohm and Johann Fr. Bünger, living in the colony at that time, nevertheless, thought about establishing an institution for the training of pastors and teachers. Walther, Löber and Keyl concurred with the plan of the candidates also and assented with their active cooperation. Together with Walther, they bought six acres of land in the settlement Dresden and provided also for the erection of a log cabin, for which they performed the main part of the work, since the settlers had to grapple with severe poverty." In

summer 1839, the following announcement appeared in the *Anzeiger des Westens* [*Advertiser of the West*]:

"Institution of Instruction and Education.

"We, the undersigned, intend to establish an institution of instruction and education, which distinguishes itself from ordinary elementary schools especially by this, that it comprises, besides the ordinary branches, all *Gymnasium* branches (*Gymnasialwissenschaften*) necessary for a true Christian and academic education, as: Religion, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, German, French and English languages, History, Geography, Mathematics, Physics, Natural History, Elementary Philosophy, Music, Drawing.

"The pupils of our institution are to be so far advanced in the above-named studies that they, after absolving a complete course of study, shall be qualified for university studies.

"The esteemed parents, who may desire to place their children with our institution, are requested to make inquiries regarding its plan and arrangements of Pastor O. H. Walther in St. Louis, Poplar Street No. 14, between First and Second Streets. – Instructions are to begin, God willing, on the 1st of October of this year.

"At the settlement of the German Lutherans in Perry County, near the Obrazo, August 13, 1839.

C. Ferd. W. Walther. Ottomar
Fürbringer.
Th. Jul. Brohm. Joh. Fr.
Bünger."

The first students were: Hermann Bünger, Theodor Schubert, Fr. J. Biltz, J. A. F. W. Müller, Ch. H. Löber.

Two-and-a-half months previous, the Society of Emigrants had to publish the following in the *Anzeiger des Westens*:

"The undersigned felt themselves compelled several weeks ago to contradict the many nasty rumors from Germany against our Bishop Stephan which have been spread here too. Since not only according to our own observations, but also according to the stringent judicial investigations imposed upon this man, all accusations against him have remained absolutely unproven, we held foremost to his resolute Lutheran confession and had no misgivings to emigrate to America with him and

to publicly express our conviction of his innocence.

“Regrettably, however, we had an experience in the past weeks in regards to this man which convicts us of a shamefully suffered deception and which fills our hearts with abhorrence and dismay. Stephan has in fact been guilty of the secret sin of lust, infidelity and hypocrisy; and we have to be the ones to whom the confessions were made unasked, who expose him, and of which we immediately have made the necessary notifications to others.

“Just as we had defended this man previously in ignorance and in voluntary loyalty, we publicly disassociate ourselves now from this fallen person, since God has opened our eyes through His gracious guidance.

“We hope to God that He Who has protected us and our congregation, emigrated with us, will avert all harmful consequences of the prevailing gross scandal from us and others.”

This declaration of May 27, 1839 was signed by Pastors Löber, Keyl, Bürger and Walther. Stephan’s deposition judgment was dated: “Perry County, May 30, 1839.” He was then removed from the society. He was ferried across the Mississippi in a small boat to the Illinois side to a place which the sailors call “Devil’s Oven” (“*Teufels-Backofen*”), because at this point many a ship has run aground and many a human life has perished. Stephan remained there for some time and accepted the call to a union congregation. He died without any indication of repentance on February 22, 1846 and is buried in the graveyard near Red Bud, Illinois. The exact place where he lies is unknown. That is also a memento which speaks yet almost louder than if one were to read on a memorial stone: “Martin Stephan, a leader and misleader of many souls. Whoever is standing, may well see to it that he does not fall.”

The effect of the unmasking of Stephan upon the entire society was terrible. The greater the veneration, nay, near deification, had been with which Stephan had been paid homage to, the more dreadful was the rebound. They had let themselves be persuaded by him in accession to the Swedish Lutheran Church constitution to acknowledge him as “Bishop;” to kiss his hand had become a standing courtesy at soirées; the

society’s declaration of submission of February 1839, demanded by Stephan, had been executed yet during the journey from New Orleans to St. Louis on the steamboat “Selma;” also “in the communal,” in the management of the cash box, he had seized near dictatorial power. And now he stood there before church and world as a godless hypocrite, disgraced and a desecrator, as a defrauder and squanderer of other people’s property, as a seducer of body and soul, as a pillory of Lutheranism for which the Saxons, who had emigrated for the sake of their faith, wanted to prepare a place in America.

Now they were thunderstruck. Everything that had been well-established for them up to now, whatever had induced them to emigrate, faltered for them, except one thing: God’s Word and the Confession of our Church which they didn’t want to abandon and which preachers and listeners clasped the more so now as the only remaining unbreakable anchor for them. “The cardinal questions,” Walther wrote to his brother at that time, “concerning us now are: ‘Are our congregations Christian/-Lutheran (*christlutherish*) congregations? Or are they factions? Sects? Do they have the power to call and to ban? Are we pastors or not? Are our vocations valid? Do we still belong to Germany? Could we have been divinely called here, since we left our German divine calling and have run away after our false conscience? Shouldn’t the congregations dismiss us, since they now, along with us, realize the great offense we have caused? Wouldn’t it be better if the congregations would dismiss us at least, would seek for a time to maintain themselves through the practice of the spiritual priesthood and then either choose the old or new pastors?’ It is impossible for me to write you all the various answers to all these questions which can be given to them.”

In the aberration of conscience, they went as far as to declare the emigration in itself as sin, not only the offenses occurring by it, e.g., the severing of family ties. They harbored distrust of all pastors and they doubted the validity of their official acts.

Karl A. Hase (III, 2, p. 429) writes: “A sermon of (the older?) Pastor Walther printed in St. Louis at the end of the church year, 1840, which came into my possession, recollects that event as one of collective guilt, in which individuals had a part

to a varying degree. 'We had a man among us who bore all the marks of antichrist and was nevertheless an idol of the congregation, whose disfavor and anathema we feared more than God's wrath, and upon whose word one listed more than to God's Word. We indeed did sell our freedom, dearly bought by Christ, and became slaves of men! We indeed did deny our baptism and became slaves of priests! Talk was heard among us: the church rests upon two eyes! And we clergymen did not resist, but consented'."

However, the cause of the Lutheran Church in America was not lost with Stephan. Faithful God has succored her largely through Walther's service. By diligent study of the Holy Scriptures and by indefatigable search of Luther's writings, he shed light on all the questions which so deeply troubled him and the sorely afflicted congregation at that time, and he summarized what he discerned from God's Word into the following eight theses, which he has defended and upheld in a disputation at Altenburg in April 1841 against all opposition coming from the congregation itself.

1. The true Church, in the most real and most perfect sense, is the totality (*Gesamtheit*) of all true believers, who from the beginning to the end of world from among all peoples and tongues have been called and sanctified by the Holy Spirit through the Word. And since God alone knows these true believers (2 Tim. 2:19), the Church is also called invisible. No one belongs to this true Church who is not spiritually united with Christ, for it is the spiritual body of Jesus Christ.

2. The name of the true Church belongs also to all those visible companies of men among whom God's Word is purely taught and the holy Sacraments are administered according to the institution of Christ. True, in this Church there are godless men, hypocrites, and heretics, but they are not true members of it, nor do they constitute the Church.

3. The name Church, and, in a certain sense, the name true Church, belongs also to those visible companies of men who have united under the confession of a falsified faith and therefore have incurred the guilt of a partial departure from the truth; provided they possess

so much of God's Word and the holy Sacraments in purity that children of God may thereby be born. When such companies are called true churches, it is not the intention to state that they are faithful, but only that they are real churches as opposed to all worldly organizations (*Gemeinschaften*).

4. The name Church is not improperly applied to heterodox companies; but according to the manner of speech of the Word of God itself. It is also not immaterial that this high name is allowed to such communions, for out of this follows:

a) That members also of such companies may be saved; for without the Church there is no salvation.

5. b) The outward separation of a heterodox company from an orthodox Church is not necessarily a separation from the universal Christian Church nor a relapse into heathenism and does not yet deprive that company of the name Church.

6. c) Even heterodox companies have church power; even among them the goods of the Church may be validly administered, the ministry established, the Sacraments validly administered, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven be exercised.

7. d) Even heterodox companies are not to be dissolved, but reformed.

8. The orthodox Church is chiefly to be judged by the common, orthodox, public confession to which its members acknowledge and confess themselves to be pledged.⁴

These theses contain, in deed and truth, the short sum total of the biblical doctrine of the Church. The realization at that time that they are securely grounded in God's Word, had set the deeply vexed and bewildered congregation of Saxon emigrants aright again. Indeed, we are still Christians, are still Lutherans, bear the true and unmistakable mark of the true Church still, have the Office of the Keyes yet, the power to forgive and to retain sins and to establish the ministry which preaches reconciliation among us. This they now learned virtually, and their hearts were filled with comfort of the Holy Spirit over that.

Twenty-five years later at the opening of the synodical meeting in the same Altenburger congregation, Pastor Georg A. Schieferdecker said justly of that disputation: "It was the Easter-day of our severely tested congregations, where they, like the disciples, saw again the Lord Who was believed to be dead and in the power of His resurrection were filled with joy and hope. As important and significant the Leipzig Disputation of 1519 became for the Reformation, the disputation held here has become just as important – I dare say it confidently – for the entire subsequent formation and development of our Lutheran Church here in the West. Whatever was then achieved and obtained as the jewel of truth has proved itself in all following battles which our Synod has led."

We cannot possibly describe those battles to the reader here, not even briefly, [we] refer him rather to the life of Dr. C. F. W. Walther drawn up by Prof. M. Günther which presents to him a good part of American church history from the nineteenth century.

We want to rather step to the end of the career of this witness of Christ in spirit and briefly survey what has become of the small beginnings of the church affairs of those days and above all what good from the Lord befell the Lutheran Church through his service.

It may be useful to do this in connection to the statistical notices of the "Amerikanischer Kalender für deutsche Lutheraner auf das Jahr 1888," ["German counterpart of the "Lutheran Annual"] which in its "Church Review" about the happenings of the year 1887 mentions above all the death of Dr. Walther on May 7, 1887, 5:30 o'clock in the evening, after he had remembered the golden ordination jubilee which Walther was permitted to celebrate by the grace of God on January 16th of that year.

Indeed, he has remained minister or pastor of the Lutheran general congregation in St. Louis until his end. He was chosen as pastor of the Lutheran congregation in St. Louis on February 8, 1841, after his older brother Otto Hermann had passed away in Christ on January 21st. On Jubilate Sunday [4th Sun. of Easter] 1841, he preached his inaugural sermon. After he had procured peace from the restless spirits in the vehement strife in the congregation and after congregation regulations and vestry regulations

had been drawn up and agreed upon, the congregation, through sermons and instructive discussions in congregation meetings, was spiritually so strengthened that it was delighted to start the building of a church although being very poor yet. The vestry of the Episcopalian church (Christ Church), in whose lower room it had until that time held its worship services, began to make trouble. Thus a building started by the 325 souls, and the (old) Trinity Church was dedicated on December 4, 1842, (2nd Sun. in Advent). The congregation had grown to 944 souls by 1849. And when in that year, Walther was called as professor and director of the seminary, which had been relocated from Altenburg to Saint Louis, and the congregation decided to let him leave in peace only if he would remain its pastor at the same time; they came to an agreement, that he, as pastor, preach thirteen times a year, attend the congregation meetings and vestry meetings and superintend the congregation. This decision remained essentially in effect throughout many years, and Walther had alternately preached on the specific Sundays and festivals in four different churches after one Lutheran congregation after the other was established in Saint Louis. When Walther died, there were nine larger and smaller congregations in Saint Louis.

The collections of sermons published during his lifetime and afterwards his posthumous works give ample testimony about what kind of a preacher Walther was. I am calling attention here to only one thing. As head of Concordia Seminary, he surely had also to see to it when he preached that he was an example to the future shepherds of congregations in this point too. His sermons never, absolutely never, offended through an ignoble utterance. His language is always refined, but never artificial; his speech is effective, but never grandstands. One surely feels the pains taken to perfect the form of speech by so many highly esteemed positive pulpit orators of Germany (Kögel, Max Frommel, Zezschwitz as well). His sermons have cost the blessed Dr. Walther pains and hard toil, too, but he has utilized them primarily for the right content, in order to proclaim the entire counsel of God for our salvation quite plainly and clearly for everyone, quite rousingly and emphatically, so that even the silly ones become wise and the fools may not

miss the right way. His aim was to make the individual truths of the Christian faith and life important, intelligible, powerful and comforting for all listeners. One perceives in every sermon: this man speaks in the name and charge of God; he knows that his testimony is truth. That it is spirit and life. He doesn't preach himself, but Christ, the crucified and risen. He doesn't seek his glory, but with his whole heart and soul and with all his strength, Christ's glory, and [seeks] eternal salvation for his listeners. His newly accepted congregation members could tell by the addresses with which he welcomed them at their admission into the congregation that that was his only object; the heartfelt, fervent prayers with which he used to open the meetings of the voting members of the entire congregation (*Gesamtgemeinde*).

At the time, 1849, when Walther took over the directorship of Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, God had also bestowed great benefits to many Lutherans outside of St. Louis already through him and his service. First, through the publication of the *Lutheraner* from September 1844 on. After that, however, through the organization – occurring in Chicago on April 26, 1847 – of the “Deutsche evangelisch-lutherische Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten,” which elected him its president and which now also took over the *Lutheraner* as its organ. Christian Hochstetter's *Geschichte der Missouri-Synode* shows how much of a blessing was caused by it right from its beginning. The Synod, of fifteen pastors and twelve congregations in 1847, had already grown to 81 pastors and 95 congregations through the joining of many Löhe missionaries (*Sendlinge*) in the course of four years. At Walther's death, the number of congregations and preaching stations amounted to more than 1,200; the number of pastors, nearly 1,000; the number of parochial schools, over 1,000; the number of schoolchildren, 70,000. Walther was to live to see this great blessing. How blessed were the sessions of the Synod when it met.

The synodical meetings of the Missouri Synod distinguished themselves from those of most other church bodies, which had hardly anything but business sessions, primarily by cultivating and discussing always and above all Christian teaching; and what wonderful contributions had

Walther furnished always, even when he wasn't the speaker (*Referent*). When the *Referent* had spoken and Walther had got up then, all eyes were fixed on him with a longing, for they knew that a satiation of the best kind was forthcoming for their spirit. Also the sermons, with which he, as president, opened the synods, used to set the right mood and pave the way for the forthcoming teaching sessions. Nearly all the time that was free between the various sessions, you could see him closely surrounded, now by pastors who wanted counsel about this or that matter, now by congregation members who let him in on their particular quarrels and now desired for him to intervene with help and advice. Whoever provided quarters for him during the synodical time, was able to see from the correspondence forwarded to him, how he was importuned by all congregations. And by all this pressed-full measure of work, he usually had “an ever cheerful heart” at synods.

He was also never missing that [the cheerful heart] in the church conflicts into which the Lord of the Church had placed him and had properly appointed him champion (*Vorkämpfer*). Whoever reads the first volumes of the *Lutheraner*, finds Walther not only instructive there, but also cheerfully and confidently contending with weapons of righteousness on the right and on the left of the battlefield of the Church. And when ten years later, our most distinguished church periodical was joined by *Lehre und Wehre* a theological and contemporary church-historical monthly journal, the greatest portion of the editorial work fell to Walther also in this more scholarly journal read mostly by pastors. And there Walther has proven himself as a Christian polemicist. He didn't dispute for the sake of disputing, but to be able to teach calmly and salutarily what God's Word teaches. He “was not itching to compete” with Johannes A. A. Grabau, or with Löhe or with his epigones, or with Friedrich A. Schmidt, Henry A. Allward, Frederick W. Stelhorn and associates. As a rule, he let the controversy come to him and put on the armor only when the adversary compelled him to and had already commenced hostilities with several trials of strength. But when he took up arms, he certainly fought to be victorious, for he didn't want to strike into the air, but find his mark; he didn't rest until every shred of the

threatening scarecrow, which the opponent had put into the field as a bugbear, had disappeared. The “exclusive’ Walther, how ironic had he been all the same! Just as little consideration he knew of old and oldest religious friendship and fellowship when the truth of the Word of God was attacked or the Lutheran Confession (*Bekennntnis*) was questioned, he was just as willing until his end to engage in discussions, colloquies, disputations where he perceived sincerity, where he could entertain hope that the other party was anxious to arrive at unity in the spirit, i.e. in the faith, in the teaching and confession of the Lutheran Church that has remained faithful. Walther has never changed his position and church praxis in this regard. Surely, it was nothing else than the heartfelt desire to obey the apostolic command: “Be diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” [Eph. 4:3], which impelled him to go to Germany with Friedrich K. D. Wyneken in 1851 on instruction of the Synod, in order to avert a break with Löhe, with the help of God. And Löhe had acknowledged that then also. However, not Walther but Löhe has changed his mind and position.⁵ This mind, after all, to possibly prevent a break, is found in Walther yet in his last controversy, the one about predestination. The ones who are no longer sincere about Scripture and Confession have finally left the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference, that “the eternal election of God not only foresees and foreknows the salvation of the elect, but is also, from the gracious will and pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, a cause which procures, works, helps, and promotes our salvation and what pertains thereto.” [*Concordia Triglotta*: ‘Thorough Declaration, XI, Of God’s Eternal Election.’ CPH, 1921, p. 1065.] And having left, because their conscience drives them, they cannot grasp and comprehend that Missouri does not keep prayer fellowship (*Gemeinschaft des Gebets*) with those who no longer have fellowship in the teaching of the apostles along with him.

There is certainly no doubt that in the many, nearly innumerable polemic articles, which Walther has written during his long life against papists, the Reformed and sectarians, as against pseudo Lutherans: Grabauans, Breslauans, Vilmarians, Löheans, Iowans, Schmidttians and

other –ans and –ians; (passages are found also in [the writings of] Luther, also [in those of] Abraham Calov(ius) and other polemicists), Walther was also very far from considering himself a perfect man who, in polemics, too, did not fail with one word and who could keep his entire body in check and who kept it in check. But this, nevertheless, remains certain: he was a true Christian and genuine Lutheran theologian as a polemicist, too. When teachers of God appear in the Church, “who teach us false semblance,” they teach us “vain, false cunning which [their] own wit devises,” then it’s a mercy from God when He bestows men to the Church who discern this misery, who make the Word of God into their armor and then enter the battlefield of the Church with a steady step.

“My salutary Word them shall back;
Confidently and vigorously they attack
And be the strength that they lack.”

And the American Lutheran Church of the nineteenth century had such a champion of Christ in C. F. W. Walther.

Walther was a worker of extraordinary productivity and zeal. When all articles by him, which are found in the first forty-three volumes (*Jahrgänge*) of the *Lutheraner*, in the thirty-three volumes of *Lehre und Wehre*, all his contributions in eleven volumes of the *Magazin für evangelisch-lutherische Homiletik*, all the synodical lectures given by him, in addition to his collection of sermons, are put next to books and tracts which were edited by him otherwise, what an amazing work do they show! Besides the abundance of opinions, of official and private letters! The attendance of synods, further, the educational institutions which he, as president, had to inspect (and that was justly a very important matter), all of that besides his regular chief occupation to lecture on Dogmatics and Pastoral Theology to the students of Concordia Seminary: it represented such an amount of work that one can hardly comprehend how he was able to accomplish it. However, he knew where he could seek and find Him Who dons His servants with strength from on high.

When Walther was at the peak of his activity and efficiency, he received visits several times (in December 1869) from Count Ernst zu Erbach-Erbach who toured North America and Cuba then, and in his *Reisebriefen aus Amerika*

(Heidelberg, 1873), still worth reading today, he also recalls the impression Walther made upon him. He says there on page 211 ff:

“I may not pass over a most interesting acquaintance, which I have made recently. The other day, I visited the general president of the Lutheran Synod of Missouri, who is pastor at the local (St. Louis) congregation and professor at Concordia College in which young clergymen are trained theologically for their duties. His name is Walther, not unknown in the theological realm. . . . I am quite prepared to count him to be one of the most eminent and most interesting and most captivating men whom I have encountered in my life. The heated struggle for the truth over the years, the incessant activity and striving for the propagation of the Word of God have developed such steadfast certainty and shining truth in all subjects of the faith, that I always had to marvel and came to the conclusion: this is the man whom God has chosen hitherto; He couldn't have found one more worthy. And indeed, He has used this instrument in order to build His Church anew here in the New World on the rock of the Confession amid storms and thunder. Through him, He has established a new home for the Lutheran Church where it, if it . . . is expelled from Germany, will be welcomed with open arms. The hope of Lutheranism rests now in America. There, while everything in all the world cracks and breaks and splinters, the seed grain of the pure truth is being sowed, cultivated and watered quietly and assiduously, unconcerned about the clamor of the entire world, with the combat weapons at the side, prepared for self-defense at any moment, so that it perceptibly brings fruit a hundredfold. Battles are waged here incessantly, the weapons can never get rusty, and that keeps the life of faith fresh and young. No foe is considered dangerous, no circumstances binding where the truth is concerned. Disputes are waged day and night, mostly with those who take the truth seriously. No sand grain of revelation shall be relinquished, everything can sooner perish. These conditions fill the person, who is concerned about the future of the Church, with great solace. Wearing such armor lets one face the decisive battles undauntedly.

“Professor Walther is an exceedingly amiable, gentle man with striking, noble features and clear, bright eyes. His conversations are

stimulating and instructive in every respect. Everything gains shape and form in his mouth and appears graphically before the listener's eyes. He answers all questions by quickly seizing the central point and illuminating everything else with it. His logic is compelling in his reasoning and his eloquence overwhelming. He is unmistakable in doctrine, charitable in language, cheerful in intercourse and lively as a youth. The hours pass like minutes in his presence. Yet, he exhibits a consolatory enthusiasm, which has its origin in the blessing that God has placed upon the work of his hands. He recalls the religious circumstances in the old homeland with love, yet with sadness. I am especially obliged to him for sacrificing long evenings for me often at which he cut short his studies. These evening hours were his favorite of the entire day; I heard that only later on. He gave me books and other writings from which I might obtain further information about Lutheranism in America. He has such clarity in his portrayal, that I, through him and only through him, acquired a fairly exact picture of the religious conditions of America. For all the wealth of his knowledge and the retrospective view at all his accomplishments, he displays, however, humility, as I have never encountered it before. He doesn't claim to have done anything himself; only the grace of God has effected everything through his weak hands. May he be around for quite a long time as a pillar of the Lutheran Church!

“My America trip is now at its zenith: temporally, for I have half of the established time behind me; and in a spiritual respect, for I have made the most important acquaintance.”

It was a wide, wide sphere of activity into which God had placed Walther. How many of the corrupt German regional churches have sought advice from him! How glad has he been over every progress of pure Lutheranism wherever he encountered it! With what interest has he followed the fate of the German Free Church, healthy in Lutheran orientation, through joy and sorrow. How has he thanked God with all the benefits He has bestowed upon our Missouri Synod, wherever opportunity presented itself. With what joy has he welcomed the Synod's acquisition of a printery and that operation's growth in scope and significance! How has he rejoiced when he saw the zeal and the self-

sacrificing devotion in his dear Missouri Synod for its educational institutions, when, from the original modest beginnings in Altenburg, one after another came into being: the gymnasium [classical secondary school] in Fort Wayne; the progymnasia [preparatory classical schools] in Milwaukee, Concordia, New Orleans, New York; the seminaries at St. Louis and Springfield; the teachers' seminary in Addison. – No less than 919 students attended all of these institutions of higher education in the year of Walther's death. – And how shone his eyes when he had the privilege to yet dedicate the magnificent St. Louis building! After all, in St. Louis he was permitted to see the institution, which had been moved there from Altenburg, come into being and grow. Also the Lutheran college in St. Louis, which later on changed its name to "Walther College," in addition, the institute for the deaf and mute in North Detroit and the various charitable institutions within the Synod (orphanages and hospitals) were very dear to his heart.



However, he especially thanked God that other orthodox synods, too, had united to a covenant, the Synodical Conference. Thus the Wisconsin Synod, the Minnesota Synod and others. The controversy for the pure doctrine of predestination naturally had here also caused a split by the withdrawal of the Ohio Synod from the Synodical Conference; but the fraternal intercourse with most of the Norwegians was maintained.

Thus Walther, for whom the rift caused much distress, had to experience much sorrow into his old age, in addition to the abundant grace of God with which he had seen his activities blessed; and that was the means in God's hand to keep him in sincere humility. The answer, among other testimony, which he gave his colleagues in Chicago when they congratulated him at the occasion of his promotion [the conferring of a doctorate] by a faculty which was at that time still in doctrinal agreement with us, gives proof

of his unfeigned humility. Walther thanked them then with the following letter:

“St. Louis, Mo., March 9th, 1878.

“To the reverend Pastors' Conference at Chicago,

Pastor H. Wunder residing at the same address.

“Reverend and beloved brethren in the Lord!

“On the occasion of my promotion, congratulations from so many dear brothers have reached me, that I am unable to answer all of them expressing the gratitude due them. You, however, have bestowed such an exceptional distinction, that my heart and conscience prevail on me not to accept it quietly.

“As you all, along with me, must have experienced innumerable times, nothing effects sincere humility as much as unearned grace, and indeed a humility, which is all the deeper the more abundant the latter is. Thus I may inform you as a consolation, while at the same time I express my most heartfelt thanks for your wholly undeserved love, that God has protected me, contrary to your *Jubelklänge* [*Sounds of Rejoicing*], only the slightest of the good that is extolled therein and ascribed to me, the most miserable among sinners, has humbled me to give Him alone all honor in fervent tears, in the most lively emotion that nothing, nothing but disgrace and shame is due me. I certainly cannot and may not deny that the work and the struggle of our dear Synod, in which I was found worthy to be allowed to stand in the front line, has been effusively blessed, however, as God has never let me forget, that all blessing was free grace, thus, by reading through your *Jubelklänge*, I have particularly felt deeply: ‘If there's something good in my life, it is truly nothing but Yours.’ The church has not really been blessed by us, but by the blessing, we got to be what we – I above all – are. Had God put some other faithful Christians into the same circumstances into which God, out of inconceivable mercy, has considered me worthy to be placed, they would have, if God would have shown them the same mercy, experienced the same blessing of their work and struggle. I was only God's mask. And, alas, such a bad and ugly one! What really was mine thereby, was my sin, my foolishness, which has corrupted and hindered much, and would have corrupted and hindered everything, if God, Who at this time

wanted to visit America in grace, would not have staved it off through His marvelous reign. When I was yet a student, God has extricated me with force from great blindness and from great sinful ruin and planted faith in His Word into my heart and has worked in me daily despite all my unfaithfulness that the small flame of my faith would not and could not extinguish. God now gave me the opportunity here and as a result of gross erring He compelled me to either seek the truth or to perish temporally and eternally. Not I decided that, however, but God determined for me to choose the former. I couldn't resist. When He called me thereupon to work and thrust me into the fight against the opposition which raised itself, I couldn't do otherwise than to hold fast to the truth and to beat back the opposition. I gained wonderful experiences then. In my loneliness on and on swaying to and fro in my heart filled with apprehension, fear, dismay, sense of sin, often nearly gripped with despair, so that my praying became almost only a mute 'my-wriggling' (*Mich-Winden*) in the dust before God; God almost always granted me, whenever I had to speak or write publicly, a confidence and a joy without which all my intending and running would have been entirely in vain. The cycle in which I have lived so far, consists of God now having humbled me, now having lifted me up, so that I indeed always knew that when a raising-up came, an utter humiliation would swiftly follow; however, when the latter was present, a lifting-up or rather a straightening-up followed always without my expectation (nay, as a rule, when I thought, 'I am done for'), soon, or also after some time of utter darkness and hiding of the divine countenance of grace.

"The following has also always been especially remarkable for me. I have taken away very meager knowledge full of gaps from school and university and was able to complete it only as circumstances might have required, haphazardly; also the collection of my library has always been haphazardly, incidental one. But finally, I often had to see in amazement that God put me into such circumstances in which I could utilize the little that I knew. O, a faithful God! In short: God has done great things for me, for which I am glad, even when I feel, vividly feel, that I am nothing by myself but a clump of darkness and sin.

"Until now, God has kept my eyes open to clearly see my wretchedness and therefore remaining untouched by the praise which my brethren bestow to the instrument and which belongs only to Him Who makes use of the instrument according to His unsearchable wisdom. But, dear brethren, you certainly know from God's Word what corruption dwells in my flesh and that therefore I can, at any moment when God removes His hand from me, fall into the most dreadful blindness, into haughtiness, sin and shame; Oh, so add to your proofs of love this one, that you now and then remember me also in your 'Our Father' before the Lord; and especially in every petition, for I need them all, but what is more, also in the last one since I sense: I have finished my race and long to leave this world full of nets and snares.

"Now again my humble thanks. God reward you for what you have done unto me, the most dishonest member of our common body.

"Your C. F. W. Walther."

The faculty, who honored him at that time, has amply taken care of adding misery to his last years of his life through their opposition to the truth of Lutheran doctrine. But whatever they and fellows of the same ilk have afterwards done contrary to the truth of the Gospel; with the help of God he has abided by the good confession of Paul, Rom. 8:38, 39: "I am convinced that neither things present nor things to come, neither height nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

He went to his eternal home in this faith and confession. Of all the obituaries, which his death occasioned, only a single one will be related here. It is not from the circle of the Synodical Conference, neither from the circle of his religious opponents in America.

Christoph E. Luthardt's *Allgemeine evang.-luth. Kirchenzeitung* [*General Ev. Lutheran Church Journal*], in the issue of June 22nd, 1887, expressed itself thus:

"With his passing, one of the great men of the Church has gone to his eternal home, a man who was not only an epoch-making personality in the church history of America and the prominent leader and gatherer of the Lutherans there, but

whose effectiveness in the Lutheran Church of all parts of the world was perceived as an immensely inspiring one. The success of his efficacy in the recent history of our Church is nearly unprecedented and characterizes him not only as a man of great abilities, outstanding talents, indefatigable industry and exceptional energy, but suggests a providential personality, as the Lord sends His Church when He wants to . . . lead it in particular ways.

“Of course, he did not have what actually makes a great theologian in our modern times; he did not want to bring new ideas, did not want to establish a new theological system, did not want to create a new school; he thought nothing of the humble-sounding boasting that we Christians may never think of possessing the truth but that we must seek it constantly. He was very much above the viewpoint of inner flightiness and vagueness. He became unshakably certain of the truth from the Word of God. The Lutheran Confession was no cliché acquired by routine which he had put onto his escutcheon as a motto and to which he had thoughtlessly and pedantically clung with vain obstinacy; but in difficult battles hanging over abysses, often near despair, in his confession he had discovered the anchor and foundation of all hope, the source of all joy and the light of the truth. For him it had now become the pulse, the heart of his entire life; the man was immersed in this faith and that gave him the enormous energy, the unshakable security and lucidity at which an astonishing erudition and a clear, dialectically trained intellect rendered him great services. Therefore he did not want to hear anything about ‘open questions’ in which he only saw the pretext of a heart disobedient to God’s Word; and everything that ever so slightly contradicted the fundamental article of our Lutheran Confession about justification . . . found in him an inexorable and devastating adversary. Just as he did not want to hear anything about open questions in his theology, he did not want to hear about coming to terms with the world or false doctrine in his praxis. . . . He went straight ahead constantly in accordance to his conscience, even if such straightforwardness would seemingly ruin everything. And he had discerned that ‘straight on’ is always the best way to [reach] the aim. Few have seen such splendid results, as he

has had. He has taught us all that all clever diplomacy in the Church is the greatest foolishness.

“Within his character lay a peculiar mixture of tenderness and toughness. Whoever knows him only through his polemic treatises, does not sense that his genial cordiality was enchanting; that he won hearts with stirring humility and unpretentiousness. This merry humorist, this concerned friend, ‘this courteous, fine Saxon,’ as his blunt, Low German bosom friend Wyneken often jokingly called him, this childlike cheerful soul, these deep, warm eyes: they were the same ones that could cast looks with burning fury when he defended his Gospel and eliminated the adversary with spirited blows. He had therein something of Luther’s character and one can also say of him as Melancthon has said of Luther: ‘that he proves himself in all discussions charming, friendly and loving, not at all impudent, tempestuous and willful or quarrelsome, and yet there are seriousness and bravery in his words.’

“He distinguished himself as preacher through his warm sincerity and often fascinating, breathtaking sway; he, however, clothed his vivid thoughts in exemplary form of clear, logical development. He was thoroughly instructive, but nothing less than doctrinal; everything had its practical point. Both books of homilies, of which the Gospel homily (*Evangelienpostille*) has undergone the eighth edition in eleven years and has been circulated in 23,000 copies, has been translated into Norwegian as well, show him as a theologian who presents his congregation what he has lived to see himself and whereupon his life rests, from mature experience and diligent study. The focal point of his sermons, as well as his speeches and writings, is the Lutheran Doctrine of Justification. He recognized the continuation of the apostolic church in Lutheranism. His aim, therefore, was to return the Lutheran Church to its origin, to the doctrine of the Reformation scooped from the Word of God. He has unmistakably and valiantly held and defended this point of view as teacher, professor and leader of his Synod as well as often in the vehement controversy with sects and enthusiasts. . . . The American circumstances required such a man, and vice versa, they shaped such a man, who in Germany would hardly have

become what he now was able to be for the church. He has reformingly, constructively, inspiringly labored not only within the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference, but he also has disciples in the widest circles. . . .

“And as deeply shaken as the religious groups are by the death of this man, we find obituaries honoring the eminent German man also in the daily press of America, even in the most radical sort. A clergyman in America has surely never been buried with such public recognition and honor as Walther.”

But it is worth more than tribute-paying obituaries from the mouth of the opponents when a servant of Christ like Walther can say with Paul: “I have fought a good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith. From now on, the crown of righteousness is ascribed to me which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give men that day. However, not to me alone but also to all who love His appearing.” (2 Tim. 4:7,8)

The memory of a witness such as he remains a blessing.

* Translated from: *Lebensbilder aus der Geschichte der christlichen Kirche*. [Biographical Sketches from the History of the Christian Church.] Selected and Revised for Lutheran Readers of North America by Eugen Adolf Wilhelm Krauß [Krauss], St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1912; pp. 707-733. By Sieghart Rein.

1 Compare, *Dr. C. F. W. Walther. Biographical Sketch*. Drawn up by Martin Günther. With 11 illustrations. St. Louis: Lutherischer Concordia-Verlag. 1890. This is a book exceedingly worth reading. 256 pages long.

2 In the booklet: *Kurzer Lebenslauf des weiland ehrwürdigen Pastor Johann Friedrich Büniger usw.* [Short Biography of the Late Reverend Pastor Johann Friedrich Buenger, etc.], St. Louis, 1882.

3 I have heard one of them, old cobbler Göttsching, residing in the *Kleinen Fleischergasse* in Leipzig, speak with joyful emotions of this “*Kränzchen*” [circle] when I visited him as student yet in the year 1872.

4 The translation of the Altenburg Theses is by Carl Stamm Meyer as quoted in *Lutheran Cyclopedia*, Erwin L. Lueker, editor, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, © 1975, p. 22.

5 On this journey, God blessed the testimony of both of the Missouri delegates in other ways too. – Max Frommel relates about his student days in his booklet *Führungen Gottes in meinem Leben* [God’s guidance in My Life], Heilbronn, Germany, 1879, pp. 19 and 20: “I have to mention an encounter which, as it were, brought with it the conclusion of my development until now. Two Lutheran clergymen from America had come to Erlangen, to whom I, as president of the Lutheran students, got to be close. I invited them to my room one evening, and the conversation got to be about faith. One said: ‘It certainly is the most blessed that we are a saved quite solely through faith.’ Now that was a fact I had known for a long time, also surely had often expressed it myself. But on this evening, the point took hold of me, and I replied somewhat timidly: ‘Surely, we are all saved through faith, but sanctification is nevertheless necessary.’ – A very thorough discussion ensued about that matter in which justification alone through faith confronted me in a clarity and truth as never before. I hid the deep emotion that this generated in my peace-seeking mind until the day of departure, where I as president came to sit next to the other Americans at the banquet. ‘It has to come out or never,’ I said to myself and, in the stillness amidst all the loud conversations of the table, I directed the question to my neighbor: ‘May a person, who sees himself as a poor sinner and who doesn’t know any salvation other than Christ, the crucified, believe that he has grace by God?’ My neighbor looked at me sharply and said with a steady voice: ‘As certain as God lives in heaven.’ I, however, at that hour went home into my bedroom and rejoiced on my knees: ‘I believe in the forgiveness of sins’ and sang the verse:

What have You forborne	When from me was taken the kingdom.
For my comfort and bliss?	As peace and joy smile,
When body and soul sat forlorn	Then, You, my Salvation, have come

In their greatest distress, And made me glad.

From then on I had peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; I knew then what the sweetest is in Lutheran Christianity: Namely the assurance of the forgiveness of sins. Therefore, do not wonder that I preach the catechism maxim so often: 'Where there is forgiveness of sins, there is life and salvation'."