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Walther's Letter from Zurich: A Defense of Missouri's Unity and Confessionalism

Carl S. Meyer
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Translated and edited by CARL S. MEYER

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS TO WALTHER'S LETTER

IN a formal letter, written from Zurich, Switzerland, on 16 June 1860, Prof. C. F. W. Walther praised the unity existing in the Missouri Synod and defended her confessional theology, which undergirded this unity. The letter was addressed to Prof. Rudolph Lange, Walther's substitute as editor, and was printed in *Lehre und Wehre,*[1] before Walther's return from Europe. It was a churchman's word of greeting to a host of friends. It is a warm letter. In some respects it is an ordinary letter with references to Walther's personal experiences and emotions. It is also an important theological document, setting forth some basic considerations for the church life of the Missouri Synod.

Walther was in Europe for reasons of health.[2] The officials of Synod, particularly President Wyneken, who had come to St. Louis with Prof. A. Craemer for that purpose, urged Walther to make the journey.[3] The St. Louis congregation, the *Gesamtgemeinde,* defrayed the costs.[4] On 6 Feb. 1860, Walther left St. Louis in the company of his son Konstantin and nephew S. Keyl. They traveled by river steamer, the *Lacey,* to New Orleans, where they arrived on 12 Feb. After a stay of almost a month they left New Orleans on the *Oder.* After a 55-day voyage they arrived in Hamburg. Their continental itinerary took them to Saxony and then to Switzerland. On 4 Aug. they began their return trip to America on the *New York.* Already on 20 Aug. they reached New York City and on 28 Aug. St. Louis. Walther returned

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[1] "Editorielle Correspondenz," *Lehre und Wehre,* VI (July 1860), 193—197. Paragraphing added.

[2] See n. 26.

[3] Stephanus Keyl, "Tagebuch," bound notebook, MS., St. Louis, Concordia Historical Institute, pp. 92—104. Keyl says that the students decided to write to President Wyneken, Prof. A. Craemer, and Dr. W. Sihler about Walther's condition. Walther suffered from a highly inflamed throat and a very severe cough. He could not meet with his classes after the Christmas recess. The immediate response of the officials surprised the students. Wyneken, Craemer, and Th. Brohm chose Keyl as Walther's companion (p. 98). The last entry in his diary is on 5 Feb., the day before the departure from St. Louis. (P. 110)

Der Lutheraner, XVI (7 Feb. 1860), 102. The item is signed by C. F. W. Walther.

[4] A special meeting of the congregation was held on 23 Jan. 1860. Prof. A. Craemer explained the circumstances which made Walther's trip necessary. The congregation decided to pay the costs of the trip itself, "ohne dadurch die Betheiligung anderer Gemeinden davon auszuschliesen." It appointed collectors in each of the two districts. "Protokollbuch der ev.-luth. Gesamtgemeinde vom 7ten Januar 1856 bis zum 18 April 1865," bound ledger, MS., St. Louis, Concordia Historical Institute, pp. 175—176, minutes of 23 Jan. 1860, No. 2—9.

C. F. W. Walther to the *Gesamtgemeinde,* St. Louis, 3 Feb. 1860, *Briefe von C. F. W. Walther an seine Freunde, Synodalgenossen und Familienglieder,* ed. Ludwig E. Fuerbringer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1915), I, 134.

in good health and ready to assume his duties.[5]

Some details of the journey are given in the letter translated below. Of greater importance are the thoughts which Walther expresses on the unity of the faith and on the reproach of repristination leveled against him and the members of the Synod.

His preoccupation with these themes arose from several circumstances. One, and perhaps one of the more important, was the series of free conferences which had been held in 1856, 1857, 1858, and 1859. Walther had attended all of them except that in 1859. The free conference scheduled for 1860 was not held, partly because of Walther's absence, partly because of dissatisfaction within the Ohio Synod.[6] Walther had instigated these free conferences because Samuel S. Schmucker had issued the *Definite Platform* (1855), which contained modifications of the Augsburg Confession. The controversies connected with this "crisis in American Lutheranism" had not yet died down entirely in 1860.[7] Likely the return to Germany reminded Walther forcibly of his trip less than a decade before to meet with Wilhelm Loehe of Neuendettelsau in the interest of unity and of the subsequent break between Loehe and the Missouri Synod.[8] The relationships between the Iowa Synod and the Missouri Synod after that break,[9] and between the Buffalo Synod and the Missouri Synod,[10]

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[5] *Der Lutheraner*, XVII (4 Sept. 1860), 16; Mo. Synod *Proceedings*, 1860, p. 23; *Walthers Briefe*, I, 136—159, a letter to his nephew and three letters to his wife, giving details of the trip; Martin Guenther, *Dr. C. F. W. Walther: Lebensbild* (St. Louis: Lutherischer Concordia-Verlag, 1890), pp. 104—108.

C. F. W. Walther to Fr. Wyneken, New Orleans, 8 March 1860, MS., Walther file, Saint Louis, Concordia Historical Institute.

"Protokollbuch" (cf. n. 4), p. 180, No. 2, minutes of 2 April 1860; a letter was read to the congregation from Walther, dated 7 March 1860.

Ibid., p. 190, minutes of 27 Aug. 1860, No. 6; the congregation resolved to appoint a special committee to welcome Walther. This committee consisted of the council *(Vorstand)* and the professors. Two men were designated to provide a buggy *(Kutsche)* to take him to his home. Keyl did not return with Walther. *Walthers Briefe*, I, 173 n.

[6] E. L. Lueker, "Walther and the Free Lutheran Conferences of 1856 to 1859," CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, XV (Aug. 1944), 529—563.

[7] "Amerikanisch-lutherische Kirche," *Lehre und Wehre*, I (Oct. 1855), 318—320; A. Hoyer, "Die sogenannte Amerikanische Überarbeitung der Augsburgschen Confession," ibid., I (Nov. 1855), 336—341; "Definite Platform," ibid., III (Jan. 1857), 27, 28; Vergilius Ferm, *The Crisis in American Lutheran Theology: A Study of the Issue Between American Lutheranism and Old Lutheranism* (New York and London: The Century Co., 1927).

[8] *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika*, passim, but especially 1851, Nr. 10, "Zum Gedächtnis der Anwesenheit der ehrwürdigen Brüder Walther and Wyneken in Deutschland"; [C. F. W. Walther] "Reisebericht des Redakteurs," *Der Lutheraner*, VIII (17 Feb. 1852), 97—102; ibid., VIII (2 March 1852), 105—108; ibid., VIII (16 March 1852), 113 to 115; ibid., VIII (13 April 1852), 132—134; ibid., VIII (27 April 1852), 137, 138; ibid., VIII (11 May 1852), 145—147; ibid., VIII (25 May 1852), 153—157; ibid., VIII (8 June 1852), 161—165.

[9] No work has been written on these relations, except those in general histories of the church. But see Siegmund and Gottfried Fritschel, *Iowa und Missouri: Eine Verteidigung der Lehrstellung der Synode von Iowa gegenüber den Angriffen des Herrn Prof. (F. A.) Schmidt* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, n. d. [1877]).

[10] Roy A. Suelflow, "The Relations of the Missouri Synod with the Buffalo Synod up to 1866," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, XXVII (April 1954), 1—19; ibid., XXVII (July 1954), 57—73; ibid., XXVII (October 1954), 97—132.

were factors, it may be supposed, in his concern with the theme of fellowship. Perhaps even the unpleasant relationships with the Wisconsin Synod played their part in his thoughts.[11] The highly gratifying relationships that had been established with the Norwegian Synod[12] find their overtones, it may be supposed, in this letter.

There were other factors that caused him to write as he did. Two controversies had stirred the Missouri Synod during the 13 years of her existence as a Synod. The one dealt with the question of private or public confession.[13] The second, more virulent, had chiliasm and related topics at its center. G. A. Schieferdecker, President of the Western District, was declared no longer a member of Synod because of his persistent views on this question. He joined the Iowa Synod, but returned to the Missouri Synod later.[14] Around 1860 Wil-

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[11] Unionistic tendencies, doctrinal aberrations, and improper dealings, within the Wisconsin Synod during the first decade of its existence were noted repeatedly by Missouri Synod writers. The establishment of an "opposition" congregation from dissidents of Pastor L. Geyer's congregation in Lebanon, Wis., caused hard feelings. Mo. Synod, Northern District, *Proceedings*, 1858, pp. 22—26. The relationships seem to have been at their worst in 1862.

G. Schick, "Aus der Wisconsinsynode," *Lehre und Wehre*, VI (April 1860), 114-117; F. Steinbach, "Neueste Praxis der Wisconsin-Synode im Missionieren unter den Deutschen," *Der Lutheraner*, XVII (5 March 1861), 116; ibid., XVIII (5 March 1862), 120; ibid., XIX (12 Nov. 1862), 41—45; ibid., XIX (10 Dec. 1862), 58—60; ibid., XIX (21 Jan. 1863), 87.

[12] "Bericht der Pastoren Ottesen und Brandt über ihre Reise nach St. Louis, Mo., Columbus, Ohio, u. Buffalo, N. Y.," ibid., XIV (15 Dec. 1857), 67—69; ibid., XIV (29 Dec. 1857), 73—76; Mo. Synod, *Proceedings*, 1857, pp. 53, 54, 100, 101. Laur. Larsen began his work as professor at Concordia College, St. Louis, on 1 Nov. 1859. *Der Lutheraner*, XVI (15 Nov. 1858), 55.

[13] Private confession and absolution, *Privatbeichte*, was the outstanding question in the category of adiaphora, rites, and ceremonies, which troubled the Missouri Synod in the period from 1847 to 1860. In 1847 and 1848, see *Der Lutheraner*, IV, passim, the question was aired thoroughly. It seems to have been relatively dormant until 1856, when the practice was questioned in Wisconsin. Between 1856 and 1858 considerable discussion regarding *Privatbeichte* was carried on within the Synod. The Northern District urged that it be retained. Mo. Synod, Northern District, *Proceedings*, 1856, pp. 11—17. The controversy raged in the congregation at Lebanon, Wis. Mo. Synod, Northern District, *Proceedings*, 1858, pp. 22—26. In the 1858 convention of the Northern District lengthy answers to questions pertaining to *Privatbeichte* were given. Ibid., pp. 26—34.

A. Wagner, "Erklärung in Bezug auf den Bericht unseres nördlichen Distrikts von 1858," *Der Lutheraner*, XV (26 April 1859), 199.

The agitation cropped up in Freistatt, Wis., and called forth a detailed reply from the District, written by O. Fuerbringer and F. Lochner. Mo. Synod, Northern District, *Proceedings*, 1859, pp. 24—31.

Absolution was the topic of the essay for the synodical convention in 1860, "Über den innigen Zusammenhang der Lehre von der Absolution mit der von der Rechtfertigung." The subject of *Privatabsolution* was included. Mo. Synod, *Proceedings*, 1860, pp. 34—58.

Also see Carl Fricke, "Ist die Privat-Beichte, wie sie in der lutherischen Kirche geübt wird, ein Stück römischen Sauerteigs?" *Der Lutheraner*, XV (8 Feb. 1859), 100—102.

Privatbeichte was discussed also at the 1858 Western District convention, and agreement was expressed with the principles on the question laid down in the Northern and Central Districts. Mo. Synod, Western District, *Proceedings*, 1858, pp. 26—29.

Also see Mo. Synod, Central District, *Proceedings*, 1858, p. 27, and Mo. Synod, Eastern District, *Proceedings*, 1858, pp. 18—22.

[14] The controversy regarding chiliasm was rife between 1856 and 1858. The Western District in 1856 was asked concerning the events connected with the second coming of Christ, particularly the conversion of the Jews, the universal reign of Christ, and the millennium. The question was raised, too, whether or not these doctrines were divisive of fellowship ("Sieht die

helm Loehe in Germany, too, developed chiliastic ideas against which the theologians of the Missouri Synod wrote.[15] That the Chiliastic Controversy particularly was

Synode einen Dissensus in diesen Dingen für einen solchen Dissensus des Glaubens an, der die kirchliche Einigkeit aufhöbe?"). A committee consisting of C. F. W. Walther, A. Kraemer, and F. K. D. Wyneken formulated the answer to the question. It declared that a true Christian could fall into error on these points, but should be open to instruction and not spread his errors. Fraternal relations need not be severed at once, but efforts should be made to win the erring brother over. Mo. Synod, Western District, *Proceedings,* 1856, pp. 19—30.

At the convention of Synod in 1857 the doctrine of the Last Things, particularly chiliasm, was discussed. Debates extending over more than a dozen sessions failed to achieve agreement. G. A. Schieferdecker's connections with Synod were severed, and Synod appointed a committee (Walther was a member of this committee) to deal with C. F. Gruber. Mo. Synod, *Proceedings,* 1857, pp. 25—48. Also see ibid., pp. 79—89. A. Biewend, "Kurze Nachricht von dem, was die auf der letzten Allgemeinen Synode zu weitern Verhandlungen in Perry Co., Mo., bestellte Committee ausgerichtet hat," *Der Lutheraner,* XIV (26 Jan. 1858), 89, 90.

In 1858 Gruber's name was stricken from the membership roll of the Western District. Mo. Synod, Western District, *Proceedings,* 1858, p. 35.

Schieferdecker joined the Iowa Synod, but returned to the Missouri Synod in 1875, not, however, in response to an open letter addressed to him by Walther. *Der Lutheraner,* XIX (15 Oct. 1862), 25—29. Also see ibid., (15 April 1863), 135; ibid., XIX (1 May 1863), 141, 142; F. Köstering, "Ehrengedächtniss des seligen Pastors Georg Albert Schieferdecker," XLVIII (30 Aug. 1892), 144, 145; ibid., XLVIII (13 Sept. 1892), 151, 152; ibid., XLVIII (27 Sept. 1892), 167, 168; ibid., XLVIII (25 Oct. 1892), 175, 176; ibid., XLVIII (8 Nov. 1892), 182, 183; ibid., XLVIII (22 Nov. 1892), 193, 194.

Chr. Hochstetter, *Die Geschichte der Evangelisch-lutherischen Missouri-Synode in Nord-Amerika, und ihrer Lehrkämpfe von der sächsischen Auswanderung im Jahre 1838 an bis zum Jahre 1884* (Dresden: Verlag von Heinrich J. Naumann, 1885), pp. 310—314.

J. F. Köstering, *Auswanderung der sächsischen Lutheraner im Jahre 1838 . . .* (St. Louis: A. Wiebusch u. Sohn, 1866), pp. 161—248, 251—272.

The following articles, some of which are not signed, appeared during the controversy:

[K. A.] Roebbelen, "Die Offenbarung St. Johannis. Das zwanzigste Capitel," *Der Lutheraner,* XII (22 April 1856), 137—140.

[G. A.] Schieferdecker, "Das canonische Ansehen der Offenbarung St. Johannis," ibid., XII (1 July 1856), 177—180.

A. Biewend, translation of an article from the *Protestant Episcopal Banner,* "Die Lehre vom tausendjährigen Reich. Ist sie schriftgemäss?" ibid., XIV (25 Aug. 1857), 2—4.

H. Fick, "Chiliasmus," ibid., XIII (4 Nov. 1856), 46; ibid., XIII (30 Dec. 1856), 75—77; ibid., XIII (27 Jan. 1857), 89—91; ibid., XIII (10 March 1857), 117—119; ibid., XIII (24 March 1857), 122; ibid., XIII (14 July 1857), 187—189; idem, "Sacharja kein Chiliast," ibid., XIII (7 April 1857), 134, 135.

"Von der Hoffnung einer noch hervorstehenden allgemeinen Bekehrung der Juden," ibid., XIII (13 Jan. 1856, [*sic* for 1857]), 84—87; ibid., XIII (27 Jan. 1857), 91—93; ibid., XIII (10 Feb. 1857), 97—99; ibid., XIII (24 Feb. 1857), 105—107; ibid., XIII (7 April 1857), 130—133; ibid., XIII (21 April 1857), 137—140; ibid., XIII (5 May 1857), 147, 148; ibid., XIII (2 June 1857), 161—165.

"Die Augsburgische Confession wider den Chiliasmus," ibid., XIII (14 July 1857), 189, 190.

"Ein Zeugniss Dr. Hengstenbergs gegen den Chiliasmus," *Lehre und Wehre,* III (March 1857), 87—89; G. Schick, "Der Chiliasmus etlicher angesehener Kirchenväter in den ersten Jahrhunderten," ibid., III (Oct. 1857), 298—303; idem, "Zeugnisse der Kirchenväter gegen den Chiliasmus," ibid., IV (June 1858), 176—178; "Zur Geschichte des americanischen Chiliasmus," ibid., V (May 1859), 146—150; "Chiliasmus," ibid., V (May 1859), 153, 154.

[K. A.] Roebbelen, "Das zwanzigste Capitel der Offenbarung St. Johannis," ibid., V (Aug. 1859), 233—245; ibid., V (Sept. 1859), 257—267; ibid., V (Oct. 1859), 289—298.

[15] See the review by C. F. W. Walther (?) of J. Diedrich. *Wider den Chiliasmus, No. II, Gegen den Herrn Pf. Löhe's Predigt über Phil.* 3, 7-11 (Leipzig: Doerffling u. Francke, 1858), in *Lehre und Wehre,* IV (Nov. 1858), 328, 329.

To be noted, too, is K. A. Roebbelen's *Wie*

in the background of Walther's thinking when he penned this letter can scarcely be denied.[16]

Other happenings within Germany, likewise, conditioned Walther's thoughts. The Prussian Union (1817), the effort to unite the Reformed and Lutheran churches in Prussia, was entirely against Walther's concept of church fellowship. Prussia was emerging as the most powerful state among the German *Länder*. Frederick William IV, King of Prussia from 1840 to 1861, had not enforced the Prussian Union rigorously. However, in 1858 his brother William, who had assumed the vice-regency due to his brother's illness and then in October 1858 the regency, adopted a policy of greater enforcement. Although he had installed a liberal cabinet, in religious matters he promoted the "friends of the union."[17]

Then, too, the charge that Missouri was preoccupied with the "theology of repristination" weighed heavily on Walther. The charge was made especially within the circles of the General Synod[18] and in Germany.[19] In Germany the confessional

stehen wir zu Herrn Pfarrer Löhe? Eine Stimme aus der Missouri-Synode in Nord-Amerika, published in 1855. Walther says in his unsigned review of this pamphlet: "A truly touching coalescing of a personal, cordial love for Pastor Loehe and a repudiation of his views which depart from the Lutheran Confessions radiates from this work." The review makes it evident that Walther shared Roebbelen's sentiments. *Der Lutheraner,* XII (23 Oct. 1855), 39.

Fr. Wyneken, "Eine Erklärung Herrn Pfarrer Löhe's nebst einigen daran hängenden Bemerkungen," *Lehre und Wehre,* I (March 1855), 65—75, discusses Loehe's article from his *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika,* 1854, Nr. 8., especially Missouri's position toward the confessions.

Other articles in *Lehre und Wehre* discussed the Missouri Synod's reaction to the answer of the Leipzig-Fuerth Conferences (1852). "Stimmen der Brüder in Deutschland über unsere Antwort auf das Ermahnungsschreiben der Leipziger Conferenz," ibid., I (June 1855), 182—185; "Die Erlanger 'Zeitschrift für Protestantismus und Kirche'," ibid., I (July 1855), 193 to 202; ibid., I (Aug. 1855), 225—233.

[16] C. F. W. Walther to the then editor, on board the steamer *Lacey,* 9 Feb. 1860, *Der Lutheraner,* XVI (21 Feb. 1860), 108, 109. In this letter Walther commended Roebbelen's exposition of Rev. 20, which had just appeared in a 55-page pamphlet. Also see his "Vorwort zu Jahrgang 1860," *Lehre und Wehre,* VI (Jan. 1860), 1—13; ibid., VI (Feb. 1860), 33—47. In that introduction Walther discussed the question of Chiliasm and fellowship and relationships with W. Loehe.

[17] Herman Fick, who was in Europe, wrote: "A caesaropapistical church court is to be established with the expressed command that everything that dares to rise above the level of a weakened and watered-down consensus theology is to be prosecuted as orthodox and contrary to police regulation." *Der Lutheraner,* XV (8 March 1859), 118. Written from Hildesheim on 8 Jan. 1859.

[18] The *Lutherische Kirchenbote* of the General Synod was particularly virulent in its disparagement of the Missouri Synod's scholarship as well as of her devotion to orthodoxy. See, e. g., ibid., XIX (1 Oct. 1862), 22, 23.

"Einige Glossen über die diesjährigen Sitzungen der sogenannten lutherischen General-Synode zu Pittsburgh," *Lehre und Wehre,* V (July 1859), 193—201; G. Schick, "Urtheil eines Norwegischen Lutheraners über die Generalsynode," translation of J. A. Ottesen's "Ein Blick in die Generalsynode," which originally appeared in *Maanedstidende, Lehre und Wehre,* V (Sept. 1859), 270—278; G. Schick, "Aus der Generalsynode," ibid., V (Nov. 1859), 336—339.

[19] Some months after his return from Europe Walther coupled W. Loehe with Grabau among the opponents of the Missouri Synod. He said: ". . . and since for the most part, to begin with, in Germany they are prejudiced against our teachings, it will be easy for him and Rev. *Loehe* to stir up opponents against us everywhere, who will think the worst of us and spread it." *Der Lutheraner,* XVI (5 Feb. 1861), 103; italics in the original.

revival of the first half of the 19th century enlisted theologians such as E. W. Hengstenberg (1802—69), who opposed the rationalism and unionism of his day; Theodor Kliefoth (1810—95), whose interests were chiefly in the field of liturgics and church polity; Friedrich Philippi (1809 to 82); Franz Delitzsch (1813—90), the Hebraist and Old Testament exegete; Johann von Hofmann (1810—77) and Gottfried Thomasius (1802—75) of the Erlangen School; and Karl Friedrich August Kahnis (1814—88).[20] With none of these men, however, did the leaders of the Missouri Synod find themselves in complete agreement.[21] Nor did they wish to be called *Alt-Lutheraner*.[22] Conscious, however, of their great Lutheran heritage they wished to remain true to the Scriptures and to the Confessions in the unity of faith and in true fellowship. To strengthen them in this resolve Walther directed this letter to them.

The theological substance of the letter Walther had formulated already on board the *Oder*. In his daybook (no longer extant) he set down jottings which are very close to the thoughts of the letter he later penned from Zurich. Happily they have been preserved.

"An admonition to our Synod to keep the unity in which she stands.

"It is without parallel in our day, a miracle of God.

"It is a return to the days of our fathers and to Acts 2.

"It is a gracious visitation of God and His gift of grace.

"Let us quietly observe how everywhere they wish to progress and discover something new, to correct the orthodox church, to bring the fathers to school; even if the new wisdom values itself ever so highly, the winds of time will scatter it like chaff, and the old truth will shine forth like the old sun.

"This unity makes us strong in spite of our weakness.

"Let us with joy bear the reproach that we only repristinate the theology of the 16th century and that we do not reproduce; let us look at those who are seeking the reputation that they do not repristinate the pure Lutheran doctrine as pupils but independently reproduce it.

"Not a unity of stagnation but a unity with lively activity.

"Unity not only with ourselves but also with the orthodox church of all ages."[23]

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[20] Karl Ströbel, "Lutherische Antithesen," *Lehre und Wehre*, I (April 1855), 97—117, reprinted with a commendatory introduction by Walther from *Zeitschrift für die gesammte Theologie und Kirche*, ed. Rudelbach and Guericke, XVI (1st Quarter 1855), 110—133, is valuable as one statement of theological currents in Germany at this time.

Robert C. Schultz, *Gesetz und Evangelium in der lutherischen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts*, in series *Arbeiten zur Geschichte und Theologie des Lutherthums*, ed. Wilhelm Maurer, K. H. Rengsdorf, and Ernst Sommerlath, IV (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1958), 62—97, has a good treatment of "Die Restauration der lutherischen Orthodoxie."

[21] Delitzsch, Hofmann, and Thomasius were attacked for their Christology by J. F. Köstering, "'Wo sind die Klugen? Wo sind die Schriftgelehrten? Wo sind die Weltweisen? Hat nicht Gott die Weisheit dieser Welt zur Thorheit gemacht?' 1 Kor. 1, 20," *Der Lutheraner*, XV (11 Jan. 1859), 82—84.

See, e. g., "Lesefrüchte," *Lehre und Wehre*, IV (Aug. 1859), 250—255.

[22] [W.] Sihler, "Gibt es Alt- und Neu-Lutheraner?" *Der Lutheraner*, II (16 May 1846) [74—76]; ibid., II (30 May 1846), [77, 78].

[23] Martin Guenther, *Dr. C. F. W. Walther*, pp. 106, 107, with reference to Walther's "Tagebuch."

From these jottings and from his letter it is evident that Walther's concern for unity and tradition were in an ecumenical spirit, one which wished to maintain fidelity to the Bible and to the teachings of the Lutheran Church and the Biblically correct doctrines taught throughout the history of the church.

WALTHER'S LETTER

Zurich, 16 June 1860

DEAR EDITOR:

It has long been my intention during my absence in Europe to send a sign of life to you as my temporary substitute in the editing of this journal and through you to its esteemed readers. However, until now I have not had the kind of quiet, absolutely needed for the necessary composure to do so. This quiet has finally come to me (against my will, I grant) by a rain which has already lasted several days, detaining me in the birthplace of Zwinglianism.[24] It will not allow me, as I had intended to do immediately after I came into the picturesque Alpine valleys, namely to head for the first among the frequently visited heights in Eastern Switzerland, the famed *Rigi,* and to climb to its peak, which ranges high into the clouds. (Because my American physician had so advised me and because the condition of my health had already changed during the sea voyage, I consulted local doctors, who earnestly advised me to take hikes in the fresh mountain air, instead of taking the mineral baths which I had intended to do).[25] And so I am happy to make use of this lull, which has been forced on me, to let you and your readers hear something from me again from faraway.

Since I took my present journey purely for the purpose of restoring my failing health,[26] I haven't the slightest intention to enlighten anyone with a description of my recovery. My long journey from New Orleans to Hamburg and from there to Leipzig, Zwickau, Cahla, Roda, Nuernberg, and in part to the vicinity of this city, was by the blessing of God indeed beneficial for my health; but it was lacking in events which might be of interest and profit in a public communication. (I should have liked to make Munich, too, a goal of my trip, to look up Ministerial Coun-

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[24] Huldreich Zwingli (1484—1531), humanist and Protestant reformer of Zurich, founder of the Swiss Reformed Church, was active in this city from 1519 until his death.

[25] The sentence in parentheses was in a footnote in the original.

[26] Stephanus Keyl, in his "Tagebuch" (see n. 3), writes that Walther went to Europe to regain his health and to find his own successor as professor and to bring him along to America (p. 97). The students in their letter to President Wyneken had suggested that Walther could find his successor on this trip (p. 93). Walther was only 48 years and two months old at the time.

J. M. Buehler, a student at the Seminary at this time. substantiates Keyl's account in his "Tagebuch," reprinted by J. H. Theiss and J. W. Theiss, *Lebenslauf und Charakterbild des seligen Praeses J. M. Buehler* . . . (Oakland, Calif.: Verlag des "Lutherischen Botschafters," 1902), pp. 11, 12. Buehler adds that Walther was suffering from "eine schwere Anfechtung" about the beginning of January, so that he believed he was unworthy to render any kind of service to the Lord and longed for death. Buehler also adds that the students consulted with Walther's physician, D. Schade, before writing to Wyneken.

Nothing appears in the official reports about the thought that Walther find a successor. Walther returned without bringing a successor with him or even, it seems, without suggesting that he scouted for a successor.

selor *Dr. Harless;*[27] alas! I was informed that this highly esteemed man was ailing and therefore was staying at Bad Gastein just now.)[28]

Only one incident I cannot pass over in silence, and this, to be sure, very depressing, tragic. In Leipzig, there lived a man who once, now nearly 23 years ago, emigrated with us from Saxony to America. However, after a two-year residence he returned from there. His heart, nevertheless, remained with the church in America; in him our Synod, with which he was fully agreed in spirit and faith, had its closest friend and advocate here in Germany; he is *Mr. Franz Adolph Marbach,* Finance Minister of Royal Saxony, Knight, etc.[29] I met him on my trip the first time I came to Leipzig from Hamburg. Although in his 63d year, he was almost youthfully fresh and strong in body and spirit, and I was refreshed and strengthened in every respect in my association with this beloved man. When I passed through Leipzig the second time and accepted his urgent invitation to stay with him, I found him suffering from periodic headaches; however, whenever he was not suffering from them, he was still mentally animated and stimulating. In the hope that his malady would soon be relieved, I then made a side trip of several days. At its close I hurried back in the expectation of enriching myself by further, and now unhindered, association with him. But behold! God's thoughts were entirely different. Already on the day before my return, on Wednesday the 6th of June, my closest friend in my old fatherland fell asleep quietly as a confessor of Christ, the only Hope of his soul.

The one thing still granted me was to press the hand of his precious body and follow it to its resting place on Saturday, the 9th of June. There I heard a most comforting, magnificent funeral sermon, which the confessor and friend of the departed, the Rev. Dr. Ahlfeld,[30] delivered on the basis of the words "Whosoever will

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[27] Gottlieb Christoph Adolf von Harless (1806—79), a conservative Lutheran theologian, was made president of the *Oberkonsistorialrat* at Munich, Bavaria, in 1852. From 1845 to 1850 he taught at the University of Leipzig. His chief work is his *Christian Ethics.*

[28] The sentence in parentheses was in a footnote in the original.

[29] Franz Adolph Marbach (1797—1860), lawyer, civic official, was Martin Stephan's right-hand man during the planning and execution of the Saxon emigration in 1838. Forster says (p. 174): "Next to Stephan, Marbach was the most influential of the leaders." Although Marbach challenged Stephan's position during the voyage, he signed the pledge and continued as a valuable member of the immigrating group. After Stephan was exiled, Marbach became the leader of those who contended that there "was no church among them." His role as Walther's opponent in the Altenburg Debate (15 and 21 April 1841) made him not an enemy but more of a friend of Walther. In August 1841 Marbach left Perry Co., Mo., to return to Saxony — his brother-in-law, Vehse, had returned earlier — where he continued his successful career in civic affairs. He died on 6 June 1860. Details of his activities are noted in the following: Walter O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953); Hochstetter, *Geschichte der Missouri Synode;* Carl E. Vehse, *Die Stephan'sche Auswanderung nach Amerika, Mit Actenstücken* (Dresden, 1840); J. F. Köstering, *Auswanderung der sächsischen Lutheraner im Jahre 1838 . . .; Walthers Briefe,* I; papers and letters in the archives of Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis.

[30] Johann Friedrich Ahlfeld (1810—84) was pastor of St. Nicolai in Leipzig from 1851 to 1881. He wrote the introduction to a book of sermons, *Das himmlische Jerusalem,* by Valerius Herberger (1562—1627), which he issued in a new edition in 1858. *Der Lutheraner,* XV (26 July 1859), 195—197.

confess Me before men," etc. With sketches from his life he presented him as a true and richly blessed confessor of his Lord.[31] Many had been irritated by open and positive testimony of the departed during his lifetime for the pure truth and against false doctrine and impure [church] life *(Wesen)*. All the more gratifying therefore were the ringing testimonies voiced orally and in writing after his death by people of various classes, by the learned as well as by simple laymen, by those highly placed, including princes, as well as by the most insignificant domestics. The departed had been to them a light and a salt and for not a few an instrument through which they were rescued from this evil world. Of his accomplishments as a statesman of eminent attainments, richest experience, deepest insights, unusual versatility, incorruptible faithfulness, and indefatigable activity for the state and society, even in times of greatest confusion, I shall not speak here. His memory, as that of a righteous man, although misunderstood by many during his life, will remain a blessing.—

If, in view of a complete lack of newsworthy events, I should nevertheless be permitted to express what has moved my heart especially in getting together with a large number of church servants [pastors and teachers] and church members here, I should have to admit that above all it is the unity of doctrine and faith in which our synod in America stands.[32] Elsewhere this treasure seems to have been lost almost entirely. At any rate here it is difficult to find as many as two who are in true unity in doctrine and faith. A certain kind of unity, to be sure, is evident also outside our synod. But what kind, for the most part? — On the one hand, a negative one, based on indifference or apathy toward doctrinal purity. There is agreement only that lack of unity in many important issues is to be overlooked and that nevertheless peace is to be maintained and fraternal and ecclesiastical co-operation is not to be given up. I am referring to the unity of

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31 Friedrich Ahlfeld, "Grabrede über Matth. 10, 32, dem Königlich Sächsichen Finanzrath Franz Adolph Marbach am 9. Juni 1860 gehalten," ibid., XVII (4 Sept. 1860), 9—11. The note was appended by the temporary editor [Th. Brohm] that the sermon would be edifying for those who did not know Marbach; for those who knew him it would give an occasion to praise God for His grace in leading this fellow pilgrim into eternal glory.

32 As President of the Western District G. A. Schieferdecker noted: "Our Synod already constitutes a beautiful organic whole, animated by the true spirit of faith and of confession." Mo. Synod, Western District, *Proceedings*, 1855, p. 5.

"Welch' ein theure Gabe Gottes wir an unserer Synodal-gemeinschaft haben," *Lehre und Wehre*, IV (August 1858), 242—248. The article is probably not by Walther.

H. C. Schwahn in his "Synodal-Rede" in 1861, as President of the Central District, spoke at length about the unanimity and unity within the Synod. He noted particularly the unity of faith. The fact that doctrine, *Lehrsachen*, always occupied the first place in the conventions and conferences of the Synod, he said, solidified this unity. *Der Lutheraner*, XVIII (11 Dec. 1861), 65—68.

Other expressions of this unanimity are extant. One in particular may be noted. More than a year after his return, after the onset of the Civil War, Walther noted the favorable comment of Muenkel's *Das Neue Zeitblatt*, that the Missouri Synod and the Episcopal Church did not suffer schisms as a result of the war. He added the remark: "May this report, just as it will have aroused joy in Germany, arouse us to a more zealous watchfulness over the great boon of unity, which until now God has granted us in the midst of strife." Ibid., XVIII (16 Oct. 1861), 39.

unionism and of so-called open questions.[33] On the other hand, there is a unity of fanaticism, of factiousness, and Donatistic sectarianism *{Sectirerei}*. Since extremes always have something in common, this kind of unity coincides with the one just described in being unrelenting only in those points which belong to the shibboleth of the party.[34] In one instance, there is a mandated unity of the state church. This requires only what is necessary to maintain the external organization.[35] In another instance, there is the Roman-papistic unity of the *fides implicita* and the common subjection under the latest decision of a church ruler.[36] In one case unity is achieved through acceptance of formulas which admit of various meanings; in another, by means of a subscription to so-called essential doctrines in contrast to so-called less essential — hence admittedly essential nevertheless.[37] On the one hand there may be the unity of a constitution, ceremonies, liturgy;[38] on the other, it may be the unity of a struggle against a common foe or the co-operation for the accomplishing of certain tasks.[39] And who would dare name all the different kinds of unity, which, though they are mere phantoms of true unity, are imagined to carry with them the possession of it nevertheless.

An entirely different kind [of unity], in contrast, is that in which our synod

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[33] The reference is to the Iowa Synod and to the views of Wilhelm Loehe. See the article (not by Walther) "Ein Wort über die Unsitte: Glaubensartikel zu offenen Fragen zu machen," *Lehre und Wehre*, VI (Sept. 1860), 257—262.

[34] [C. F. W. Walther], "Unionistischer Glaube," *Der Lutheraner*, XV (12 July 1859), 185—188, wrote that the unionists cannot have even a *Köhlerglaube*, since they cannot know with certainty what their church teaches. Walther may be making a reference to poorly indoctrinated members of various sects and denominations in America. In his "Synodalrede vom Jahre 1850" he refers to the *Mischmaschkirchen*. Mo. Synod, *Proceedings*, 1850, 2d ed., p. 120.

[35] The Prussian Union, the Lutheran state churches in the Scandinavian countries, the Established Church in England, the state churches in some of the German *Länder* are all condemned by Walther here. He may have had in mind also the article by L. Wetzel, "Gedanken über Union: Ein Sendbrief an den Redactor," *Zeitschrift für die gesammte lutherische Theologie und Kirche*, ed. Rudelbach and Guericke, XIX (4th Quarter 1858), 706—722.

For Walther's concept of a church independent of the state see C. F. W. Walther, *Die Rechte Gestalt einer vom Staat unabhängigen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Ortsgemeinde: Eine Sammlung von Zeugnissen aus den Bekenntnisschriften der evang.-luth. Kirche und aus den Privatschriften rechtglaeubiger Lehrer derselben* (St. Louis: A. Wiebusch u. Sohn, 1863). Subsequent editions appeared in 1884, 1885, 1890, and 1892.

In a sermon at the opening of Synod on John 18:36, 37 Walther asked the question: "What challenge is inherent for us in our American Lutheran Church's relationship to the State?" He answered that it requires the church to thank God for His grace and to use this freedom the better. C. F. W. Walther, *Lutherische Brosamen: Predigten und Reden, seit 1847 theils in Pamphletform, theils in Zeitschriften bereits erschienen, in einem Sammelband aufs Neue dargeboten* (St. Louis: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten, 1876), p. 497.

[36] The reference is to the unity within the Roman Catholic Church and within the Greek Orthodox churches.

[37] The reference seems to be to the General Synod and to W. Loehe. Cf. [C. F. W. Walther], "Vorwort zu Jahrgang 1860," *Lehre und Wehre*, VI (Jan. 1860), 1—13; ibid., VI (Feb. 1860), 33—47.

[38] The Protestant Episcopal Church is probably meant here.

[39] It is not clear against whom this stricture is made. Perhaps the reference is simply a general one to church conditions in Germany such as those against which the Fort Wayne Pastoral Conference directed itself. A. Craemer, "Correspondenz nach Deutschland," *Lehre und Wehre*, V (Oct. 1859), 298—307.

stands. Pupils of the same teachers, of a Luther and his faithful followers, we have come to the clear knowledge and living conviction that our dear Evangelical Lutheran Church, as she has set forth her doctrine in her Confessions, agreeing in all points with the Word of God, is the continuation of the old, apostolic church; in short, at the present time the only orthodox church.[40] United under this great principle we are knit together by a cordial, fraternal confidence. We are, in spite of all the jealous concern for our unity in doctrine and faith, free, nevertheless, from every inquisitorial spirit, which can so easily convert the fraternal bond into oppressive iron shackles. So, too, mutual confidence prevents us from disregarding those differences in doctrine which become evident and are at hand, to cover them up and to submerge them.[41] Instead of declaring such points "open questions"[42] and entering into mutual compromises, in order to remain outwardly united, we bring them out in the open as manifest differences. We do not desist from seeking and searching in the Word of God and in the testimonies of the church and the teachers of the church, by colloquies and disputations privately and publicly, until unity has been attained also in those points in which it might have suffered loss. We are, it is true, far removed from letting our unity be conditioned by a general agreement in matters which are really unessential, that is, in matters about which the Word of God does not decide clearly or not at all. On the other hand, to us everything which God has revealed in His Word for awakening, preserving, and strengthening saving faith, is held to be essential. We will not permit ourselves to barter away that which once was delivered to the saints.

We subscribe wholeheartedly to the well-known maxim *In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas* (in essentials, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity).[43] We do so, how-

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[40] See "Antwort auf die Frage: Warum sind die symbolischen Bücher unserer Kirche von denen, welche Diener derselben werden wollen, nicht bedingt, sondern unbedingt zu unterschreiben? Ein von der deutschen ev.-luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. St. Westlichen Distrikts bei Gelegenheit der Versammlung derselben im April 1858 zu St. Louis, Mo., angenommenes Referat," *Der Lutheraner,* XIV (10 Aug. 1858), 201—206; Mo. Synod, Western District, *Proceedings,* 1858, pp. 7—25. The proceedings do not explicitly identify the author of this essay.

In 1866 Walther read his essay "Die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche die wahre sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden" to the convention of the Missouri Synod, Mo. Synod, *Proceedings,* 1866, pp. 39—44, 64—72. By resolution of Synod (p. 91) it was published. The first edition (St. Louis: Aug. Wiebusch u. Sohn) appeared in 1867; it was reprinted (St. Louis: Lutherischer Concordia-Verlag) in 1891; in 1920 it was reproduced again from the original plates (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House).

[41] The Chiliastic Controversy is a case in point. See n. 14.

[42] [C. F. W.] W[alther], "Die falschen Stützen der modernen Theorie von den offenen Fragen," *Lehre und Wehre,* XIV (April 1868), 100—114; ibid., XIV (May 1868), 129—141; ibid., XIV (June 1868), 161—169; ibid., XIV (July 1868), 201—211; ibid., XIV (Aug. 1868), 233—240; ibid., XIV (Oct. 1868), 297—305.

C. F. W. Walther, "The False Arguments for the Modern Theory of Open Questions," trans. Alex. Wm. C. Guebert and William F. Arndt, CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, X (April 1939), 254—261; ibid., X (May 1939), 351 to 357; ibid., X (June 1939), 415—419; ibid., X (July 1939), 507—513; ibid., X (Aug. 1939), 587—594; ibid., X (Sept. 1939), 656—665; ibid., X (Oct. 1939), 752—758; ibid., X (Nov. 1939), 827—833.

[43] This seems to be directed particularly

ever, not in a unionistic sense, which places even the doctrine of the means of grace into the category of doubtful things.[44] We do so in this sense: that we gladly permit anyone to harbor his private opinions in matters which are not contrary to the Word of God, so long as he does not attempt to subject anyone else's conscience to his.[45]

So little is unity in the form and method of doctrine the goal of our endeavors that we rather heartily rejoice in the multiplicity of spiritual gifts, which in this respect are given free play for their development.

Our union stipulates agreement in ceremonies only insofar as this unity is required by the confessional rites of our church. Unity in practice is of great value to us, to be sure, but only insofar as the unhindered edification of the church depends upon a common foundation and as faithfulness to the Confessions requires it.[46]

Strongly united as we are now among ourselves, our unity is not, however, a sectarian one. On the contrary, an inner longing for unity with all other denominations enlivens and inspires us. The less this unity among us is cold and abstract, but rather a unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, a unity of sentiments and cordial love, so much the more it urges us to pursue unity with all Christians, especially with those who carry before them the same confessional banner.[47] We have already exercised so much effort in that direction, by the grace and impetus of God, that because of this we must bear the insult of hearing the accusation from false brethren that we harbor in our bosom "an eagerness for conquest."[48]

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against unionistic Pietists and those who advocated "reasonable orthodoxy."

[44] See H. Fick, "Gedanken über die moderne Theologie," *Lehre und Wehre,* IV (June 1859), 176—181.

[45] See, e. g., [C. F. W. Walther,] "Ist derjenige für einen Ketzer oder gefährlichen Irrlehrer zur erklären, welcher nicht alle in den Convolut des Neuen Testaments befindlichen Bücher für kanonisch hält und erklärt?" ibid., II (July 1856), 204—216. Although he differed with Roebbelen, Walther did not condemn him for regarding Revelation uncanonical.

See also [C. F. W. Walther], "Vorwort zu Jahrgang 1860," ibid., VI (Feb. 1860), 41 to 47, where Walther discussed agreement in fundamental articles as a requisite for fellowship.

In "Synodalrede vom Jahre 1850" Walther made the point, too, that agreement in fundamental articles only, but in all fundamental articles, is necessary for fellowship. Walther, *Brosamen,* p. 533.

[46] See n. 13.

[47] One of the most comprehensive statements by Walther on doctrinal agreement as a basis of fellowship is in the 1868 "Vorwort zum vierzehnten Jahrgang," of *Lehre und Wehre,* XIV (Jan. 1868), 1—4; ibid., XIV (Feb. 1868), 33—39; ibid., XIV (March 1868), 65—70; "Dr. Walther's Foreword for Vol. XIV of 'Lehre und Wehre,' 1868," trans. by Alex Wm. C. Guebert, CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, XVII (July 1946), 481—499.

Ottomar Fuerbringer, "Synodalrede," Mo. Synod, Northern District, *Proceedings,* 1856, pp. 5—8, has a masterful presentation of Lutheran confessional ecumenicity.

[48] These were charges made in connection with the free conferences, especially after their failure within the Ohio Synod. Although the incident happened after Walther wrote the above, the following brief exchange may serve as an illustration. David Worley called Walther "the Missouri Pope" *(der Missouri Pabst)* in the issue of 4 Jan. 1861 of the *Lutheran Standard.* Walther refused to accept this "honor" from "Cardinal" Worley. *Der Lutheraner,* XVII (22 Jan. 1861), 93—95.

In "Synodalrede vom Jahre 1866" Walther took cognizance of some of the charges made against the Missouri Synod. Walther, *Brosamen,* pp. 536—539.

See also [C. F. W.] W[alther], "Vorwort zum neunundzwanzigsten Jahrgang des 'Luthe-

Not seldom, and especially in Germany, there is hurled against us the reproach that our unity is dead, unfruitful, a stagnant unity and not a vital movement, because it is a unity of repristination and not of reproduction.[49] It is requested of us that we learn and receive the pure doctrine not from our fathers but that we again produce it freely and independently from the Scriptures, create it, so to say, a second time. Then only, it is supposed, our fellowship would become a green, fruitful branch on the tree of the universal church, and she could look upon us with hope; then we would add to the old treasure something new. Moreover, if we hold to our position, only a withering away, we are told, and disappearing without a trace would be in prospect for us.[50]

But if we look at those in our time who do not repristinate the old pure doctrine but want to reproduce it, we shall note with dismay that the alleged reproduction consists in correcting the orthodox church everywhere, in schooling the fathers, in finding new doctrines along the new way, in ostensibly erecting a new structure on a firmer foundation placed under the old structure.[51] And this is done under the label of a strictly confessional but continuously developing Lutheranism. Thus an entirely different doctrinal system is made the underlay of the old church of Luther.[52]

Indeed, they say, "Do you wish to deny the formal principle of the Lutheran Church, that Scripture is the only rule and norm of doctrine and life?" We answer: "God forbid!"[53] However, certain as it is that interpretation is a spiritual gift *{charisma}* not given to everyone, much less in the same measure (Rom. 12:6,7; 1 Cor. 12:30, cf. vv. 4,10), it is just as certain this does not mean that this principle is properly made use of when everyone wants to find everything that is in the Bible by himself and does not want to accept, as a pupil, the mined treasures of Scriptural doctrine from those granted the gift of Scriptural interpretation in high measure. If someone will not allow

raners,' " *Der Lutheraner,* XXIX (1 Oct. 1872), 1, 2; ibid., XXIX (15 Oct. 1872), 9, 10.

[49] See the reprint from Freimund's *Wochenblatt,* "Schriftgelehrte sollen nicht unrecht Urtheile schreiben," *Lehre und Wehre,* VI (Sept. 1860), 281—284.

[50] Walther likely had in mind some specific pronouncement made directly against the Missouri Synod, possibly the last section of W. Loehe's *Drei Bücher von der Kirche* (Stuttgart: Sam. Gottl. Liesching 1845), or Wetzel's theses (see reference in n. 35).

[51] In a footnote to an article in *Der Lutheraner,* XV (26 July 1859), 195, Walther remarks to the designation "Repristination des Lutherthums in der Form des 16. Jahrhunderts": "It is indeed true that the present-day true Lutherans will thank God fervently if only the Lutheranism of the 16th century for the first is repristinated. At the same time they can only commiserate the chiliastic enthusiasts when in these horrible times they speak in humble-proud language of forward steps, of completion, of a holy progress."

[52] The concept of a "development of doctrine" *(Lehrentwickelung)* was one which the writers of the Missouri Synod opposed. See, e. g., F. Köstering's article against A. G. Rudelbach (1792—1862) for his views on the development of doctrine, "Was verstehen die Gelehrten zu dieser 'grossen Zeit' unter Fortentwickelung der Lehre?" *Der Lutheraner,* XV (19 April 1859), 137—141.

[53] Walther already in the introduction to the first number of *Der Lutheraner,* I (7 Sept. 1844), 1, defended his support of the Scriptures as the formal principle of theology, although he did not use the term there. To him it was *unicus iudex omnium controversiarum.* Walther, "Synodalrede vom Jahre 1850," *Brosamen,* p. 535.

himself to be given what was previously dug from the mine of the Scriptures by the church through God's illumination, but wants to fetch everything from it by himself, he will indeed find out whether God is beginning the history of the church anew with him and granting him once more the gracious visitation of the Reformation era which he certainly did not highly eseteem in a Luther and others. We would be in a sad state if we received the pure doctrine from Luther as if it had originated in Luther. However, this is not the case. The incomparable gift of a Luther and other great instruments of God[54] consists specifically in this, that they not only present Biblical truth, but also that he to whom they present this truth is led to see clearly that the truths presented are Biblical.[55] To properly accept the pure doctrine from the hands of our believing fathers does not therefore exclude, but includes drawing it from out of the well of Scripture. Whether we have properly accepted it, or whether we have accepted it without seeing clearly that (and how) it flows out of the pure wells of Israel those may judge who have read the testimonies of our faith.

Oh, how I rejoice, therefore, that God has given me the great grace to participate in the fellowship of our Synod! To the praise of the Lord I acknowledge that I perceive in her a return of the days of our fathers' unity of faith.[56] May the gracious and merciful God, from whom this unity is a pure gift of grace, continue to preserve it among us. May He make us faithful that also on our part we may preserve this precious jewel. As He has established a deep-felt unity between us and our fathers, already resting in their graves, may He unite us to an ever greater degree with our brethren living near us and battling at our side. May He make us constantly stronger and more fruitful through our unity.[57] May He — and this is my final wish today — help me that renewed in strength I may soon return to the circle of my brethren and that I may continue to enjoy the blessing which I have enjoyed within it up to this time until the day of my death,[58] when I hope to enter, through Christ, into the blessed fellowship of the Church Triumphant. Amen.

In the Lord, your

C. F. W. WALTHER

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[54] Walther has reference particularly to John Gerhard (1582—1637), Martin Chemnitz (1522—86), and John Quenstedt (1617—85). The reference does not exclude other theologians of the 16th and 17th centuries and some of the church fathers.

[55] "We, however, wish to remain sitting at the feet of our faithful fathers, and with calling upon God to His Holy Spirit diligently learn from them and not be ashamed of them. Whether we are praised or censured for that — it is all the same to us; neither the one nor the other will separate us from them." F. Köstering, "Was verstehen die Gelehrten zu dieser 'grossen Zeit' unter Fortentwicklung der Lehre?" *Der Lutheraner*, XV (19 April 1859), 140.

[56] Compare Guenther, *C. F. W. Walther*, p. 106.

[57] While in Germany Hermann Fick published a 48-page booklet, *Zeugniss aus der ev.-luth. Kirche Nordamerikas, in Beantwortung der Frage: Warum hangen wir so fest an der lutherischen Kirche* (Hildesheim: Gerstenbergsche Buchhandlung, 1859). In this booklet he included the introduction to *Der Lutheraner*, XV (24 Aug. 1858), 1—3; ibid., XV (7 Sept. 1858), 9—11; ibid., XV (21 Sept. 1858), 17—19; ibid., XV (5 Oct. 1858), 25, 26. In this article Walther gave 18 reasons for remaining true to the Lutheran Church.

[58] Already in 1851, while in Germany, he wrote that he wanted to live and die in America. C. F. W. Walther to his wife Emilie, Erlangen, 11 Oct. 1851. (*Walthers Briefe*, I, 81)