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WALTHER AND MISSIONS

"He did more for the extension of the Church than any other."¹
With this comment President H. C. Schwan announced the death of Dr. C. F. W. Walther to the convention of the Missouri Synod. It was on May 7, 1887, while the convention was in session that the Lord called home this beloved leader. The Kirchenblatt of the Iowa Synod, which had often disagreed with Walther on doctrinal issues, indicated that he had been a great power in the Lutheran Church in America, especially in the upbuilding and tremendous expansion of the Missouri Synod.² Also the Baptist Watchman called attention to this growth. It indicated that in the early days of Walther's stay in the United States the Missouri Synod was only a dream but at his death it numbered over 1200 congregations and preaching places, and almost 1000 pastors.³

¹H. C. Schwan, "Synodalrede." Zwanzigster Synodal-Bericht der Synode von Missouri, Ohio, und nderen Staaten (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1887) p. 17

²J. T. Mueller, "Der Gnadenwahlstreit - D. Walthers Heimgang" in Denkstein (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938) p. 83

³C. W. Ernst "A Great Theologian, the Rev. Dr. C. F. W. Walther," Lutheran Witness, 6,2 (June 21, 1887), 15ff

Looking back upon the scene, Neve-Allbeck in 1934 say this: "The prominence of Walther can be discerned throughout the development of the Missouri Synod. Spaeth gives a correct estimate of his talents when he says: 'Continued doctrinal discussions at Synods and conferences, yes, even at the congregational meetings, regular parish visitations, careful establishment of parochial schools, cooperated, not only toward the creation of a common synodical spirit, but also toward its powerful propagation in new territory. Walther's wise and steady leadership had a magnetic effect, conquering, winning and assimilating antagonistic elements.'"⁴

These comments do not use the word missions and yet refer to missionary activity in its widest sense. "Extension of the church," "development," "powerful propagation in new territory" - all of these are included in the term "missions" as we know it today.

Walther thought of the work of the church in this way. This can be seen especially from the essay he prepared for the 1862 Convention of the Western District of the Missouri Synod: "The Proper Form of an Evangelical Lutheran Congregation Independent of the State."⁵ Thesis 11, the last of a series of six on the duties of such a congregation, reads: "It is incumbent upon the congregation to do its part in building up and promoting the welfare of the church-at-large."⁶ In support

⁴J. L. Neve - Willard D. Allbeck, History of the Lutheran Church in America (3rd Revised edition; Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literacy Board, 1934), p. 186.

⁵Theo. Engelder, Walther and the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), pp. 86-115.

⁶Ibid., p. 94

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of this Walther quotes Luther on Mark 16.16, as follows: "Christ binds us together in this divine community in order that the Gospel be spread farther and farther and others be brought into the fold through our confession."⁷

Thesis 11 is expanded upon in theses 62-66. These give us Walther's own definition of "building up and promoting the work of the church-at-large."

"62. The congregation should see that the gifted boys and young men be consecrated to the service of the Church and that they be enabled to prepare themselves for such service.

"63. The congregation should make provision that the Bread of Life be broken to such of its brethren in the faith as suffer spiritual want and should therefore support those who are performing this work of love.

"64. The congregation should zealously engage in the work of Bible distribution.

"65. The congregation should join in the work of bringing the Gospel to those who still sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to the poor heathen and Jews.

"66. The congregation should be ready to unite with the Evangelical Lutheran congregations of this country when there is opportunity for such union and this tends to serve and promote the glory of God and the upbuilding of His kingdom."⁸

Thesis 64 reminds us that in 1853 Walther had caused the Gesamt-gemeinde in St. Louis to found a Bible Society. This group imported the genuine Luther Bibel and published the Altenburger Bibelwerk and

⁷Ibid., p. 94

⁸Ibid., p. 114ff

several editions of the Bible.⁹

Thesis 65 speaks most precisely of what we call "missions." Here the German terminology has an advantage over the English. Walther indicated that the congregation should be involved in bringing the Gospel to the heathen, "den Heiden." The German speaks of "Heidenmission" while the English speaks of foreign or world missions. The German term directs thinking to people without Christ, while the English too often directs us to far places. When Walther spoke of "Heiden" he meant the Indians and Negroes and unchurched in our own country every bit as much as he meant those of other lands. Missions begin at home and stretch to the far corners of the world. This one must bear in mind in any evaluation of Walther and missions.

For thesis 65 Walther uses his favorite text, I Peter 2.9, as a Scriptural support.¹⁰ Peter says that we should show forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness to His marvelous light. Therefore, to Walther it was self-evident that the Christian should express his faith to others. This passage of Scripture gives glorious titles to Christians, not just for the sake of the titles, but that an awareness of our gifts may also impel us to witness constantly as we show forth His praises.

Thesis 65 expressed Walther's interest in missions close at hand as

⁹Der Lutheraner, 45,2 (January 15, 1889), 12

¹⁰Theo. Engelder, Walther and the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 114

well as far away. His comment in this case could have been written by any district or synodical mission executive today. "It is certainly the duty of every congregation zealously to help along in this work. The least it can do is to permit its pastor to do mission work in the vicinity. . . . It is to be deplored that so many of our congregations are too selfish in this regard. . . . Many of our congregations are not alive to their missionary obligations; witness the fact that, while there is a great lack of preachers with us, every little congregation which easily could be served together with a neighboring congregation must have its own pastor."¹¹

MISSIONS A CHURCH RESPONSIBILITY

While Dr. Walter A. Baepler was preparing the centennial history of the Missouri Synod,¹² I had opportunity to discuss various phases of this work with him. According to him the 1847 constitution of the Missouri Synod injected a new thought into American church life. He referred to Purpose 6 as set down in the constitution: "United effort to extend the kingdom of God and to make possible and promote special aims of Synod." These are: 'seminary, agenda, hymnbooks, Book of Concord, school books, distribution of the Bible, missionary activities within and without the church.'¹³ Assigning missionary activities to the whole church was the new breath. Till this time missions had been considered

¹¹Ibid., p. 115

¹²Walter A. Baepler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947).

¹³Ibid., p. 99

the responsibility of individual Christians or groups of Christians who organized themselves into societies. Since the founders of the Missouri Synod came out of a background of such societies and congregations of Synod were supporting such societies this was a considerable forward move. Whether this was originally Walther's idea or not, he vigorously supported it later on.

There can be no doubt but that the founders of Synod felt missions are the business of the church. At the first convention, presided over by Dr. Walther, the pastors and delegates of only twelve congregations had the right to vote. This convention voted to take over training schools for church workers at Fort Wayne, Indiana and Altenburg, Mo. It accepted the Lutheraner as its official publication. A travelling missionary was appointed, acquisition of the Indian mission in Michigan was proposed, and investigation into foreign mission possibilities was authorized.¹⁴

LETTERS

Walther wrote many letters. A goodly number have been collected into volumes,¹⁵ but most of them are still unpublished and very many of them probably have not been gathered as yet.

¹⁴Neve-Allbeck, op. cit., p. 184

¹⁵L. Fuerbringer, Briefe von C. F. W. Walther, Vol. I, 1841-1865; Vol. II, 1865-1871. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1915, 1916); Martin Guenther, Dr. C. F. W. Walther (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1890), pp. 213-233; W. G. Polack, The Story of C. F. W. Walther (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1935), p. 118 ff.

Recently Walter C. Pieper has worked through and translated or at least given the gist of many of the unprinted letters of Dr. Walther.¹⁶ In summarizing impressions gained from these letters he says: "In working through the correspondence of Walther, one quickly comes to the conclusion that his whole life was governed by concern - concern for the church and her doctrine, concern for the extension of the kingdom, concern for his family and friends."¹⁷ And then going into some detail he indicates: "Walther's great concern for the church is also shown in his very deep concern for missions. More than once he expressed the fear that Synod's lukewarmness and slowness in missions might incite God to remove His blessings from Synod. His mission interests were directed especially toward the people of East India and the Negroes and Jews in this country."¹⁸ He indicates Walther's interest in missions in East India. In a letter directed to Carl Manthey-Zorn, missionary to India of the Leipzig Mission Society, dated February 20, 1875, he indicates his joy over the work and expresses the hope that the church in India will be built upon the basis of sound doctrine. He encouraged Zorn and his co-workers "to uphold the Biblical and Lutheran teachings about justification, the Word, the sacraments, free will and election." Since

¹⁶Pieper-Golisch, Inventory Correspondence of C. F. W. Walther, (St. Louis: Concordia Historical Institute - Typewritten, n.d.)

¹⁷Walter C. Pieper, "C. F. W. Walther, Revealed in His Letters," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXXIV, (April, 1961)

¹⁸Ibid., p. 21

the missionary had used rather involved language in a doctrinal essay, Walther urged him to use simple language like Luther if he wanted the church in East Asia to come into bloom.¹⁹

Dr. Walther had become known to various missionaries in a rather incidental way. Upon the urging of Ferdinand Sievers, Sr., who of all the early clergy of the Missouri Synod was perhaps the most active in urging the extension of the synod's mission effort to foreign lands, it was resolved in 1868 to furnish synodical periodicals gratis to missionaries and national workers of any group anywhere in the world if they would request them.²⁰ Since Walther wrote much of this material, his name and opinions became very well known. About eight years later Der Lutheraner²¹ carried the news of the break of five men from the Leipzig Mission. Of these C. M. Zorn particularly had corresponded with Walther as indicated earlier, having come to know him through periodicals.

Walther was eager to do something to help this group, likely also because Missouri had broken with Leipzig for doctrinal reasons. He hoped that two would stay on in India as missionary of the Synodical Conference. He also sent these men £500 sterling²² to help them come to Europe and

¹⁹Ibid., p. 21

Carl Manthey-Zorn, Dies und Das aus fruehem Amtsleben (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1912) pp. 3-5

²⁰Herman H. Koppelman, "The Missouri Synod Undertakes Foreign Missions," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXII (August 1951), 558

²¹Der Lutheraner, 32, 2 (January 15, 1876), 15

²²Zorn, op. cit., p. 67, p. 69

the U. S. A. This was a tremendous amount of money. Therefore Walther first cleared this matter with the local clergy and then the Districts of Synod. He received the concurrence of the latter without dissent.²³

Mission work in the U. S. A. also found its place in Walther's letters. A goodly number remind us of the stress and strain of a growing church in this country. The wave of German immigrants was tremendous and following them thus was a big work. Just as tremendous were opportunities and obligations. No one will ever know how many letters he received from hither and yon asking him to supply or suggest a pastor. And no one will ever be able to recount how many congregations were held or taken over or established, humanly speaking, because he was able to supply men. A former congregation of mine, Salem of Jacksonville, Ill., would hardly be in the Missouri Synod today but for this.

On February 25, 1850 Walther wrote a letter telling how he had urged Pastor Schieferdecker to grasp the "opportunity to bear testimony to the truth in the beautiful metropolis Louisville." "We have been endeavoring at great effort and expense, to gain entrance in the large cities, but mostly in vain; here, unsought, a door is opened to us in one of the best situated cities in the United States; and this dare and must not happen in vain."²⁴

²³Chr. Hochstetter, Die Geschichte der Evangelisch-lutherischen Missouri Synode (Dresden: Heinrich J. Naumann, 1855), p. 423

²⁴Polack, op. cit., p. 131

A congregation in Mobile, Alabama, "heard about the good work which pastors of the Missouri Synod were doing in New Orleans, corresponded with Dr. Walther, and received in H. G. Sauer its first Missouri Synod pastor in 1870."²⁵ A St. Louis Lutheran noted statistics on Protestant churches in a New Orleans daily paper of 1852. One congregation there called itself Evangelical Lutheran. Walther's attention was called to this and he sent Candidate George Volck to investigate. As a result, on May 22, 1853, Walther ordained and installed Volck in New Orleans.²⁶ Some might say this was more a work of conservation of German Lutherans, but among these Germans were also many non-Christians or such as had only a formal relationship to the church in their homeland. They needed to be an objective of the mission effort of the church.

SERMONS

Anyone endeavoring to come to know Walther today must also read and review his sermons. An amazing number of these are extant, most of them collected for posterity by his friends.²⁷ Among these the sermons for the Festival of the Epiphany are often rousing appeals for missions. Later, when mission festivals came into vogue, Walther preached at these quite frequently.

²⁵Baepler, op. cit., pp. 111-112

²⁶Ibid., p. 111

²⁷See bibliography for titles of sermon books.

Matthew 2, 1-12

A sermon preached in 1842 on the Epiphany Gospel is titled: "That Jesus Came into the World to also Save all Heathen."²⁸ But the best known exposition of this text first appeared in *Der Lutheraner* and was repeated in three sermon volumes. It bears the title: "Missions to the Heathen a Christian Obligation."²⁹ While the range of this sermon may have been limited by its special reference to the American Indian, it had a considerably wider scope. In this sermon Walther traces the thought of missions through the Old and the New Testament, indicating that it should be evident from all the Scriptures that the Lord meant His salvation not only for the Jews but also for all others. The many who still do not know Christ, heathen who are languishing away without comfort and hope, are loud accusers of those Christians who in indifference or lovelessness do not concern themselves with the conversion of the heathen. The conversion of the heathen is and remains an obligation for each one who calls himself a Christian. Although the neglected heathen are lost because of their sins God demands their blood from the hands of the Christian.

²⁸C. F. W. Walther, Predigtentwuerfe (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1903), p. 36ff

²⁹Der Lutheraner, Vol. 6 (January 22, 1850), p. 81ff.
C. F. W. Walther, Brosamen (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1876), p. 38ff.
C. F. W. Walther, Evangelien Postille (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1871), p. 52ff.
C. J. Otto Hanser, ed., Licht des Lebens (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1905), p. 95ff.

As wonderful as it is that God led the Wise Men to Jerusalem through the star, so it seems still more wonderful that He did not use this star to lead them all the way to Bethlehem, but rather brought them to Herod and the Scribes and Pharisees in Jerusalem. One of the chief reasons for this certainly was that God wanted to show all coming ages that He was not going to save the heathen through miracles or stars or angels or some other special celestial appearances, but through people, particularly through the already existing Church. Despite this there are many within Christendom today who feel that missions to the heathen are indeed a praiseworthy action, but one they can take or leave, according to their inclination. But the Christian Church is a debtor to the whole world that is yet without Christ. This story of the Wise Men and the whole Scriptures are evidence of this.

One evidence that the Church is under obligation to do mission work is found in the Great Commission. A second evidence is God's command to love Him. Can we truly say that we love God and sit idly by while Satan binds millions of people; while we see millions continue without Christ, for whom Christ has died and gained salvation; while we see millions who do not recognize God, who, rather than serve God, serve sin and Satan, rather than praise God, mock Him, rather than hallow His Name, disgrace Him?

A third evidence is that a Christian is also obligated to love his neighbor. All human beings are our brothers and sisters and neighbors. Can Christians then say that they love their brothers when they sit idly by and see millions of them without God, without light, without grace,

without comfort in their sorrows, without hope in death, in sin, in blindness, in God's anger, in inexpressible external and internal need, and finally going eternally lost in despair?

Mission work is particularly the obligation of the Lutheran Christians in this day because of the wealth that God had given them. Because of the open doors which He had set before them due to the political, economic and travel situation of the day, and also because He has made it possible for people to master languages more easily so that they can also communicate properly.

While we cannot all become missionaries and go where the heathen are, (and to be a missionary takes special qualifications) we do have the very special privilege of supporting these men.

Only Christians can fulfill this obligation of carrying on mission work. Only they can take care of the twofold need for prayer and giving, giving and prayer. "Even though a person gave all his money and would have all his sons become missionaries and would even forsake everything that he had and become a missionary himself, and yet did not pray, he would not be doing the work the Lord wanted him to do. All giving for missions is worth nothing without prayer. But prayer is also nothing without giving if we can give at all. What would we think of someone who upon seeing his brother drowning in the river did no more to save him than to kneel down on the shore and pray? The same hands that we raise to God in prayer for missions, we should also open with our gifts of love."

Isaiah 60, 1-6

A second frequently used text is the Epistle lesson for the Epiphany festival, Isaiah 60, 1-6. Once Walther uses it to answer the question: "What shall Move Us to Give Willing and Joyful Obedience to the Call: 'Arise, Shine for Thy Light is Come!'"³⁰ Again he uses it to show: "The Joy a True Believer Has in the Work of Missions."³¹

In this sermon he gives his definition of missions: The work of converting the heathen. This work has been opposed by many, Jews, non-Christians and also by some within the Church. Our German forebears in East Frisia about eleven hundred years ago clubbed to death the English Missionary Winfred Boniface in gratitude for his love that was seeking them out. But to be a Christian and an enemy or opponent of missions is an impossibility. The Christian rather feels joy in the work of missions because he has experienced for himself the enlightening and saving power of the Gospel, and thus cannot help but carry it on to others, those of his own city, country and the whole world. In doing this work each congregation is an active mission society.

The Christian feels joy in missions because through this work so many lost souls created by God for eternal life and redeemed through Christ at such great cost are rescued from damnation and become saved people like us. Christ's kingdom of salvation is spread ever further so that all lands become full of His glory. The Christian therefore makes

³⁰C. F. W. Walther, Brosamen, p. 50ff.

³¹C. F. W. Walther, Amerikanisch-Lutherische Epistel Postille (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1882), p. 53ff.

these the objects of his concern: 1) the uncouthed millions of heathen; 2) many in America who are still in heathen darkness; 3) the Negroes in America; 4) Lutherans who have come over from Germany and are not yet related to any church.

The Christian's joy also shows itself in his participation in mission work through gifts and prayer. "If a congregation wants to exist, then it must enable pastors to be trained at great cost, place them, support them and help in the establishment of seminaries and building of churches and schools. If the Church as such wants to carry on missions then it must in the same way train and support missionaries and often this is not possible at a low cost. God has arranged this in great wisdom and love. Not that He needs us men nor our gold and silver, but he wants to permit those who have come to faith to have a part in this glorious task of bringing salvation to the world of sinners."

The most important thing is and remains prayer. An unbeliever can put gold into the mission treasuries, but he cannot pray for missions. That only a true Christian can do, and he does it. As often as he prays the Lord's Prayer, he also earnestly pleads for the heathen that God's pure Word and blessed kingdom of grace might come to them. As often as he brings a gift for missions, he sighs: "Lord, bless this gift." He carries the missionaries and the whole mission cause in his praying heart and at times is moved by the Holy Spirit also to bend his knee for this work in particular in the quiet of his own chambers, to call upon God and ask Him to proclaim His own praise.

A third sermon on this same text discusses: "The Glorifying of God

Through the Preaching of the Gospel in all the World."³² Here Walther really gets excited on the subject. You feel his heart throbbing through these words:

"Where are the boundaries of the kingdom of Jesus Christ? Where is the ruler on earth who can claim a kingdom so widely spread as His whose life ended shamefully on the cross? Where is the country on earth among whose citizens there are not some who through baptism have pledged themselves to the blood marked flag of their eternal Savior? Yes, the voice of the Gospel has gone out to all lands, and its sound to the end of the earth! This sound has penetrated the most distant north, is heard throughout the islands of the Pacific, has laid for itself a runway through the gateways of America which Satan had long sealed with the mighty beams of the ocean. Jesus Christ is the only king, who, as Scriptures prophesied, rules in the midst of His enemies. There is no language or tongue in which the name of Jesus may not have been spoken; all distinctions of countries and nations and colors have fallen away, everywhere it is confessed that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Countless Caesars, kings, dukes and lords have laid down their scepters, crowns and purple robes before the staff of the good Shepherd and humbly worshipped Him at the foot of the cross."³³

Walther is the more sure and confident that this preaching of the Gospel shall glorify God especially as success is achieved in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Despite the lowliness and wretchedness of the messengers of the Gospel; the contempt heaped upon their weapon, the Word; the multitude and might of the enemy; the streams of blood it cost these defenseless bearers of the Gospel - despite all these things we still see the countless numbers of those who come to

³²Ibid., p. 58ff.

³³Ibid., p. 62

faith and the incomparable steadfastness of millions of martyrs. If we do not see God glorified in this, how shall we see God's glory at all?

Galatians 5, 25-6,10

An intriguing sermon preached in 1843 on Galatians 5, 25-6,10 carries the imposing title: "What Shall Move a Christian to Give Something of His Earthly Goods for the Maintenance and Extension of the Word of God and to Do It Joyfully?"³⁴ In his answer Walther points to God's clear command, to the blessing which could be expected from such action and finally to the reward of grace which is promised. Let me quote you just one paragraph out of this sermon.

"There can be no doubt: God has not only directly commanded us that we shall give of our earthly goods for the maintenance and extension of His Word but already every command to pray for the spread of His kingdom, yes, every command to love our neighbor as ourselves, is a loud call of God to all Christians: help, help that the sound of my Gospel may be heard or may be carried into all the world and resound in the ears and hearts of all men till the end of days!"³⁵

This sermon is intriguing because it is a simple stewardship sermon preached in order to encourage his people to give toward the erection of the first St. Louis seminary. Dr. Walther did not preach brick and stone and mortar. He spoke of missions, the work the graduate of this school would do later on in the preservation, maintenance and spreading of the Word, the spreading of Christ's Kingdom.

³⁴Ibid., p. 390ff.

³⁵Ibid., p. 392

Luke 11, 1.2

In June, 1864, preaching in Sheboygan, Wisconsin he used Luke 11, 1.2, the second petition of the Lord's Prayer as a text.³⁶ In an intensive exposition of this prayer he points out that this is to be the constant prayer of the Christian and take priority over all else but the hallowing of God's name. In strong words he says that he who does not carry mission work close to his heart can certainly not be considered a true Christian.³⁷ While setting down the Christian's duty he also emphasizes that the kingdom is God's and He will give success to the work.

At a mission festival in Collinsville, Illinois, Walther preached on the Macedonian Call, Acts 16, 8-10, using the theme: "The Need of the Heathen which Calls Ever Louder to Us for Help." First he pictured the material and spiritual needs of the heathen in powerful heart-rending examples. Then he touched upon some of the basic reasons why Christians should act speedily in answering this cry for help.³⁸

On the basis of Isaiah 43, 21 he set forth one of the basic themes of his mission thinking: "The Christian Church Itself is the Proper Mission Society Established by God."³⁹

When the Synodical Conference was brought into being in 1872 Walther preached the opening sermon on I Timothy 4, 16. Significantly

³⁶O. Willkomm, Goldkoerner (Zwickau i. S.: Johannes Herrmann, 1882), p. 179

³⁷Ibid., p. 72ff.

³⁸Ibid., p. 78

³⁹C. F. W. Walther, Brosamen, p. 28

the theme was missionary in import: "How Important it is to Make the Saving of Souls the One Great Object of Our Cooperative Work in the Kingdom of Christ."⁴⁰ Was Walther hoping that this conference would be the proper body to do mission work among the heathen, be they the Indians or Negroes of North America or people of other lands?

When August Crull published a book of devotions in 1893, he used excerpts from Walther's sermons. For the Epiphany week he chose these mission thoughts:

- "1. The church must light the star for the world by spreading the Word. Matt. 2, 1-12.
- "2. Missions are a Christian debt to the heathen. Matt. 28, 18-20.
- "3. Countries are open, move in. Malachi 1, 11.
- "4. God would have all men to be saved. I Tim. 2, 4.
- "5. The darkness of the world demands light. Isaiah 60, 2.
- "6. God gives success to His Word. Isaiah 60, 3-6.
- "7. Money is necessary to carry this work forward but much more so prayer. Isaiah 60, 6."⁴¹

Thinking of Walther's sermons, Oliver C. Rupprecht wrote in The Quill, the student paper of the Milwaukee Concordia:

"A strong missionary desire vibrates in his sermons and invigorates his other messages, even as it gives direction to his numerous activities as pastor, teacher, and synodical executive.

⁴⁰A. W. Meyer, "The Organization of the Synodical Conference," Ebenezer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), p. 328

⁴¹August Crull, Ein Handbuch zur taglichen Hausandacht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1893), p. 51ff

"So great was his passion for souls that he seemed almost to begrudge taking a man from a pastorate to teach at a synodical college or seminary in the educational system, of which he himself was a part. Preaching on Isaiah 49, 3.4 for the installation of two junior college professors, he spoke on the topic: 'What should comfort (!) us today, when two men, who had prepared themselves for the office of saving souls and who had experienced the blessings of God in the discharge of that office, now follow the call of the church to assume the office of a teacher at one of our preparatory institutions?' Dr. Walther's choice of that topic was determined by his missionary outlook."⁴²

ENGLISH WORK

In the department of English Work one can transport himself from black to white or white to black as he thinks of Walther. Here we see a man growing, a fact for which we can thank a gracious God. Perhaps it will be best to review this facet of Walther's activity and interest chronologically.

1842 - "As late as March, 1842, Walther did not know enough English to translate a letter which he had written in the name of Trinity congregation to the Vestry of Christ Church, St. Louis."⁴³ While this must stand as a fact, much depends on how we judge it. Is it really surprising that this should be the case only three years after arrival in this country? I know missionaries to foreign lands who would not send such a formal letter of their own writing even after many years of

⁴²Oliver C. Rupprecht, "Walther's Lasting Achievements Bear Witness to His Character," The Quill, May 5, 1961, 5

⁴³Carl S. Munding, Government in the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947) p. 206

preaching the foreign tongue. They would engage someone who had the particular language as his mother tongue just to be sure all was correctly done.

1842 - When Trinity Congregation, of which Walther was pastor, accepted its constitution, it designated as unalterable a paragraph which called for German services only. But also, it was stated that this rule was not unalterable by divine command. This action grew out of a statement by Walther in 1842, indicating that German ought continue to be the language of the congregation.⁴⁴

1845 - June 2. Walther wrote to Ferdinand Sievers, Sr., "We are making every effort to maintain the German language in our midst and to keep out the evil leaven that begins to permeate pure doctrine and polity with the coming of the English language."⁴⁵

1854 - He supported the plan of erecting an English Lutheran Academy when he had been but fifteen years in this country.⁴⁶

1855 - Der Lutheraner urged the younger generation in particular to become familiar with the English language for the sake of the Church and their English-speaking neighbors.⁴⁷

1857 - The synod had early concerned itself with the language

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 143-153

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 206

⁴⁶C. L. Janzow, Life of Rev. Prof. C. F. W. Walther, D.D. (Pittsburgh: American Lutheran Publication Board, 1899), p. 48

⁴⁷Baepler, op. cit., p. 190

problem. In 1857 it laid down the principles which ought to obtain in connection with the organization of English congregations out of German mother congregations. It had delegated Prof. Walther and Pastor Schwan to adjust the differences between the German congregation of Pastor Keyl and the First St. Peter's Congregation of Baltimore.⁴⁸

1859 - Walther had Dr. S. L. Harkey of the Illinois State University of Springfield, Illinois, come to St. Louis for the purpose of conducting an English Lutheran service. He rented a hall and announced the service in all German and English newspapers in the city. He took Dr. Harkey to the service in his buggy. He also took him to the homes of those who had indicated they were interested in English. On the following Monday he had a meeting which was to result in the founding of an English Lutheran congregation. Not enough people were interested. There were no hymnals, catechisms, devotional materials in English. So the matter was dropped.⁴⁹

1859 - As J. M. Buehler himself relates it was Walther who had instructed and confirmed him and who also chose him to open Missouri Synod work in California because Buehler could handle the English rather well.⁵⁰

⁴⁸"We account it our sacred duty to found English congregations as soon as it has become manifest that for the founding of a congregation there is a sufficient number of such as understand English better than German." Baepler, op. cit., p. 109. D. H. Steffens, Doctor Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1917), pp. 331-2

⁴⁹Baepler, op. cit., p. 190 ff

⁵⁰J. H. and J. W. Theiss. Lebenslauf und Charakterbild des seligen Praeses J. M. Buehler (Oakland, Calif.: Lutherisches Botschafter, 1902). P. 11

1869 - Walther writes to Ferdinand Sievers: "It will be difficult to begin mission work among the colored people as long as we have not more men who are conversant with the English language."⁵¹

1872 - In the same year of the formation of the Synodical Conference Walther attended the free conference in Gravelton, Missouri, which under God, became the formal beginning of English work in Synod. Nor did Walther just attend. He delivered the theses which were discussed at that time. These, Wm. Dallman tells us, "were adopted by all present"⁵² and then and there was organized THE ENGLISH EVANGELICAL CONFERENCE OF MISSOURI. In giving his report on this meeting, Walther commented: "May it please God to lay His further gracious blessings on this small but blessed beginning of organized care for the scattered children of our Church in the West who speak the English language! May everyone who loves our Zion assist in requesting this from the Father of mercy in the Name of Jesus. Amen."⁵³

1879 - In 1879 a pastor had been appointed by Synod to visit the English brethren assembled in Niangua, Missouri. But he was unwilling to go alone. Upon ascertaining that the English cause met with little sympathy from a great number of Missourians, he would not go at all. Then it was Walther who urged him to go. At about 10:00 p.m. one day in

⁵¹Fuerbringer, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 156

⁵²Wm. Dallmann, "The English Work of the Missouri Synod," Ebenezer, p. 422.

⁵³Der Lutheraner, 28, 23 (September 1, 1872), p. 183.

October after a conference, the venerable Doctor almost implored that pastor to go by all means, and to go alone, if no one would go with him. Grasping his hand, Walther spoke words to him which indelibly impressed themselves upon his memory. "Dear Pastor", he said, "God has brought us into this country and without our merit has given us the pure doctrine also for this very purpose that we should proclaim it in the language of this our country, the English language. But alas! so far we have not done what we ought to have done, and I fear God may punish us on account of our ungrateful negligence, and take away from us Germans the great blessing bestowed upon us till now, because we have not done in the English language what we ought to have done in our country." These words induced that pastor not only to go to Niangua at that time, but to embrace the English cause for life.⁵⁴

1879 - It was mainly due to his encouragement that, in the spring of 1879, the Southeastern District Conference of Missouri Synod expressed its willingness to take up English work conjointly with Pastors J. R. Moser, P. C. Henkel and a layman, Mr. A. Rader of the Tennessee and Holston Synods, and that in 1880, a Board for English Missions was elected by the Western District.⁵⁵

1882 - Walther also assisted with his advice when in 1882 the first English Lutheran missionary of the Missouri Synod was called.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Janzow, op. cit., p. 49

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 50

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 50 ff

1882 - At the convention of the Western District, Walther gave utterance to a very remarkable statement considering his action in 1843. In the constitutions of a number of congregations that applied for membership in the Missouri Synod, a paragraph was found to the effect that the pastor of the congregation was to preach in its church in German only. Dr. Walther said: "Such a paragraph in the constitution of a German Lutheran congregation may have been of some good thirty years ago, but it is of no good in our days. I consider it hurtful to the spreading of the kingdom of God through the Lutheran Church."⁵⁷

1882 - When the Lutheran Witness first appeared Walther warmly welcomed it in the columns of Der Lutheraner. He encouraged the undertaking as such and urged all who understood English to subscribe to the same.⁵⁸

1887 - "Not long before his departure, even on his death-bed, he labored for the English cause. It was he who cherished and advocated the plan that all those little English congregations existing in 1887 within the bounds of the Synodical Conference should, if they made application (which they did), be received as an 'English Mission District' into the Missouri Synod and thus come into membership with the Synod. He foresaw rightly that in the near future the English-speaking element would greatly grow in numbers. Its needs he bore in mind. Far from being averse to English mission work, he was its warmest friend."⁵⁹

⁵⁷Der Lutheraner, 38, 11 (June 1, 1882), 84

⁵⁸Der Lutheraner, 38, 11 (June 1, 1882), 84

⁵⁹Janzow, op. cit., p. 51

1888 - August Crull presented to the English Conference a hymnal which he had translated upon the urging of Dr. Walther.⁶⁰

1888 - The English Synod passed suitable resolutions on the death of Dr. Walther, designating him "the guide and director in forming the English Lutheran Conference of Missouri, having been present at its first meeting, and always showing great and active interest in its work and sincerely desiring that it might grow and increase."⁶¹ Steffens expresses the opinion: "It remained for Walther to give direction and form to the English work of Synod."⁶² Walther, says Janzow, "had a very ardent love for English mission work. He very heartily advocated Lutheranism in the language of the country."⁶³

For a man who "never took occasion to master the English language nor to address English speaking people"⁶⁴ this appears to be quite a record.

⁶⁰W. G. Polack, The Building of a Great Church (2nd Edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), p. 137 ff.

⁶¹Dallmann, op. cit., p. 424

⁶²Steffens, op. cit., p. 332

⁶³Janzow, op. cit., p. 48

⁶⁴Lutheran Witness, 6 (June 21, 1887) 15

IN THE CONGREGATION

"The missionary methods employed by Walther and Buenger in the establishment of these two congregations (Trinity and Immanuel) are characteristic of the Missouri Synod. As a rule, new city congregations, especially in larger cities, like Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Milwaukee, were founded by the planting of a parish school in some promising location, the inauguration of regular preaching services and the dismissal of at least enough members from the mother church or churches, to properly organize the new parish. The result was a solid and well trained organization to assist the pastor in his missionary activities in the new field. While this method of work may be somewhat responsible for Missouri's under-estimation in the past of the value of a large church extension fund, it also safe-guarded that Synod against putting too much dependence upon a handsome church building with the further temptation to gather a crowd of poorly instructed people in an effort to promptly repay the funds furnished by the Board.

"Trinity congregation had framed and adopted a constitution, selected its name and seal, built a church when it lacked even the purchase price of a desirable lot; organized its parish school, provided a home for it in the basement of the church building dedicated with such indescribable joy on the second Sunday of Advent, 1842. Surely, if a congregation ever had the right to stand still for a moment and catch its breath, it was Trinity. But neither Walther, its pastor, nor Buenger, its teacher, knew what it was to stand still. They, and the congregation with them, immediately began to make plans "to break forth on the right hand and the left."⁶⁵

"In the country, however, the methods followed by Buenger on the Bonhomme Road generally prevailed - regular and faithfully kept appointments, a visiting of all families, with real pastoral solicitude for their welfare and a most careful instruction and indoctrination of their children. This is the outstanding feature of both methods of work; the care of the Church's youth. If the Missouri Synod in its missionary activities has had a larger measure of success than the other Lutheran Church bodies of this country,

⁶⁵Steffens, op. cit., pp. 202-3

it owes this not to a larger measure of opportunity but to a faithful following of the missionary methods employed by Walther and Buenger at the very outset. They established precedents which not only obtain today, but any departing from which will be fraught with danger."⁶⁶

EVALUATION

While most of Walther's biographers and writers of obituaries at the time of his death say very little if anything of him and missions, yet a good bit can be said. Various evaluations of Walther's work and influence in this regard have been given.

Frederick Dean Lueking, who spent a two-year vicarage in Japan and left a strong and favorable imprint upon the work there, has recently studied the motivations that underlie the mission activities of the Missouri Synod. He speaks of two traditions, the one being scholastic confessional, the other evangelical. The former, to which Walther's name is attached in contrast to such men as H. C. Schwan, Ferdinand Sievers, Friedrich Lochner, Eduard Arndt, August Emil Frey, John Doescher, Nils Bakke and Daniel Landsmann,⁶⁷ is described thus:

"This emphasis (on correctness of belief) yields a great influence in the scholastic confessional idea of the mission of the church. Error had to be corrected as well as truth proclaimed. Hence, the missionary task could with validity be described as

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 205

⁶⁷F. Dean Lueking, The Tension Between the Confessional and Evangelical Traditions in Shaping the Missouri Synod Conception and Practice of Missions, (Chicago: Chicago University, 1960, unprinted), p. 4

setting erring Christians aright. This was given equal status with a mandate to carry the Gospel to unbelievers. As the history of nineteenth century Missouri Synod missions shows, it soon became evident that correcting the erring was far more convenient and statistically impressive than meeting the demands of witness to those utterly unfamiliar to Christian truths."⁶⁸

No one who knows Walther will deny his insistence on purity of doctrine and loyalty to the Lutheran Confessions in all situations. But this was not done just for the sake of purity but because Walther firmly believed that not to maintain this purity would put souls into eternal jeopardy. This pervaded all his work whether serving his own congregation or being active in the extension of the church. He believed strongly in the power of the true Word to convince people and bring them to accept Christ as God and Lord. He had ample evidence for this both in the internal and external building up of the Church, which elements were so closely linked together through all his days. It is truly amazing that despite slow means of communication and transportation, Der Lutheraner, which in the early days was a junior dogmatics, could be so effective. Walther issued the first copy in September, 1844. A number outside Walther's circle received it and agreed with it. They held various meetings and already in April, 1847, came together to found Synod. This Synod, as indicated above, had missions as one of its objectives from the start. A summary of the first convention has already been given. The second has been described thus:

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 20

"True, its congregations were, as a rule, quite small and almost invariably poor. The three strongest congregations were St. Louis, with 2,945 souls; Baltimore, with 1,084, and Fort Wayne, with 1,066. But it had set the stakes of its house in the strategic points of the Middle West, Chicago, St. Louis, Cleveland, Milwaukee, etc.; it had its outposts in the East; it was looking toward Iowa and Oregon, lengthening its cords and stretching the curtains of its habitation almost to the breaking point, enthusiastically following the lead of Walther, its teacher, organizer, and missionary."⁶⁹

The effectiveness of the combination of doctrinal strength and missionary zeal is recognized also by others. That which must be called real mission work and the enlargement of the Synod through absorption of other groups that found themselves in doctrinal agreement and sought strength in union go hand in hand.

"The latter part of the nineteenth century witnessed an enormous German immigration to this country. The Missouri Synod by virtue of its German character and staunch position was able to take advantage of this Teuton flood. In this it had the aid of influential men in Germany who sent pastors and students to take care of the Lutheran multitudes. Thus the Missouri Synod came to be by far the largest Synod in America. It absorbed the Illinois Synod and the Concordia Synod of Pennsylvania. Part of the German Evangelical Synod of Indianapolis also united with the Missouri Synod."⁷⁰

In 1872 Graf Ernst zu Erbach-Erbach visited the U. S. A. and reported his impressions in his Reisebriefe aus Amerika. He felt that becoming acquainted with Walther was the high point of this visit. His evaluation of Walther is noteworthy: "Der jahrelange heisse Kampf um die Wahrheit, das ewige Schaffen und Ringen um Ausbreitung des Wortes Gottes haben in diesem Manne eine so felsenartige Sicherheit und

⁶⁹Steffens, op. cit., p. 273

⁷⁰Neve-Allbeck, op. cit., p. 190

leuchtende Wahrheit auf allen Gebieten des Glaubens entwickelt." These are big words. The two characteristics they stress are the hot battle for the truth which has extended over years and the eternal activity and striving or wrestling for the spread of the Word of God. As Graf Ernst evaluated the scene, he summarized thus: "The hope of Lutheranism now rests on America."⁷¹

Walther has also been accused of motivating people to missions on a false or very weak basis. Reference is made to his fears that God would soon take the Gospel from the Germans because they were not carrying it on to those in the U. S. A. and elsewhere who did not yet know Christ. We can agree this is a negative, insufficient, inadequate motivation. But how often did Walther not call upon his people to take advantage of opportunities and situations God had placed before them: the relative ease of travel and communication; the rather stable political and economic situation in which the world found itself; the wealth God has given the people of the U. S. A.; the greater possibility of learning foreign languages. All of these, he said, called upon the Christian to share his faith with others. But there was also obedience to the great commission, and even more urgently love - love to God and love to our neighbor. He also knew and believed that "the love of Christ constraineth us." And joy over one's own salvation drives the Christian on to share the joy with others!

⁷¹E. A. W. Krauss, Lebenshilder aus der Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche. 19-21 thousand (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1930), p. 727

It is quite possible that Walther was the one who led with the idea that the mission responsibility is not, first of all, that of a society but rather that of the congregation and the church. Over and over again he mentioned that each individual Christian must be a missionary if he is to be fully a Christian. In addressing new members being received into the St. Louis congregation he set before one group: "Indeed the church is an institution for the conversion of the world."⁷²

Nor can the scope of this work be questioned seriously. As we have seen in various sermons, Walther included all non-Christians whether in our land or others. Among these in his various sermons he mentioned the uncounted millions in non-Christian lands, Jews, Muslims, the unreached Negroes, the Indians, but also the "many in America, German and English-speaking, who are still in heathen darkness" and "Lutherans who have come over from Germany and are not yet related to any church." This combination of what we today call Home and World Missions must always be borne in mind.

Walther's "care for the churches is evident in the advice he gave to hundreds of pastors and congregations. The large number of shepherdless communities of Lutheran immigrants weighed heavily on his heart. He cannot be censured for a lack of vision because he did not promote foreign missions more vigorously. North America was a foreign mission field in 1839 and even in 1859. The blessing which came to the Missouri Synod because it began almost at once to train an "indigenous" ministry..

⁷²C. F. W. Walther, Ansprachen und Gebete (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1888), p. 49

..... made Walther ready to reach out to others. The native Indians - he encouraged the work among them..... Toward the very close of his life Walther was promoting the mission work in India. He solicited support for Harms at Herrmannsburg, the Leipziger Missionsgesellschaft, and other missionary societies, as long as doctrinal differences did not inhibit his giving such encouragement. Walther's mission-mindedness is part and parcel of his churchmanship.⁷³ This is the estimate of Carl S. Meyer of the St. Louis Concordia Seminary faculty:

"We have abundant reason to thank God for the far-flung missionary program of our church in foreign fields and for the intensified missionary activities at home. Local parish missionary programs, including door-to-door canvasses are a continuation of Dr. Walther's work."⁷⁴

CONCLUSION

Yes, Walther was interested in missions and was actively engaged in them. He selected men who were to go out as missionaries to various sections of our country and wanted the members of the Synod to support this endeavor with gifts and prayers. When he printed his first mission sermon in Der Lutheraner he stated in a footnote that he did not feel the sermon worthy of being distributed more widely, but because many who had heard it urged that it would further the cause of missions, he did not want to withhold it if it would help this cause even a little bit.

Bearing this intention in mind, let us hear again a few sentences of Walther that we can carry with us.

⁷³Carl S. Meyer, "Dr. C. F. W. Walther, Churchman and Ecclesiastical Statesman," (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1961), p.52

⁷⁴Rupprecht, op. cit., p. 5

"The Christian Church is a debtor to the whole world that is yet without Christ⁷⁵ Mission work is particularly the obligation of Lutheran Christians today because of the wealth God has given them and the open doors he has set before them⁷⁶ The same hands that we raise to God in prayer for missions, we should also open with our gifts of love⁷⁷... ... The Christian feels joy in the work of missions because he has experienced for himself the enlightening and saving power of the Gospel, and thus cannot help but carry it on to others, those of his own city and country and the whole world!"⁷⁸

Such is Walther's word to us in the area of missions.

Herman H. Koppelman
(Written - 1965)

⁷⁵Cf. p. 12 (Rupprecht, op. cit.)

⁷⁶Cf. p. 13 above

⁷⁷Cf. p. 13 above

⁷⁸Cf. p. 14 above

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