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**BIOGRAPHY OF PASTOR ERNST MORITZ BUERGER
(1806 - 1841) WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON
HIS DECISION TO LEAVE PERRY COUNTY, MISSOURI**

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In the German matter of the divine right of kings, while the two revolutions in the last quarter of the 18th century had sown the seed of democracy which was destined to become a powerful factor in the world, Ernst Herrig referred to the Napoleonic struggle in these words:

My parents saw hard times in the six-yeats up to 1815. There was plenty of quartering of soldiers, danger, and trouble. I remember that the glass goblets on the table jingled and the wine-glasses rattled from the clatter of quizzing in the battle of Leipzig, which was over ten years distant from Berlin.³

1 E. G. Hughes, The Making of Modern Germany, p. 104.

2 Rechtsgeschichte von Ernst Herrig, lutherischer Pastor, Verlag des Lutherischen Vereins, Leipzig, 1885, also Das 19. Jahrhundert, (Verlag des Lutherischen Vereins), p. 9.

3 Ibid., p. 7.

The millenium-old Holy Roman Empire collapsed in the year 1806 at the hands of Napoleon I. A recent history textbook, referring to this feat of the Little Corporal, adds this sentence: "Thus disappeared from European politics a title (Holy Roman Emperor) which had been a trouble-maker for a thousand years or so."¹ It was on February 17th of this memorable year that Ernst Moritz Buerger saw the light of day in Arnsheld in the Saxon Erzgebirge.²

Politically the turn of the 19th Century saw the reactionary, conservative statesmen of Europe endeavoring to turn the hands of the clock of time back to the period before the American and the French Revolutions. The Metternich System which was an outgrowth of the Congress of Vienna (1815) tried to reinstate in Europe the Ancient Regime, that anachronistic state of affairs which was built on inequalities, inefficiencies, insecurities, and insincerities. The rulers in Europe guarded their vested interests in the staunch belief of the divine right of kings, while the two revolutions in the last quarter of the 18th Century had sown the seed of democracy which was destined to become a powerful factor in the world. Ernst Moritz Buerger referred to the Napoleonic struggle in these words:

My parents saw hard times in the war-years up to 1814. There was plenty of quartering of soldiers, danger, and trouble. I remember that the glass goblets on the table jingled and the window-panes rattled from the thunder of cannonading in the battle of Leipzig, which was even ten hours distant from Seelitz.³

1 R. O. Hughes, The Making of Today's World, p. 464.

2 Selbstbiographie von Ernst Moritz Buerger, lutherischer Pastor emeritus Meinen Nachkommen gewidmet, geschrieben in dem Jahre 1889 als ich 83 Jahre alt war. (hereinafter cited as Selbstbiographie), p. 6.

3 Ibid., p. 9.

A glimpse into the living conditions of the village and lack of fire-fighting equipment is afforded by the following reference:

It must have been in the year 1823 that lightning struck a thatched roof of a dwelling in the village. Because of the narrow streets and houses huddled closely together almost the entire village and the barns, belonging to the parsonage, went up in flames. The parsonage and the church in close proximity barely escaped the conflagration.⁴

Religiously it was difficult, if not impossible "to uphold true Lutheran Christianity in Germany."⁵ Quoting Dr. E. Deneff in the Lutheran Standard for June 16, 1945, the Concordia Theological Monthly reprinted the following:

King Frederick William III insisted on a union between the Lutheran and the Reformed churches in his realm, although there existed no unity as to the Confessions. This union was consummated in 1834. Now a Lutheran consciousness awoke. Lutheran pastors and congregations opposed the union and insisted on clinging to their Confessions. Then the Prussian State began to persecute these Lutherans; pastors were cast into prison, congregations were punished with respect to their property, and Lutheran services were interdicted the king declared that he would tolerate the Lutheran Church in the Union, but never outside the Union.⁶

Faithful Lutherans according to another source "longed for a land, where it would not be necessary to hide out in forests, corners, and cellars for conducting their divine services, in order to be secure from the spying informers, but where they could enjoy full freedom of religion."⁷

⁴ Ibid., p. 8

⁵ E. A. Wm. Krausz, Lebensbilder aus der Geschichte der Christlichen Kirche, p. 715.

⁶ Concordia Theological Monthly, XVI, (Aug. 1941), p. 558.

⁷ Theodore Buerger, Chronik der Ersten Ev. Lutherischen Dreifaltigkeits - Gemeinde, U.A.C. in Buffalo, N. Y. p. 3.

Rationalism ran rampant in Germany in church circles. Speaking of the spread of rationalism in general, Ernst Moritz Buerger said: "At the time of my grandfather, 1753, rationalism began to deluge Germany mightily."⁸ Referring particularly to the seats of learning, the universities, Buerger observed concerning his stay at the University of Leipzig: "Because of the crass rationalism that pervaded this University I consider my stay here as at least partially lost years of my life."⁹

As far as the economic status of pastors was concerned, Buerger could say about the parsonage in which he was reared;

My father's diocese embraced twenty-four villages, all of whose inhabitants were obliged to attend the large, beautiful church in Seelitz. Seelitz was perhaps in early days an episcopal see, for father received royalty and grain-taxes or tithes also from the neighboring parishes. My father's salary was good. Besides the various perquisites, which he received at baptisms, weddings, burials, and confession, he had the use of the large glebe or parish landholdings. He was also justiciary (Gerichtsherr) over the district of a number of landowners. In case of lawsuits he had to procure the services of a senior judge. That was an odd remnant of olden times. When the Augsburg Confession says in Chapter XX (Sic!): Concerning the Power of the Bishops: 'If they have any other power or jurisdiction, in hearing and judging certain cases, as of matrimony or of tithes, they have it by human law,' so without a doubt this remnant of secular rule which belonged to the bishops of Seelitz was, when the Reformation was introduced in Saxony, transferred to the Lutheran pastors not according to divine, but according to human law. At any rate this arrangement was in effect down to my father's time.¹⁰

Buerger's father was situated well enough financially that he made provision for his wife by building her a house in Seelitz. The Autobiography

⁸ Selbstbiographie, p. 4.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 39-40.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

contains the statement: "Mother occupied this house with my oldest sister Florentina upon the death of my father."¹¹

A few observations on educational practice will be added at this point:

We received our schooling from father. For about a year we had a tutor in our home (Hauslehrer).... We spent six hours in father's study, partly to receive instruction from father, partly to busy ourselves with exercises. In the war years this instruction was disturbed considerably. Father started quite early by teaching my older brother and me Latin, somewhat later also Greek. When we were ready to read Cornelius Nepos, father sent us both to the Gymnasium in Chemnitz, six hours distant from Seelitz. We entered Tertia. The supervisor was a strict and severe man. Trivialities were punished with a blow by a Spanish reed on the palm of the open hand, which was so painful that one felt like screaming out loud.¹²

The following incident may be of interest to show that youth in school is the same in all ages and that rowdiness is common in all periods of history. Incidentally the use of home-remedies also has a long and honored history, as this reference will show:

When I was in Tertia, I was nearly killed by a fall. A class-mate chased me over the benches. I fell and the weight of my body struck my chest against the sharp corner of a bench, so that I could breathe only with the greatest difficulty for several minutes. I began to fail in health and was forced to give up singing.... Later, while a student in Leipzig, a doctor discovered that I had broken a rib at that time. Even today I can feel the cartilagification.... A simple remedy which I found in a book, the inhaling of the fumes of white pine resin, dropped upon a hot iron, cured me completely, so that I always had strong lungs even up to my ripe old age.¹³

The biographer affords a glimpse into the customs and dress of his day when he describes the commencement exercises following his graduation from

¹¹ Ibid., p. 12.

¹² Ibid., pp. 22-23.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 37-38.

the Gymnasium zum Heiligen Kreuz in Dresden.

We had to dress in black, wore silk trousers that went below the knees, silk hose, shoes with metal buckles and under the arm a collapsed chapobas-hat. After the celebration the rector treated us to wine and cake. Since the wine went to the head, we soon began to get jovial and noisy. The whole affair had a heathenish not a Christian veneer.¹⁴

A great number of factors caused the inarticulate masses of Europe to peer westward with longing eyes to America, the haven of refuge, the melting pot, the land of unlimited opportunities. However, the wide expanse of ocean and the strange tongue spoken in the New World caused even the stoutest hearts to quake and as a result America remained to many only a dream. To the subject of this thesis, America became a reality.

A look into Buerger's Autobiography presents the facts concerning his ancestry. Ernst Moritz Buerger received from his father a valuable document by means of which it is possible to trace the Buerger ancestry back to the year 1679. This document is the flyleaf of an old volume, entitled; Dubia Vexata Scripturae Sacrae, written by August Pfeiffer, printed by Melchior Bergen, 1679 cum gratia et privilegio Elect. Saxoniae. The autographs of E. M. Buerger, his father, his grandfather, great grandfather, and great great grandfather appear in the document. Each signer was a Lutheran clergyman in Saxony not too far distant from Dresden. Dates accompanying each signature and a statement in Latin passed it on to his son, who then became the possessor of the book. While a student at the University of Leipzig, Ernst Moritz received this book and promptly signed his name, bearing the date 1825. A few years before writing his autobiography

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 38-39.

Ernst Moritz gave it to his son Martin, who served as Lutheran pastor to a congregation in Wausau, Wisconsin.¹⁵

Accordingly, the forefathers of Ernst Moritz Buerger were the following:

"Great great grandfather: Johann Christopf Buerger, pastor in Schoenbert, 1697. (This is the date of signature.)

Great grandfather: Johann Christian Buerger, pastor in Bernsdorff, 1746.

Grandfather: Christian Gottlieb Buerger, pastor in Bernsdorff, 1758.

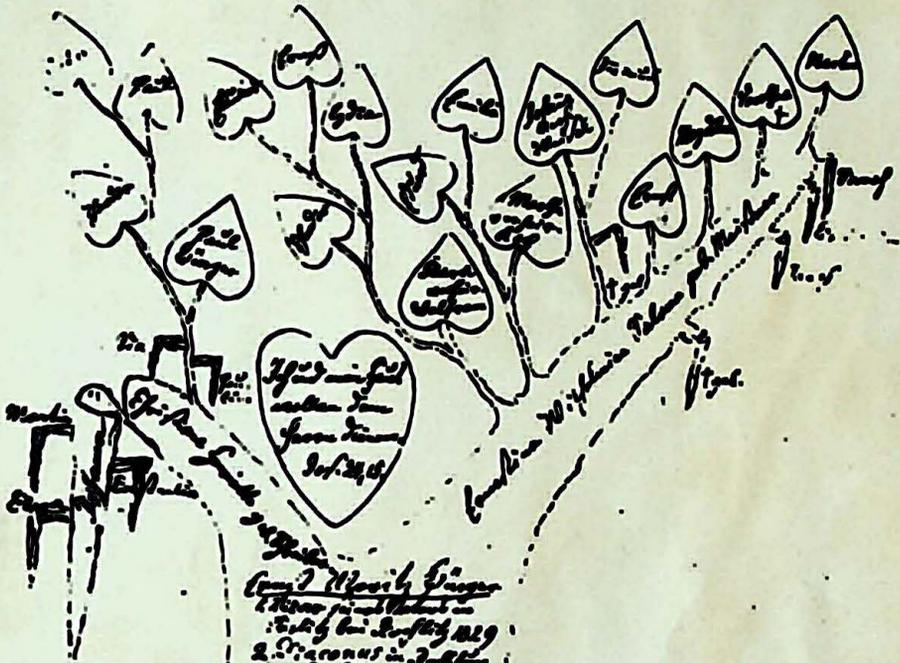
Father: Christian Gottlieb Benjamin Buerger, pastor in Seelitz, 1775.

Son: Ernst Moritz Buerger, pastor, 1825 studiosus Lipsiensis.¹⁶

Shortly after his birth on February 17, 1806, he received the name Ernst Moritz in holy Baptism. Later in life he attached great significance to his Baptism and he drew much comfort from it. While he was the assistant pastor to his father (1829 in Seelitz), he journeyed to Arnfeld to look at the church records. Concerning the entry of his Baptism he said, "To have read with my own eyes is sufficient for me and more precious than a thousand

¹⁵ I remember my paternal grandfather, the Rev. Theodore Wolfram, who now resides in retirement in Ventura, Iowa, tell a number of stories about his ancestors, the Buergers. Pastor Martin Buerger won blue ribbons at the County Fair in Wausau for his excellent cabbage heads both for size and quality. Ernst Moritz (my great, great grandfather) confirmed my grandfather at Hart, Minnesota, and later urged him to study for the ministry.

¹⁶ I am appending at this place in photostatic copy two pages from my great great grandfather's manuscripts which show in his handwriting a copy of the valuable document described above as well as the family tree of Ernst Moritz Buerger down to the year 1858. My great grandfather's name is found in the heart-shaped figure containing the words: "Clara verheiratet an Wolfram". Clara was the oldest daughter of Ernst Moritz from his second wife: Ernestina Wilhelmina Saloma geb. Meissner. My grandfather's name appears as the oldest son of this union and thus is shown in the first heart that branches from the Wolfram group in the family.



Conrad Weiser's Son
 1. Pastor in ...
 2. Diocesan in ...
 3. Pastor in ...
 4. Pastor in ...
 5. Pastor in ...
 6. Pastor in ...
 7. Pastor in ...

Stephen Geddes Benjamin
 1. Pastor in ...
 2. Pastor in ...
 3. Pastor in ...

A. Smith Geddes Benjamin
 Pastor in ...

Johann Friedrich Cramer
 Pastor in ...

Dogge's list, living long, in New York, and for others in the ...

...
 ...
 ...

worlds."¹⁷ In fact he was exuberant in his joy, "What a rich fountain of solace it has been to me in my soul-distress and future sore trials."¹⁸ Even in his old age he considered sending for his baptismal certificate so he could frame it and have it constantly before him. He deplored the fact that pastors in America were negligent in keeping the exact church records. He considered some pastors in his acquaintanceship thoughtless and frivolous in this respect.

Before his second birthday the family moved to Seelitz near Rochlitz. Already as a child he received religious instruction in the home. His grandmother, who had come to live with the Buergers because of a broken hip, taught him this prayer which he prayed throughout his life:

My God, I thank Thee heartily
For blessings Thou hast granted me
From my childhood to this very hour
In such super-abundance.¹⁹

As a youngster he followed the quaint custom of the Erzgebirge. At the setting of the sun a bell would toll and the peasants in the fields and in the villages would stop working and bow their heads in prayer. He sadly admits his negligence in prayer when as a student he was caught in "the maelstrom of the world". He finally came to his senses later when God showed him the value of prayer through trials.

17 Ibid., p. 17.

18 Ibid., p. 18. "Was fuer eine reiche Trostquelle ist mir das in meinen Seelenoethen und kuenftigen Anfechtungen gewesen."

19 Ibid., p. 21. Mein Gott, ich danke herzlich Dir
Fuer alle Wehltat, die Du mir
Von Kindheit bis auf diese Stund,
So ueberfluessig hast gegunnt.

Throughout his youth he showed himself to be a serious-minded and pious lad. On his Confirmation Day he could say that "his heart had been directed upwards and was awakened to prayer."²⁰ Yet he was subject to the same sins and weaknesses of all youth. "With levity and recklessness, with lies and even shameless misuse of God's name I besmirched my life."²¹

As he looked back on his life, he commented on a serious lack of instruction in the fundamentals of Christian faith. "That Christ had done enough for my sins, that He had earned forgiveness and the righteousness which avail before God, and that we are justified solely through faith in Him, these were truths wholly unknown to me."²²

After having been introduced to Latin and Greek in his father's study, he was taken to Dresden to the Kreuzschule together with his brother. A room was rented on the fourth floor in a home on the Frauenstrasse for the sum of twelve Thaler. After the rector gave him an oral entrance examination he was placed into Quarta. While in this class a tragedy occurred which had a profound influence on his life. His older brother, Eduard, drowned while swimming in the Elbe. Ernst considered this calamity a judgment of God pronounced on Eduard because of his waywardness. Besides making Ernst reconsecrate himself to God, it forced him to leave his room on the Frauenstrasse and apply for a scholarship which would mean that he could live in a dormitory. He passed and joined thirty-two students who lived in the Alumneum. The

²⁰ Ibid., p. 28.

²¹ Ibid., p. 28.

²² Ibid., p. 28.

housemaster, called Collaborator, supervised their singing for funerals. The revenue derived from singing helped pay the room and board costs. The Collaborator also conducted devotions; he used Wichels Morgen- und Abendopfer and had the students sing a hymn.

Under the supervision of unbelieving and rationalistic teachers the religious instruction could be nothing else but "ein elendes Gewaesch von heidnischer Moral."²³ He relates the story of the rector who assigned a composition to one of his classes. A Primaner wrote a German composition in which he gave expression to pious thoughts and included a prayer to Jesus. With the expression "phooey!" (pfui!) he shoved the essay aside. The situation became so bad that the teachers told immoral and racy stories in the classroom and such practices as cursing, self-abuse, and immorality were common in the Alumneum. Buerger was not contaminated; of this he writes, "It was a gracious dispensation of Providence that a schoolmate gave me the book, Salzmann's Secret Sins of Youth, which I read attentively and also discussed with him. We then avoided those pupils who looked suspicious to us."²⁴ "Another important book that I read conscientiously was Stunden der Andacht; it was instrumental in keeping me on the straight and narrow path."²⁵

On Sundays he made it a practice to hear the famous preachers of Dresden. He deplored the fact that the most famous were unbelievers who attempted to impress their audiences with nice sounding words. The two

23 Ibid., p. 34. "A miserable chit-chat of heathenish morality."

24 Ibid., p. 36.

25 Ibid., p. 36.

believing pastors of Dresden stood in disrepute.

After six years in Dresden he was graduated with twenty pupils from the Kreuzschule with the following report card, written in Latin: "That I had never transgressed good mores and that I was dismissed with a fine academic standing (omnino dignus)."²⁶ He gathered all his belongings together and stopped at home for a visit with his parents; and then he left for the University of Leipzig in 1825.

To gain admission he was forced to promise the rector at that time "to conduct myself respectably, to study diligently, not to join a secret association, not to fight a duel, not to leave the University without a certificate."²⁷

His course of study and the instructors were as follows:

Professor Krug, logic and metaphysics; D. Lack, World's History; Professor Niedner, Church History; D. Rossmueller, Old Testament Exegesis; Professor Thailie, New Testament Exegesis; Superintendent D. Wirmer, Dogmatics; D. Dittmann and D. Hahn, Dogmatic Examinatorium; D. Lindner, Pedagogy and Pastoral Theology; Pastor M. Wolf, Homiletics. I consider the first years of my University life in part lost years. I allowed myself to be rolled into the slime of Rationalism and to read books like Wegscheider's Dogmatik which denied the divinity of Christ, explained the miracles in a natural way, and placed Christ on the same level with heathen philosophers. I had to use The School-Teacher's Bible by Victor, a book highly recommended by unbelieving theologians, but a pattern of mendacious and satanic interpretation of Scripture. Nevertheless, the last year of my university training was a blessed one. I came to the parting of ways, to the right with truth towards heaven, to the left with lies to hell. Praise and glory to God who guided my heart to the right.

Up until the last year I learned only naked unbelief and heard trash that I often times did not understand; I considered blasphemy as truth and wisdom.... Things were to change now. Victor Hahn, a so-called liberal theologian, had been called as professor of theology to Leipzig. He was indeed an outspoken defender of the Union proposed

26 Ibid., p. 39.

27 Ibid., pp. 40-41. "mich sittsam zu verhalten, fleissig zu studieren, in keine geheime Verbindung zu treten, mich in kein Duell einzulassen, und die Universitaet nicht ohne Zeugniß zu verlassen."

by the King of Prussia, but he had the reputation of being a believing Christian. Before he entered upon his duties at the University, he had to engage in a public disputation. Philosopher Krug was his opponent, but Hahn was equal to him. In fact Dr. Hahn became world famous in theological circles because his conservative stand was sharply opposed to Rationalism.

I enrolled in Dr. Hahn's Dogmatic Examinatorium. What I heard there was new to me. It was simply the language of old orthodox theologians, the simple doctrines of faith in Luther's Catechism as a school child learned them in the good old days. Dr. Hahn entertained a small group of serious-minded candidates in his home once a week. Upon recommendation I received an invitation to be present. He called our attention to the tremendous havoc that Rationalism had produced in the church. There I heard and learned what my poor soul required.

The other believing Christian was the pastor of St. Peter's Church, who influenced my soul tremendously. I took the courage to visit him in his home and with tears in my eyes I confessed to him that his sermons were of great value to me. He gave me a number of edifying devotional books and suggested that I visit a shoe maker by the name of Goetsching. I found him to be a man of simple taste, rich in Christian knowledge and experience; my association with him was of great value.

Finally the acquaintanceship of two students, Keyl and Kuehn, made a lasting impression on my whole life. I was now breathing an entirely different atmosphere. I was moving in a circle of so-called Mystics, who spoke an entirely different language. These two students insisted on a thorough repentance and conversion and a vital knowledge of man's natural depravity. This thorn which Keyl and Kuehn had pressed into my heart remained there. It was through the efforts of these students that I learned to distinguish properly between Law and Gospel. That is something I didn't get out of the classroom.²⁸

After three and one half years study at Leipzig University he presented himself in Dresden for the examen pro candidatura. Thirty students were examined in six divisions and each examination lasted three hours. The First Chaplain in ordinary (Oberhofprediger) Ammon conducted the questioning. In Buerger's case he covered the area pertaining to the state between death and eternity. It was Greek to him (Das war mir ein boemisches Dorf) but he received a grade of "good". Behind locked doors each candidate was

28 Ibid., pp. 41-47.

asked to preach a sermon. Again he received a grade of "good". Then he was asked to teach a class by way of questions and answers (catechesis). This exercise brought him a mark of "very good". The experience he had received from teaching in an Armenschule in Leipzig made him more qualified in this field. He was licensed as a candidate and was qualified to apply for a rural pastorate (ein Pfarramt im Lande). However, he decided to accept a position in the Armenschule in Leipzig. At this time six vacancies opened up in the Katechetenschule at St. Peter's of which H. Wolf was chief pastor. He preached a trial sermon and was designated to fill the first of the six vacancies. This put him first in line for a pastorate in the city. This necessitated a degree of doctor of philosophy which required a considerable outlay in time and money. Not the least of the latter was a final fee of fifty Thaler. ("This nut was too hard for me to crack.")²⁹ So he turned the offer down, resigned at the Armenschule, and became the assistant pastor at Seelitz in his father's congregation. He felt that he forfeited a comfortable position, good prospects for advancement, a fine income, and fellowship with Christian friends, but later on in life he considered it a happy choice. For in the quiet solitude at Seelitz he devoted himself to the study of theology, particularly to Scripture. Had he remained in Leipzig, the many distractions would have made this study impossible. Through precatio, meditatio, tentatio he was learning the true theology.

From 1829 to 1833 he was assistant pastor in Seelitz. Before he could take over the pastoral duties for his father, he was obliged to preach

²⁹ Ibid., p. 50. "Diese Nuss war mir zu hart sie aufzubeissen."

another trial sermon in Chemnitz for Superintendent Unger. He used as his theme: "Man can not through his own power find the true knowledge of God."³⁰ The old Superintendent, a nationalist and freemason, who criticised his sermon, did not agree with the content of the sermon. However, when Buerger proved his sermon from Scripture, he gave him his certificate which permitted him to perform all official acts except the administration of the Sacraments.

The old conflict "that man if he is to be truly converted must experience a thorough repentance, remorse, grief, and a fear concerning sin, God's anger, and hell"³¹ began to harass him. For hours he would be on his knees begging God for such repentance. It wore on him so long that he became pale and haggard in appearance. To his great joy Keyl became pastor in Niederfrohna, a village, only three hours distant from Seelitz. Buerger visited him every month. He discovered his error and analyzed it in the following way:

I searched for God's grace, quiet, and peace and the certainty of my salvation in repentance, i.e. in a high degree of fear, terror, and remorse because of my sins and not in Christ; I made a Christ out of this repentance and did not take my refuge in the true Christ.... It was the erroneous opinion that grace, forgiveness, and salvation could and must be earned and worked out by man by means of terror, fear, and great remorse.³²

³⁰ Ibid., p. 52. Dass der Mensch aus eigener Kraft keine richtige Erkenntniss Gottes finden koenne.

³¹ Ibid., p. 54. "dass ein Mensch, wann er wahrhaft bekehrt werden solle, eine tiefgehende Busse, Reue, Leid und Schrecken ueber die Suende, Gottes Zorn und Hoelle erfahren muesste."

³² Ibid., p. 58. "Ich suchte Gottes Gnade, Ruhe, und Frieden und die Gewissheit meiner Seligkeit in der Busse, d.h. in einem hohen Grade von Schrecken, Angst und Zerknirschung ueber meine Suende und nicht in Christo; ich machte aus dieser Busse einen Christus und nahm nicht meine Zuflucht zu dem rechten Christus.... Es war da die irrige Meinung die Gnade, die Verggebung, die Seligkeit koenne und muesse durch Schrecken, Angst, und grosse Reue von dem Menschen verdient und erarbeitet werden, ehe er die durch Christum geschehene Erloesung annehmen und sich aneignen duerfe."

Through the efforts of Keyl, Buerger on a trip to Dresden in 1830 met Pastor Stephan. In their conversation Ernst explained his conflict and search for the solution; thereupon Stephan suggested that he read the entire Bible book by book consecutively and carefully. Buerger followed this suggestion and it proved beneficial.

These soul conflicts and the deep study of the Word were reflected in his Sunday sermons. A religious revival and awakening started in a small way. His father, who was respected by his superiors and honored by his congregation, had slipped into the whirlpool of Rationalism. This led to a "rub" between them and to many vehement and painful arguments and incidents.

In Lunzenau Diakonus Kuehn, his university friend at Leipzig, passed away. He was chaplain in the court of Count Von Schoenburg, a very pious and Christian gentleman in Glauchau. Buerger was invited as guest speaker by the Count. Shortly after, he received the appointment. After another trial sermon in Lunzenau before a congregation and a trial sermon before the Consistorium in Leipzig, and an examen pro munere he became Court Chaplain.

While he was chaplain, Lunzenau and two villages were to be separated from the parish of Rochsburg, so that Lunzenau was to become an independent parish. The Consistorium ordered him to go to Leipzig to be ordained and to take the oath of office. He was ordained in the Thomas Kirche, made famous by Bach, in the presence of the entire clergy of the city. Holy Communion was celebrated before the ceremony. Buerger was impressed by the seriousness and confessional attitude of the church in Saxony in the

matter of the call and ordination as the following excerpt will show.

"How well things stood at that time in the Kingdom of Saxony as far as the servants of the Word taking an oath, being pledged, and ordained upon the pure confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church is concerned, may be seen from the documents of ordination, which were handed to me, when I was called and ordained."³⁴

Buerger's certificate of ordination plays a key role in his life in America and is one of the factors that urged him to return to Saxony from Perry County. At a later point in this thesis considerable space shall be devoted to answering the question which has puzzled church historians: "Why did Ernst Moritz Buerger leave Perry County for Germany?" At this point we shall translate significant portions from his certificate of vocation:

... that you consider the election to said office as a divine call.... that you deliver, teach, and preach pure and unadulterated and untiringly and inspiringly the Word of God, Law and Gospel as such is found in the writings of the Apostles and Prophets in the Old and New Testament, and also has been repeated in the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Apology of the same, as well as in the Large and Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther, and the Formula of Concord, as well as in the Smalcald Articles; to administer faithfully the holy Sacraments according to the command of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; to visit and comfort the sick diligently; to accompany the deceased to their final resting place; to instruct painstakingly, patiently, and conscientiously the school children and with all this do not fail to live a blameless Christian life in such a way as is fitting for a faithful and righteous teacher and preacher.³⁵

³⁴ Selbstbiographie, p. 74. "Wie gut es noch damals in Koenigreich Sachsen insofern stand, dass die Kirchendiener auf das reine Bekenntniss der Evangelish = lutherischen Kirche beeidet, verpflichtet und ordiniert wurden, kann man erkennen aus der schriftlichen Vocation und aus dem Ordinationsdocument, das mir bei meiner Berufung und Ordination eingehaendigt wurde."

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 75-77.

The certificate of ordination, also bearing the date of February 10, 1833, is translated in part as follows:

Since the church is gathered and built in no other way than through the voice of the Gospel, and since God desires persons to be called and ordained, who are able to teach the Gospel, so we have heard and examined said Ernst Moritz Buerger very carefully and have discovered, that he knows correctly the sum of Christian doctrine and holds immovably fast to the purity of the Gospel, which also our church in the same spirit with the orthodox universal Church of Christ confesses, and wishes to stay aloof from all false and sectarian opinions, which the symbolical books of our church condemn. Said Ernst Moritz Buerger has promised to be and remain steadfast in this doctrine and faithfully to execute his office. According to Apostolic teaching he was therefore ordered in a solemn act, performed by the state, to preach the Gospel according to apostolic teaching and to administer the Sacraments according to his certificate of vocation.³⁶

On paper this sounded good, but in practice it was a different matter.

The inconsistency between practice and confession can best be described by the autobiographer:

I received the ordination document from the unbelieving and crass-rationalistic Consistorium in Leipzig. They demanded of me to hold steadfastly to pure doctrine as found in the Symbolic Books of the Lutheran Church. What a hypocrisy! What a sham! What a spirit of lies! They pledged me to a doctrine which they had cast aside. They placed into my hands such sterling documents dating out of olden times and demanded that I teach accordingly, but it didn't last long until I was sued for doing the very thing they asked me to do. I was told to abide by the spirit not the letter of the Bible.... not to teach that we are saved by the blood, suffering, and death of Christ, but to teach Christ has saved us through His teaching. The head of the State-church, the Minister of Culture, V. Falkenstein, informed me of this in a letter and threatened me. Stringent action would follow, if I continued in my "Buchstabenlehre".³⁷

On Lastare Sunday 1833 he preached his farewell sermon in Seelitz and on the following Sunday his initial sermon in Lunzenau, after the Superintendent had installed him as pastor.

36 Ibid., p. 81.

37 Ibid., p. 81.

For five and one half years Buerger was at first diakonus and then pastor at Lunzenau. After Easter he traveled to Leipzig to marry the step-daughter of Pastor Haensel, who was prison chaplain in Leipzig. She had been engaged to his predecessor and college-friend, Kuehn, who had, however, died before he married her. Through Pastor Kuehn she had been converted and had learned to love God's Word. Buerger's married life was a happy one being blessed with four children, but it lasted only eight years. His wife passed away shortly after they arrived in the New World. Their first child was born September 7, 1835 and received the name Paul Theodore in Baptism. A second child arrived and was baptized Fides Constantia, but she died in infancy. In 1838 the last child to be born in Germany arrived and was named Martin.³⁸ Pastor Walther from Braunsdorf was the sponsor.

Buerger's sermons were well received. Church attendance was excellent. A group of people journed from Seelitz every Sunday to attend his services. They took the two hour trip every Sunday, and finally emigrated to America with him.

His congregation had suffered under the activity of Cantor Haeberlein, a brazenly "fresh" unbelieving school-master and a rabid rationalist, who had served the congregation at Lunzenau for fifty years. Over this long period of time this teacher had inculcated a lax Lutheranism into all his pupils. Add to this the fact that the pastors of the congregation had been of a similar stripe, and it is easy to understand that his predecessor,

³⁸ Martin died in America at the age of seventeen from typhoid fever. Another son born to his second wife was also named Martin. He later became pastor in Wausau, Wisconsin.

Rev. Kuehn, had barely made a dent in their thinking along more conservative lines. Buerger attempted to follow in Kuehn's footsteps. About four months after Buerger had arrived, a severe storm of disapproval broke out against him. Opposition persisted. It increased until one day a libellous cartoon was posted at a street intersection beginning with these words:

"Pastor Buerger and the devil
Are indeed, without a doubt
Dear bosom-friends etc."³⁹

On the door of a barn were painted distorted, ugly faces with the super-
scription: "Mystic, sanctimonious hypocrite."⁴⁰ These paintings were so
placed that they could be seen by those members who came from Seelitz on
their way to church. Buerger's pious friend, the Count, came to him
secretly and informed him that the authorities were watching his move-
ments; especially were they checking to see whether he was conducting
clandestine services of a puritanical nature (Konventikel).

The section in which the autobiographer discussed the emigration to
America is so important that a rather detailed transcription of it will
be offered at this point. Again his interpretation of this move to
America dare not be overlooked, for in his interpretation a clue is to
be found that will explain his resolve to return to Saxony after serving
in Perry County for three years.

Within a circle of several believing pastors, who were suffering
from this pressure, and among conservative laymen, the question was
being discussed more and more, whether it was not about time to
emigrate to America, the land of religious freedom. Pastor Stephan
especially proposed and backed this venture. An American preacher
was consulted as to what location in the United States might be the
best place to settle. Plans were drafted and sketched how a

39 Ibid., p. 97. "Pastor Buerger und der Teufel
Sind wohl ohne allen Zweifel
Liebe Herzensbruederchen, usw."

40 Ibid., p. 97. "Mystiker, Mucker."

considerable number of Lutherans could best be carried over the ocean. Skilled experts, of whom many were at hand, were selected to solve this problem and many others.

It was decided to open a credit-treasury (Kreditkasse) from which the expenses of transporting about eight hundred souls to America could be met. Those with means were to make payments into the Kreditkasse in order that enough would be on hand so that even the people without sufficient money could be taken along. The latter obligated themselves to repay at a later date in America. Thus the money taken by the poorer was considered a loan. In short, with great industry and ability, the stupendous undertaking was carried out, and in the two months of November and December of 1839 (sic!) six sailships were steering toward New Orleans. The first ship, the Copernicus, with eighty emigrants landed on December 31, 1839 (sic!) in New Orleans. E. M. Buerger and the members of his congregation were on this ship. All of the emigrants took steamships (riverboats)⁴¹ from New Orleans to St. Louis, our final goal. One ship, the Amalia, was lost and no word was ever heard from her. That was the first hard blow to hit us. Many more were to follow, however.

Although much could be said that would excuse our emigration, yet in the main it was a colossal error (grosser Irrtum) more on the part of the instigators and leaders than by the weak, innocent Christians, because they trusted their leaders implicitly. In the first place, the Evangelical Lutheran Church was the legitimate, authentic church in Saxony, and we pastors were legally pledged and took an oath on the canonical confessions of this church. In the face of our enemies we could have appealed to our oath and to the confessions of the Lutheran Church. We were called into our offices as pastors by God. We should have stood our ground, we should have fought to the death (bis aufs Blut Kaempfen) or till the authentic, existing, pure confession of the state church would have fallen or would have been abolished, or we would have been banished or removed from office. Our emigration was premature. Our emigration was a flight from a cross (Kreuzesflucht), a lowering of the evaluation (Geringachtung) of our divine calls, in many respects a work of the flesh. In the belief that we were doing right, we tore family ties, secretly took children from their parents, and husband from wife.

Our reconnaissance of earthly advantages, which were to be found in America and of which we had read and heard, may well have blinded us. Earthly gratification, carnal craze, and passion satisfied the old Adam more than the courageous, honorable, god-pleasing, and faithful religious strife (Glaubenskampf).

Stephan himself urged and incited the emigration, without a doubt, out of very impure and sinful motives. However, it was something that we did not know at the time. If we had known it,

⁴¹ W. H. T. Dau, Ebenezer, p. 11. A list of all the ships used by the immigrants, together with a departure and arrival time-table, as well as the names of the riverboats are found here. Buerger and his congregation sailed on the Mississippi steamer, Rienzi.

not a single one of us would have followed him. His secret sins were unknown to us. He knew how to cover them up. From a better time, he knew the confessional stand of the Lutheran Church, had a rich experience and great wisdom, and was considered by all of us as a light and a faithful shepherd and was honored and respected by persons in high standing. But he had every reason to fear that his secret activity would come to the light of day, and to hope that in America no ecclesiastical boards would detect him so he could go on unhindered in his life of sin. Without a doubt that was the motive for his persistent urging and coaxing to emigrate.

Thus proven, our emigration stands indeed as a great error (Ein grosser Irrtum). But what did the gracious God do in this case? How did He deal with this erring flock? What did He accomplish with them?

He exposed Stephan, brought us to a knowledge of our error and great offence. He placed a great and heavy cross upon us, demonstrated to us gradually through His Word our mistakes in the doctrine, which we had imbibed from Stephan and brought from Germany. God also revived true teachers among us who faithfully and conscientiously searched the Scriptures and the writings of the old orthodox church fathers and disseminated the treasures which they found in these sources. The light of God's Word soon dispelled the light of darkness more and more, enlightened, comforted, and made joyous the hearts of many. In short, out of this small, erring, despised group, God eventually permitted a great people to grow who have carried the banner of the pure confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church almost over the entire United States....

To him be eternal glory, praise, and thanksgiving.⁴²

Before continuing with the Saxon immigrants in Perry County, Missouri, perhaps a few words regarding conditions in the United States would not be amiss.

Historians have given a name to the period from 1829-1840: "The Jacksonian Period". In the early years of our country's history, the word "Liberty" was all-important. The colonies chafed under British rule and hankered for liberty. This was gained by the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812-15. Next in line came the word "Democracy". Politicians had been paying lip service to the word but there was little love for true

⁴² Selbstbiographie, pp. 115-120.

democracy. But in 1828 the common man found his champion in Andrew Jackson, who was of -- not above -- the people. He was an ordinary rough -- and -- ready citizen without much formal education. The leather clad frontiersman of the West, the workers in the northern mill towns, the thousands of "one-horse" cotton farmers who lived under the shadows of the great southern plantations flocked to his standards.

A description of Jackson's inauguration will give an insight into "Andy's" democratic philosophy and love of the common man.

From all over the countryside his followers came to Washington to gaze reverently on the tall and lean man with his white hair bared to the March sun as he walked through the mud of Pennsylvania Avenue to his inauguration. Crowding into the White House afterwards, a milling mob stood on the chairs, upset the furniture, and trampled on the glassware. Tubs of whiskey and punch hastily placed on the lawn drew them out before the furnishings were a shambles. Washington society was horrified. They tilted their noses, muttered 'mobocracy' and talked grimly of the new reign of terror that would probably cost them their estates if the 'brawler from Tennessee' were allowed a free hand. But Jackson, even though he had to escape from his own reception by a window, was delighted. These were his people, and he would dedicate his reign to them.⁴³

The victorious masses disliked many things: the property qualifications for voting that still existed in some states, the restriction of office holding to the wealthy, lack of popular control over state and federal officials, and the inadequate educational opportunities for their children. Jackson attacked these undemocratic features of government. In this way democracy was expanded. Andrew Jackson selected his successor, Martin Van Buren. Van Buren was president when the Saxon immigrants arrived in Perry County, the frontier where a man could go as far as his brawn and brain would let him go.

⁴³ Ray Billington, Bert Loewenberg, Samuel Brockunier, The United States, American Democracy in World Perspective, p. 150.

In the early years of Van Buren's administration, the country suffered a great set-back in the form of a depression, the Panic of 1837. The panic came at the end of a great era of canal building. The people had invested every cent they could scrape together and borrow from Europeans into new canals which were being dug in almost every state of the Union. Along with this went speculation on lands bordering or near the canals. People began to realize that it would be a long time before the investors could get their money back out of these canals. Suddenly they became frightened and a panic started. The destruction of the Second United States Bank accompanied this collapse. This removed the brake on state banks and was followed by a flood of bank notes issued by state banks. This brought inflation, encouraged speculation, and upset the whole business world.

Captain Marryat, a famous British traveler, noticed the effects of the panic on the people:

Not a smile.... among the crowd who pass and repass; hurried steps, care-worn faces, rapid exchange of salutation, or hasty communication of anticipated ruin before the sun goes down. Everywhere people brooding over departed wealth. The violent shock has been communicated, like that of electricity, throughout the country to a distance of hundreds of miles.... and the Irish immigrant leans against his shanty with his idle spade in his hand, and starves, as his thoughts wander back to his own Emerald Isle.⁴⁴

The Saxon fathers and their congregations set foot upon American soil at a time when prices were tumbling, debts were mounting, harsh foreclosure laws were threatening mortgaged homes, and on the horizon the clouds of slavery and disunion were beginning to form.

⁴⁴ Howard Faulkner, Tyler Kepner, Hall Bartlett, The American Way of Life, p. 312.

Whereas this is a partial picture of conditions in the United States when the Saxons came over, they, like many immigrant groups, did not assimilate too readily or make much of an effort to affect the political life of their communities. They continued in the use of the German language, customs, and thought, often forming "culture islands".

The first few years in America, as the autobiography shows, were full of hectic activity. A committee of selected men purchased a large tract of land in Perry County, Missouri. Hurriedly temporary buildings were erected so that several hundred could find shelter there. A large group of immigrants who wished to farm moved to Perry County. The others, mostly craftsmen, remained in St. Louis, where they eventually found good employment. Stephan and the other pastors remained in St. Louis also.

In Germany Buerger and Stephan were the best of friends. Buerger often traveled the long distance to Dresden to seek his advice and discuss weighty problems with him. Buerger placed great confidence in the advice of his friend, whom he considered a faithful and wise counselor. When the new agenda came out in Saxony, Buerger refused to introduce it into his work at Lunzenau. When the Consistorium threatened to sue him, he went to Dresden to talk it over with Stephan. This might show, as an example, the high esteem in which he held Stephan. Buerger was an extremely zealous Stephanite. However, in the New World things changed. At first, Stephan became lukewarm in his attitude toward him.

It was particularly noticeable to him, when Stephan pushed him aside in preference to the other pastors. It was so pronounced, that he was not drawn into the deliberations and conferences which were so necessary to the new settlement. Stephan's dislike became plainly evident in the evaluation

of the sermon which Buerger had preached in St. Louis. Stephan accused him, and he mentioned it to others, that in his sermon he had vilified the holy Apostles. Buerger had preached an Easter sermon and referred (correctly and biblically according to the autobiographer) to the weakness and unbelief of the apostles concerning the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. Stephan called it a deception, libel, and defamation of the Saints. Buerger knew that he had not preached falsely on this point, and he began to distrust the man whom he had fully trusted up to this time.

Buerger had joined a number of pastors (Loeber, Keyl, O. H. Walther, and C. F. W. Walther) in a request that Stephan accept the office of the first apostolic Lutheran bishop. They claimed that their souls welfare was bound up in the episcopal form of church government and that they would obey any and all commands issued by the bishop. Before sailing, long meetings were held discussing episcopal vestments, especially the head gear which would set off the bishop properly from the other clergy. The salary was fixed at \$1,500, a sum considered to be in keeping with his high office. "This petition reveals utter subjection to a man, a servility bordering on the Oriental"⁴⁵ and helps explain the obedience to Stephan's autocratic order that Buerger's wife be placed under Rev. Walther's pastoral care. He also placed Ernst Moritz under obligation to look after the spiritual welfare of a considerable number of woodchoppers who had found employment about twenty miles out of St. Louis. In this

⁴⁵ C. S. Munding, Government in the Missouri Synod, p. 32.

retreat Buerger had a wonderful opportunity to reflect and come closer to God in prayer and the study of His Word. He also fought against the mistrust of Stephan which had inflamed his mind, but in this he was not successful ("was mir aber nicht gelingen wollte"⁴⁶).

Upon his return to St. Louis he was met by Walther with these words: "Buerger, prepare yourself for a terrible shock".⁴⁷ But Walther did not tell him at this time that Stephan had misused girls. These girls confessed their guilt to Pastor Loeber, who carried this secret in a grieved heart for several days before he finally divulged it to Walther and Keyl. At a later date Loeber told Buerger the entire story of Stephan's episode with these unmarried girls. Buerger relates: "Strange, instead of being horrified by this news, as was the case with other immigrants, it produced jubilation in my soul."⁴⁸

When Stephan's godless life became more and more known, the consternation was immense. Everything was done to make Stephan harmless, so that he could not get a following. Pastor Walther was sent to Perry County. He succeeded in inducing all immigrants to desert Stephan, before he became aware of it. Soon after this was accomplished the pastors and those who did not wish to stay in St. Louis rented a riverboat and traveled to Perry County. After an investigation Stephan was deposed of his office and banished to a settlement in Illinois. He is supposed to have served a congregation there for a short time and to have died without

⁴⁶ Selbstbiographie, p. 124.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 124. "Buerger, mache Dich auf etwas Schreckliches gefasst."

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 126.

any signs of true repentance.⁴⁹

The landholdings in Perry County were assigned to the creditors who had paid money into the Kreditkasse. Five villages were founded with the following names: Dresden, Altenburg, Niederfrohna, Seelitz, and Wittenberg. Although many poor people, whose trip had been paid out of the common treasury, gradually repaid in an honest way, yet the creditors lost in the transaction, since they had to buy the land at a higher price than it was worth. Each pastor resided in the locality where those people settled who in Germany had belonged to their congregation. Buerger settled in Seelitz, Missouri where the people lived who had belonged to his father's flock in Seelitz, Saxony.

Soon a time of great misery and need arose. Diseases, cold fever, and especially burning fever snatched away a great number of the pioneers, particularly in Seelitz which was situated in a low valley. The land was mostly wild and had to be made arable. There was not enough money to buy even the most necessary items. The brethren who remained in St. Louis and had good jobs, sent help, but they could not send sufficient funds to relieve the need.

The spiritual distress was even worse. Everyone began to doubt the expediency (Rechtmaessigkeit) of the emigration. Questions like these arose: Just where do we stand as a congregation? Did our ministers have a right to desert their office in Germany? Do the pastors here have a proper call? Were they not perhaps seducers who coaxed us to this land

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 127. "Dort (in Illinois) soll er noch eine Zeitlang eine Gemeinde bedient haben und ohne Zeichen einer wahren Busse gestorben sein."

and who were responsible for torn family ties, who helped children run away from their parents, and husbands from their wives? Are we even to be called a Lutheran congregation? These and other questions agitated the immigrants. The situation was met somewhat in this way: the individual congregations in a regularly called meeting extended calls to each pastor separately; nevertheless, the confidence of the people was shaken and shattered.

The autobiographer said about himself and his congregation: "I was the worst off. In my congregation, where a large number had great losses, the indignation was great."⁵⁰ Although Buerger had nothing to do with the Kreditkasse or the purchase of the land in Perry County, yet they looked upon him as a seducer (Verfuehrer) and the cause (Urheber) of their trouble and losses. Buerger certified the fact that a faithful and conscientious treasurer handled the finances of the immigrants. He took pains to explain how a strained relationship came to exist between him and his congregation. They were accustomed to be treated brotherly, friendly, and lovingly by their pastor. For eight years a very cordial relationship existed between Buerger and his members. On the ocean voyage, however, when his morale was low, he in moments of weakness showed himself impatient, hard, and unfriendly. His conscience became more alarmed concerning the emigration. The coming to America had been premature.

He considered the move a colossal error; after all was said and done, Saxony still had the pure confessions and recognized them as such. He

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 130. "Mir ging es dabei am schlimmsten."

felt that the pastors should have remained there and fought for them instead of deserting in a lighthearted manner the offices which God had entrusted to them. He fought for confessional Lutheranism and won a notable victory over the rationalistic Consistorium as the following incident will show. Buerger was called to give communion to a sick parishioner. She brazenly denied that she had ever committed a sin. She believed that there was a supernatural power in communion that would relieve her of her physical ailment. When he failed to convince her of her false notions, he refused her the Lord's Supper. The news of this incident spread like wildfire. The weekly paper at Penig carried a news item with distorted information and the editor commented that the activities of those mystics, sanctimonious hypocrites, and obscurantists must be checked. The newspaper made such an issue out of it that a series of articles were devoted to this subject. These newspapers were sent to Leipzig, and the Consistorium demanded an investigation. They ordered Buerger to write an explanation and to appear before this august body to defend himself.

At the trial, the Rev. Winzer, D. D.⁵¹ charged him with violations on three counts:

"First, transgression of the law of the land, according to which no pastor dare deny a sick or dying person the Holy Eucharist."

"Second, a violation of the law of Christian love."

"Third, no man can assume that another person is a sinner because the

⁵¹ Supra, p. 12. Superintendent Wirmer was the autobiographer's professor of dogmatics at the University of Leipzig.

Apostle says: 'Whosoever is born of God sinneth not.' (1 John 5, 18.)"

In his refutation Buerger answered:

First, if such a law existed in Saxony, I have indeed transgressed it.

Second, I dealt with this parishioner according to the law of Christian love; I have witnesses to prove that I have performed my ministerial obligations to the sick and dying with love.

Third, when the Doctor said that I could not assume that the woman was a sinner, I had to reply that whoever is born of God would certainly admit and not deny that he is a sinner. As proof I presented the Biblical doctrine of sin. I was forced to disagree with Dr. Winzer's weak exegesis.

After Buerger's convincing and Biblical presentation the Doctor as well as the Consistorium came back with no rebuttal. No further action was taken against him; he said, "I escaped with a whole hide (mit heiler Haut)."⁵² Because Buerger knew from experience that it was possible to stand up against these false ideas if the person was well grounded in Scripture, it became clear to him that conditions were not hopeless or beyond correction. Confessional Lutheranism was not dead, but could have triumphed if its protagonists would have championed its cause.

Buerger's contention is well substantiated in a doctor's dissertation presented to the Philosophical Faculty at the University of Leipzig by Karl Hennig in 1929 entitled, Die saechsische Erweckungsbewegung im Anfange des 19. Jahrhunderts.

Hennig's well-documented findings conclusively support the correctness of Buerger's observations.

The trumpet blast that heralded the arrival of a period of revival came in the form of a Reformation Day sermon preached (1800) by Frans

⁵² Selbstbiographie, pp. 88-92.

Volkmar Reinhard, the First Chaplain at the Saxon Court. His sermon treated the proposition: "Our church has every reason never to forget that she owes her existence principally to a clear restatement of the doctrine of free grace in Christ Jesus."⁵³ Using Romans 3, 23-25 as his text he listed as the chief doctrines of Christianity the following: all men without exception are sinners; everyone is justified and saved by God's grace without any merit of his own; man owe this grace to the mediation of Jesus and his atoning death; this grace can be appropriated only through faith in His death.⁵⁴

While a number of pastors took exception to Pastor Reinhard's sermon, many rallied to his support. Hennig concluded that "these critical answers are proof and witness that the core-dogma of the Lutheran doctrine, particularly the ones concerning justification had maintained themselves intact, in spite of all attacks on the part of psuedo-enlightened dogmaticians."⁵⁵

The call to repentance by Reinhard made relatively little impression because not only was he two decades ahead of his time, but also in addressing himself to the Saxon church, he had sent his appeal to the wrong address. In Saxony rationalism had gained the ascendancy in a mild, clarified form with a strong Lutheran flavor or touch.

When, therefore, Reinhard deplored the recession of the doctrine of the atonement, he felt that applied to the other German churches more so

⁵³ Karl Hennig, Die sächsische Erweckungsbewegung im Anfange des 19. Jahrhunderts, p. 10.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 11.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 13.

than to the Saxon church in which this kernel of Lutheran faith was just not being strongly and clearly emphasized as it had been in former times (nur nicht mehr mit alter Staerke betont wurde).⁵⁶ In other words, Reinhard was pleading for clarion voices, who would speak persistently ever louder and louder, clearer and clearer. The truths were there, but they needed to be disseminated. The rationalists had made their influence felt in key positions such as university professorships, Consistoria, etc. The rationalists out-propagandized, out-publicized, out-maneuvered the conservatives.⁵⁷ This is the identical logic expounded by E. M. Buerger, and because of it he felt constrained to return to Saxony where, D. V., he could be a leaven again perhaps in a congregation similar to his former parish which numbered 2,060 baptized souls.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

⁵⁷ Looking back upon this period in Germany, "W. Sihler, for many years a leading spirit in the Missouri Synod, says: 'It was a period of spiritual springtime. After a long and dreary winter, during which rationalism dominated the pulpit, the lecture hall, and the press, the Lord raised up men of valor, equipped with mental and spiritual power, who were happy to bear testimony on the platform and in the press. The hoarse cawing of the crows was gradually silenced. The voice of the turtledove was heard in the land. The lark and the nightingale were sending their sweet songs of praise upward to the thrones of God's grace.' (Sihler, W., Lebenslauf, I, p. 90.) When the blindfold was finally taken from Keyl's eyes, he wrote Rudelbach from Perry County: 'What an impudent lie to claim that there was no hope for the Lutheran Church, none in Saxony, none in Germany, none in Europe! Incontrovertible facts show the very opposite to be true. What an assumption to pass judgment and condemn pastors and congregation members who still uphold the Confessions of our Lutheran Church!' (Rudelbach and Guericke's Zeitschrift, III 1842, No. 1, p. 107.) Of a truth, Lutheran theology was beginning to flourish, and men like Rudelbach sensed the dawn of a new day for the Christian Church. (op. cit., II 1841, No. 1, pp. 65-115.)" Quoted from Munding, op. cit., p. 25-26.

⁵⁸ Munding, op. cit., p. 34.

Many of these same ideas were generated independently in the mind of Carl Vehse, a lawyer, who had been appointed to take care of Stephan's person. After his return to Germany, Dr. F. A. Marbach espoused Vehse's theories. Marbach urged a public confession of sin on the part of the entire company and a return to Germany. C. F. W. Walther was opposed to a return to Germany.⁵⁹ Buerger alluded to the fact and proof has been found that Dr. Walther had very good reasons for opposing a return to Germany.⁶⁰ In Saxony C. F. Walther had been party to the kidnaping of his niece and nephew, Theodore and Marie Schubert. When the legal guardians found out about it, they swore out a warrant of arrest and extradition papers were taken out. Walther left the children with widow Buerger, and hurried to Bremen where he grabbed a ship (Johann Georg) and escaped to the high seas before the warrant for his arrest arrived. In order to sail on the Johann Georg he talked a man out of his place. Besides this Walther did not secure an entirely clean release from his parish in Saxony. "All these factors made a return to Germany rather distasteful to the former Braeunsdorf, Stephanite, Walther, and explained why he applied the purge so vigorously to Vehse's theory of the necessity for a return to Germany, much defended by Marbach."⁶¹ Pastor E. G. Keyl was also disinclined to face many people in Germany. He said, "I was at

⁵⁹ Marbach represented the lay party and Dr. Walther the clerical party. A public debate was held April 15 and 20, 1841, in Altenberg, Perry County. Walther succeeded in upholding his argument that the colony was a part of the invisible Christian Church, that they had power to call ministers, and that their ministerial acts were valid in the sight of God.

⁶⁰ Munding, op. cit., pp. 112-113.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 113.

fault that so many blinded and deluded people gave up their God-appointed callings and their fatherland, to which they owed so much and to which they could have been a blessing. (Could he here be alluding to the good which the ministers might have rendered to the cause of pure doctrine as opposed to rationalism and to the confession which believing Christians might have made by their lives?) I was at fault that wives left their husbands to whom they had promised lifelong fidelity, that children left their parents, to whom they should have paid back the many favors and kindnesses which they had received in their infancy, that these children left secretly and in a stubborn mood."⁶²

Confusion and misfortune piled up at an accelerated rate on Buerger from all sides. A family burden was lying heavily on him. His wife, two boys, and he were stricken with a fever. They lacked the essentials of life, even water. At this time a baby girl was born; she choked to death at birth. No midwife was available, in fact no help of any sort. His wife died two weeks after she had given birth to the child (it was a comfort to know that she trusted her Savior to the end). Sadly he laid her to rest beside their infant daughter. Buerger saw in this the hand of God. He was being punished for the "colossal error" that he had committed in leaving his God-given duties. He thought he could see God's handwriting on the wall telling him to go back to Germany where he belonged.

In addition to this, his members became suspicious of him, and they grew indifferent. Not only did they look upon him as a seducer and the

62 Ibid., p. 41-42.

cause of their grave financial losses and hard life in the backwoods, but they even accused him of false teaching. In a meeting at which he was not present, several members poured out their hearts by muttering bitter maledictions against him, while others accused him of false doctrine.⁶³ Deserted by men and as he thought, by God, his situation was indeed a miserable one.

At the public debate in Altenberg (April 15 and 20, 1841), Buerger cut a sorry figure. Among other things Walther successfully demonstrated that Holy Communion as it was celebrated in Perry County was valid because it was administered according to Christ's direction. He shattered the argument that it was a mere farce (Komoedien=spiel). The question was

63 Pastor Buerger was exonerated of all these charges made against him. At its organizational meeting held in Chicago, Illinois, April 26, to May 6, 1847, Synod appointed a committee to investigate the church relations of Pastor Buerger and the differences existing between him and several former members of his congregation represented by Mr. Carl Faude. From the committee's report the following results were obtained:

a) Pastor Buerger had been declared deposed from office by a number of members... because he had barred some from Holy Communion and this measure was looked upon by them as unjust excommunication; he also had been accused of false doctrine by his opponents.

b) In regard to the above, Pastor Buerger admitted that in this matter he had probably spoken and acted in an insufficiently cautious and Christian manner and laid himself open to suspicion as though he wanted to be the highest court in the Church, though he had declared the very opposite in so many words.... G. Faude became convinced that Pastor Buerger... could not be accused of false doctrine, and he admitted that he and those whom he had represented in this matter had become guilty of repeated transgressions of the law of love and had deposed him from office too hastily.

... since he could not be convicted of false doctrine and willful sin and unfaithfulness in his office, it was resolved by the Synod that Pastor Buerger after a colloquy be received into the Synod as a voting member.

This information comes as a direct quotation from the "First Synodical Report of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other States of the year 1847." It is fully reprinted in the Concordia Historical Institute (Quarterly), Vol XIX, (October, 1946) pp. 122-123, Dr. Karl Kretzmann, translator.

asked "Who said it was a farce?" A man in the audience arose and said, "Pastor Buerger called it that." This accusation flustered Buerger; he lost his presence of mind so that he could not explain satisfactorily the circumstances that surrounded the use of the phrase.⁶⁴ It was true that he had not celebrated the Lord's Supper recently. Because he failed to clarify the whole incident, he was unable to defend himself. Confusion increased at the debate. Walther openly and severely censured him. Buerger

⁶⁴ Buerger explained the entire incident in his autobiography. At the age of 83 he told how it should have been made clear at the debate: 'I omitted the observance of the Sacrament, because I felt that my congregation had not experienced true repentance and were not truly worthy.' He later recognized that this was an arbitrary and wrong action. He justified it by saying, 'The people were not the seducers, but the seduced; the pastors had not sinned out of malice, but out of weakness.' Even if the emigration were a sin, he realized that he should not have denied them the Lord's Supper because we are all sinners and remain such. If his withholding were valid for his members, it would have to be valid for all Christians; then no one could take communion. He admitted that he could not prove the impenitence of a single one of his members. He had judged them too harshly. 'No wonder my members were dissatisfied.' In answer to his use of the word *Komoedienspiel*, he wrote: 'The same man, who accused me at the Altenburg debate of not wanting to observe communion, told me on another occasion that he had heard that some of my members would celebrate Holy Communion to spite me (*mir zum Possen das Hl. Abendmahl feiern*). The word 'to spite me' stirred me to indignation. I thought immediately that that was a shameful use of the Lord's Supper, and so I called it a farce (*Komoedienspiel*). I did not call the correctly-administered Lord's Supper a mere farce, but wished to call by that name the evil, godless sense in which my parishioners were using it. *Selbstbiographie*, pp. 133-136.

Hence it is easy to understand why Buerger was so indignant at Walther's censure. Buerger believed, and correctly so, that Walther should have seen him privately so that the misunderstanding could have been cleared up.

In spite of this incident, Walther and Buerger remained the best of friends. In a letter written in 1879 Walther comforted Buerger in his illness, and concluded with these endearing phrases: 'Bitte, grueze Deine liebe Gehueffin und Hausehre. Gott gebe, dass ich Dich noch einmal von Angesicht sehe, ehe wir heimgenhen. Dein Dich innig liebender und ehrender C.F.W.W.' Martin Guenther, Dr. C. F. W. Walther, Lebensbild, pp. 230-231.

considered Walther's criticism actual slander. This was all that his disgruntled members needed to convince them that their suspicions were well founded. As a result they turned away from him and joined other congregations. Buerger left this debate in confusion. His friends had been won over to the side of Walther. His congregation had deserted him; he was thoroughly and completely discredited. He had been the pastor of one of the largest, if not the largest, congregations of the immigrants in Saxony. The people had listened to his opinions and attached considerable weight to them. But now it was Pastor Walther who had dramatically captured the position of leadership.

At the conclusion of the Altenburg debate the controversial points cleared up in the minds of most of the pastors and the laymen who were interested enough to dig into them. The remaining were tired of strife and they occupied themselves with the hard task of making a living in the backwoods of Missouri or in the frontier town of St. Louis. They had little time for theological discussions. The individual congregations did not hesitate to call pastors and a healthy church life began to develop.⁶⁵ However, Pastor Buerger was still confused.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Munding, op. cit., p. 125.

⁶⁶ Buerger read assiduously during these days, especially in Luther's writings. He read Luther's Commentary on Galatians, Chapter I, verse 2: 'To the congregation in Galatia' -- Hieronymous raised the question why St. Paul considered the Christians of Galatia a congregation even though they had fallen away from Christ and returned to Moses and the Law.' Luther considered the figure of speech, as used here, a synecdoche, a part being used for the whole. A small portion was true to Christ. As an analogy Luther used the Roman Catholic Church of his day. There were, no doubt, groups of believers to be found in the Roman Church, and so God ruled there, even in the midst of his enemies and even though the Anti-Christ was sitting in the temple of God. Luther concluded that although

This confusion piled up at such a rate that Buerger's personality was at the point of disintegration. He was emotionally upset. His thinking was in a terrible muddle. He suffered from overwhelming doubts concerning the divinity of his call. He was a pietist through and through, with a reputation for an exaggerated sense of righteousness.⁶⁷ He lived in fear

66 (continued) a great number in Galatia fell away from God, a number remained loyal to Him and thus could be called a Christian congregation.

This should have straightened him out in his thinking. Walther used this passage as the basis for much of his argument during the debates with Marbach. Buerger knew of this passage quite early. He might even have been instrumental in bringing it to the attention of Pastor Walther. Buerger said, 'I have showed this passage of Luther to Mr. N. N. Whether Pastor Walther's attention was drawn to this passage of Luther by Mr. N. N. or whether Walther in his ardent study and his search for the truth found it himself, no one will ever know. Credit can be given to no one but God alone. This much is certain; through this passage God permitted light, yes rich light, to stream into our dark souls. Walther, richly endowed with brilliant gifts, knew how to exploit these gold mines. No one of us, least of all I, was his equal in the use of Luther.'

Selbstbiographie, pp. 130-134. Buerger's burdened conscience, confused thinking, and emotional state probably account for his inability to grasp the full meaning of this passage and to apply it to the situation at hand.

67 The cleavage between Rationalists and strict confessional Lutherans in the first third of the 19th century affected E. M. Buerger in a very pronounced manner. In fact it is traceable all through his long life. To him it was impossible to be a true Christian and a "neologist". He considered the keen realization of being a poor sinner (Suendenbewusstsein) and the pulsating faith in the reconciliation wrought by Christ on the cross (Versoehnungsglaube) were a sine qua non of a believer. As evidences of his wholehearted participation in the "Awakening" (Erweckungsbewegung) reference should be made to a volume entitled: Catechism Devotional Exercises (Katechismus Andachten) in rhymed verse, written by the Autobiographer. Poetry fascinated him ("Begeistert war ich fuer edle Poesie," Selbstbiographie, p. 36). He spent many pleasant hours recasting Luther's words into verse form. In the second half of the book he included a section on various kinds of prayers: Kreuz- und Nothgebete, Busz- un Beicht- Gebete. This section is heavily loaded with phrases of this type: 'Ich fuehle meine Suenden, sie beissen, jagen, und erschrecken mich, wo soll ich hin?' or 'Ach Gott, Zuerne hier, haue hier und schlage hier, und schone unser dort.' Pp. 340, 344 respectively, Buerger, Katechismus Andachten. In passing it may be well to refer to the significant name the Autobiographer gave to the second child born to his first wife in Lunzenau, Fides Constantia (faith, steadfastness).

that he would do wrong. He was rigorously harsh in evaluating himself. He was haunted by the thought that he had deserted his God-given duties in Germany; he was a traitor to the faithful pastors who were battling for confessional Lutheranism in Saxony. The oaths sworn in his certificate of vocation and ordination reverberated through his inflamed mind. The unmasking of Stephan demonstrated that his idol had clay feet. The skeletons in the closet of his mind vividly paraded before his eyes. He saw the family ties rudely torn asunder, the wedding vows shamelessly broken, children kidnapped. The drowning shrieks of the victims on the Amalia who blindly followed their leaders were conjured up, it is easy to assume, in his unruly conscience. We can readily imagine he saw hunger and death stalk the innocent victims of the colossal error of emigration. His infant daughter and loving wife were mercilessly snatched from among the living; in all this he saw the finger of God pointing at him telling him unequivocally to return to the place where he belonged. The last link in the chain that would drag him back was forged at the Altenburg debate: undeserved criticism, a deserting congregation, and ostracism by the clergy.

Then the autobiographer came to the decision to return to Germany. He sold his belongings for \$200.00, joined the Marbach family, and started his journey back. They traveled by water, the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers and Lake Erie via Cincinnati and Cleveland. They landed in Buffalo on a Sunday in the late fall of 1841.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Ein Jubilaeumsbuechlein unserer Ersten Evang. Luth. Dreifaltigkeitsgemeinde in Buffalo, N. Y., p. 5.

Here another controversial chapter in Buerger's life began, but that is a story in itself. Before drawing this present thesis to a close, a few interesting details may be added from an editorial and an obituary of the Buffalo Express:

THE LATE REV. E. M. BUERGER

A Pioneer of the Lutheran Church of
Buffalo - A Distinguished Career.

The Express has already briefly recorded the death in this city, on March 22d, of the Rev. E. M. Buerger, who was the first pastor of the First Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Congregation in this city, and a man of National note in that denomination. His former activity here in building up what has long been a strong church, and the regard with which he is still remembered by many Buffalonians, make it fitting to speak somewhat of his career.

He was born in Arnfeld, Germany, of famous ecclesiastical Saxon stock, his forefathers being pastors in the Evangelical Lutheran Church back as far as 1679. In 1829, after years at the University of Leipzig, he became a candidate for the ministry. He has left an interesting autobiography, in which the early years of his ministry are treated with much descriptive detail, which must be here omitted.

In the fall of 1838 the emigration to America of several Lutheran ministers and their congregations was planned and executed. About 800 Lutherans left their native home and sailed in six vessels, one of which, the *Amalia*, was shipwrecked. The Rev. E. M. Buerger, with his congregation, sailed on the ship *Copernicus*, and reached New Orleans December 31st, 1838. The leader of these Saxon - Lutherans was a Rev. Martin Stephan. The other ships arrived at New Orleans soon after, and the emigrants continued their voyage up the Mississippi on steamers. They founded settlements in Perry County, Mo., at that time a timber-country, with not one log hut, but now a cultivated country with fine farms and villages. Quite a number of the Saxons went further north to St. Louis, where we now find large and wealthy congregations and the Concordia University founded by these Saxon-Lutherans. There we now find the headquarters of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, (and other States), the Concordia Publishing House, where Bibles, the works of Luther, church and school books, and several periodicals, etc., are published.

The first college was a loghouse in Perry County, Mo., and those Saxon ministers were professors, pastors, loghouse-builders and farmers, and their students were obliged to change off with

axe, hoe and grammar. Not all could stand those hardships and the climate of their new home; the settlers were obliged to build a rail fence around their graveyard. There the Rev. Mr. Buerger buried his wife and two children.

In 1841 he left Missouri with his two sons and came to Buffalo, where he was selected pastor by a Lutheran congregation, which had emigrated from Prussia. His children were taken care of by a family of his congregation until in 1842 he found a true mother for them in Miss Salome Meissner, daughter of a well-educated schoolteacher, well-known in those times in Buffalo, M. G. Meissner. She died in Hart, Minn., and left three daughters and one son.

The work of a Lutheran minister in Buffalo in those times was genuine pioneer work. Money was scarce, and labor was exchanged for storepay. When cholera filled our cemeteries Mr. Buerger consoled the sick on their death-beds, as he afterwards did in Washington D. C., during the War.

When the First Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Congregation was incorporated, their places of worship were dwelling houses or halls and afterward a small brick church on William Street, corner of Milnor Street, where the Rev. E. M. Buerger also taught school. Now the congregation owns a fine church and schoolhouse, with modern improvements. The incorporation took place in February, 1844. Mr. Buerger stayed with his congregation until 1851. From 1851 to 1859 he was pastor in West Seneca, where the Lutherans assembled in a district schoolhouse. From 1859 to 1870 he was pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Church at Washington. His next charge was at Hart, Minn., where many Lutherans had settled. In 1879, at the semi-centennial celebration of his first pastorate, a jubilee was held by his colleagues of the Missouri and Wisconsin Synod in Minnesota, and a valuable Bible was given him. In 1874, two years after the death of his second wife, he again married. His home continued to be at Hart and Rushford, Minn., until 1888, when his third wife died. Thereafter he made his home with his son on Michigan Street in this city until his death a week ago yesterday, aged 84 years. The funeral was held on Tuesday last and the remains sent to Rushford, Minn., for burial.

The Rev. Mr. Buerger was one of the most distinguished men in the history of the German Evangelical church in America. This sketch has shown him as a pioneer, but it has said nothing of him as a speaker, theological writer and poet. He wrote many hymns and devout poems, one of which was read at his funeral. The church which he helped found in America has now congregations in nearly every State in the Union. Its institutions of learning include a college, founded in 1839 in Altenburg, Perry Co., Mo., now at Fort Wayne, Ind., a theological seminary, founded in 1850 at St. Louis; a theological seminary and pro-seminary, founded at Fort Wayne, Ind., now at Springfield, Ill.; a normal school founded in Milwaukee, Wis., in 1859, now at Addison, Ill. In addition

thereto are colleges of the several districts at New York, Concordia, Mo., and Milwaukee. The Synodical Conference, a church body, to which the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other states belongs, comprises four synods with 1,811 congregations, 1,290 ministers and 366,761 communicants. In this city there are four congregations, four ministers, four schools with nine teachers belonging to the said Synod. A history of the First Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Congregation was published last October when the church jubilee was celebrated, and the deceased delivered his last sermon.⁶⁹

On the editorial page of the same issue, the editor eulogized Ernst Moritz Buerger and paid tribute to the Missouri Synod in these words:

So far as we have observed, The Express today is the only Buffalo paper printed in English which has sought to pay fitting tribute to the late Rev. E. M. Buerger, one of the Lutheran forefathers of America, whose work for many years was carried on in this city. A necessarily inadequate sketch and an excellent portrait of him will be found on page 8.

Pastor Buerger's memory will be cherished not more dearly in this city than in the towns of the West where he has worked. The Evangelical Lutheran element in Buffalo is one of the purest, most righteous influences in this city. We have heard the saying, "A Lutheran is always a good neighbor." To most English citizens, we dare say, the rigidity of Evangelical Lutheran tenets would be well-nigh marvelous in these days of easy interpretation of moral obligations. In his shrewd "Studies of the Great West", Mr. Charles Dudley Warner comments at length on the Evangelical Lutheran creed and character, "which adheres strictly to the Augsburg Confession, and is distinguished from the general Lutheran Church by greater strictness of doctrine and practice... It grounds itself upon the literal inspiration of the Scriptures, upon salvation by faith alone, and upon individual liberty... I know of no other denomination which holds its members to such primitive theology and such strictness of life. It repudiates prohibition as an infringement of personal liberty, would make the use of wine or beer depend upon the individual conscience, but no member of the communion would be permitted to sell intoxicating liquors, or to go to a beer-garden or a theater... No member would be permitted to join any labor union or secret society. In a town so largely German (Mr. Warner is speaking of St. Louis, but the Buffalo conditions are not dissimilar), and with so many freethinkers as well as free-livers, I cannot but consider this strict sect, of a simple

69 The Buffalo Express, News Item, March 30, 1890.

unquestioning faith and high moral demands, of the highest importance in the future of the city. But one encounters with surprise, in our modern life, this revival of the Sixteenth Century, which plants itself so squarely against so much that we call 'progress'.⁷⁰

In the twilight of his life, the octogenarian pastor expressed the hope that his autobiography would furnish information "was ja einmal jemand von Neutzen sein koennte" (that may sometime be of value to someone).⁷¹ The present is that "sometime". I happen to be the "someone".

Saenger, Ernst Moritz, Selbstbiographie von Ernst Moritz Saenger, lutherischer Pastor emeritus in Wien nachher in Buffalo, gewidmet, geschrieben in dem Jahre 1879 als ich 83 Jahre alt war. Unpublished manuscript in the hands of relatives, at present, Rev. S. J. Saenger.

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⁷⁰ The Buffalo Express, Editorial, March 30, 1890.

⁷¹ Selbstbiographie, p. 15.

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