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DR. C. F. W. WALTHER

at the centenary of his death

LECTURE II

"WALTHER AND THE OTHER LUTHERANS"

by

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WALTHER AND OTHER LUTHERANS

by

Aug. R. Suelflow ©

1. In this presentation permit me to convey especially two extremely important concerns which Dr. C. F. W. Walther had in his relationship to other Lutherans.
 1. To unite all Lutherans in America in a single organization; and
 2. To do this solely on the basis of a common agreement to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.
2. Another way in which one could state this is that Walther fervently desired that all Lutherans in America be united, and that this be accomplished on a complete and total subscription to the historic Lutheran Confessions. Strange, therefore, isn't it, that other Lutherans considered Walther exclusive, sometimes even sectarian, and often dictatorial or authoritarian. But thereby hangs a tale. How could an individual be seen as favoring Lutheran unity by some, and by others as exclusivistic? Writers have been debating that issue even during Walther's lifetime.
3. To understand Walther's attitude towards other Lutherans, it is most important that we view briefly the experiences which he had with other Lutherans since his early youth.
4. Walther grew up in a Lutheran parsonage at Langenchursdorf, in the Kingdom of Saxony during the Napoleonic era.
5. Napoleon's battle with the Prussians at Lutzen on May 2, 1813, and at Bautzen on May 20, 1813, partially overcame the great defeat which he had suffered in his occupation of Moscow. But then Prussia, Russia, and the Austrians began a new campaign against Napoleon and in a three-day battle at Leipzig, October 16-18, 1813, Napoleon was crushed. Thereafter the allies invaded Paris in March 1814.
6. Walther grew up in a typical Lutheran parsonage of that time. He was the eighth child of the Reverend and Mrs. Gotthold Heinrich Walther and his wife Johanna Wilhelmina, nee Zschenderlein of Zwickau. Discipline and culture marked the home, together with a large number of deaths that had taken place among the 12 children, six of whom died in infancy. Both Walther's paternal father and grandfather were Lutheran pastors.

7. At the early age of eight, he went to a boys' school at Hohenstein, and received his early education from his father's brother, Franz Friederich Wilhelm Walther, who had served as Rektor (Director and Chief Teacher). Walther remained at Hohenstein near the present Karl Marx Stadt for two years.
8. In 1821 (until 1829) he studied at the Lateinschule at Schneeberg also at a considerable distance from his home. The Schneeberg education gave him a strong and fundamental knowledge of the languages, especially Latin. At Schneeberg, he experienced a very close relationship with his sister Theresa Wilhelmina who was married to the Conrektor H. F. W. Schubert.
9. Walther studied at what today is Karl Marx University in Leipzig from 1829 to 1833. The university was established in 1409, and consequently already at that time had quite a history. Walther's older brother, Otto Hermann, also studied there. At the university, Walther was thoroughly exposed to the prevalent rationalism which had invaded every "nook and cranny" that by 1819, it has been estimated that four-fifths of the educated people, one-half of the merchant class and even one-third of the peasants had become rationalists. (Rudolf Hermann, THURINGISCHE KIRCHENGESCHICHTE JENA UND WEIMAR, 1937, Vol. I and 1947, Vol. II, p. 388) Sometimes the pervasiveness and the destructive subtleness of rationalism within the churches of Saxony and other Lutheran provinces has been denied. Nevertheless, an estimate such as that of Herrmann, seems quite clearly to describe the effects that rationalism had on young Walther in his university studies. Only about two of Walther's professors at Leipzig still professed their faith in the Gospel.
10. Because of this, an older university student, H. Johann Gottlieb Kuehn, who had already discovered the blessedness of a life lived in Christ through daily forgiveness, gathered like-minded students around himself.
11. Walther, in the biography of Buenger published in 1882 reflects upon the impact this "holy club" had made. With pietistic fervor, the members of the club were striving together to seek certainty of salvation. They assumed that this certainly could be developed by themselves. Avidly they read works such as Arndt, Francke, Spener, Bogatsky, and Rambach. Walther reflected:
- "The less a book invited to faith, and the more legalistically it urged contrition of the heart and total mortification of the old man preceding conversion, the better a book we held it to be. And even these books we read only so far as they described the sorrows and exercises of repentance; when this was followed by a description of faith and comfort

for the penitent, we usually closed such a book;
for we thought this did not as yet concern us.
(LEBENSLAUF, St. Louis, Dette, 1882, pp. 17-18.)

12. Fear, apprehension, and anxiety enveloped their lives.

This reminds one of Martin Luther's struggles to find a loving Heavenly Father in his cell at Erfurt, torturing himself with condemnation and hopelessness. It was John Staupitz who referred him to the "wounds of Jesus Christ, the blood that He has shed for you; it is there that the grace of God will appear to you...throw yourself into the Redeemer's arms. Trust in Him..."

13. Thus Luther discovered the Gospel. Even so Walther also

had a man who directed him to the Gospel, namely, Martin Stephan, a successful parish pastor in Dresden. Surrounded with professional jealousy from rationalistic pastors, Stephan had preached the Gospel to a people who were searching and thirsting for it instead of rationalistic sawdust. In an age of faithlessness, Martin Stephan "preached the Gospel, having experienced its power in his own soul." People flocked to him, while church attendance in other churches declined.

14. Confronted with self-criticism and hopelessness, an advisor urged Walther to consult Martin Stephan. In the same biography of Buenger, Walther, in a lengthy footnote describes his own personal experiences. Walther admits that he did not open the letter until he prayed fervently to God that he would not receive any false comfort.

"When I read his reply, I felt that I had been suddenly snatched from hell and placed into heaven. The long tears of fear and suffering were now converted into tears of true heavenly joy...So the peace of God came to my own soul. Stephan had applied the Gospel to his own soul."

Walther had rediscovered the Gospel.

15. After a period of serving as a tutor, Walther received a call to his first parish, "Zum guten Hirten" in Braeunsdorf, not too far from Penig and also his ancestral home.

16. I had the great privilege to visit Braeunsdorf last spring.

It's a quiet little community and apparently was that also during Walther's ministry (January 15, 1837 to September 1838). It was a brief ministry, one which was marked with extreme pressures from Superintendent Seibenhaar of Penig coercing him to use the rationalistic agenda which had been prepared for the Saxon church in 1812. Even though it contained a variety of formulas for various official acts, Walther and others objected strenuously to its use. As the official "inspector" of his parish/village school, Walther also ran into difficulties when rationalistic school books were introduced. Rationalism and political despotism held their sway.

17. Walther finally resigned from his parish, agreeing with six pastors, ten theological candidates and about 700 people to forsake all and to follow Martin Stephan to America. All had hoped that by leaving the "Babylon of Unbelief" they would be able to establish a new Zion in America. However, that was not to happen immediately, because of the difficulties encountered with the self-appointed Bishop, Martin Stephan. After Stephan had been expelled from the colony, spiritual, doctrinal, and physical crises faced the immigrants. Virtual starvation, suffering from the elements, spiritual and doctrinal questions once more arose. This time not so much concerned with an escape from rationalism, but much the challenge that the entire immigration venture ought to be abandoned and its diseased and spiritually empty people ought to return to Saxony to seek forgiveness. Could there be a church under those circumstances? It was not until the "Altenburg Debate" in April 1841 that this issue defining the church came up when Lawyer F. A. Marbach, who had long agitated that the immigrants pack up their soggy, moldy, and destroyed belongings and return to their homeland.

18. For a second time Walther had thoroughly researched Scripture and Luther's writings in order to obtain certainty. The church did, indeed, exist in Perry County and St. Louis, Missouri, because it consists of the totality of all true believers. Godless men, hypocrites, and heretics have been found in this church and the confession of faith falsified. Nevertheless, and this applied especially to the disastrous situation which had developed in Perry County, Missouri, societies or companies may be referred to as churches as does the Word of God itself. From this it follows:

- "1. That members also of such companies may be saved; for without the Church there is no salvation;
- "2. That the outward separation of a heterodox society from the universal Christian church or a relapse into hethanism does not yet deprive that society of the name Church;
- "3. Even heterodox societies have church power; even among them the treasures of the Church may be validly dispensed, the ministry established, the sacraments validly administered, and the keys of the kingdom of heaven exercised.
- "4. Even heterodox societies are not to be dissolved, but reformed."

There was the key. The group of immigrant Lutherans need not dissolve, but to seek reformation.

19. Here is one of the first clues that we see of Walther's position on the church with respect to his own group and later with respect to others. These views were to be reviewed especially as the critical dialog continued with Grabau of the Buffalo Synod.

The Formation of the Missouri Synod

20. It is difficult for us today to understand the milieu in which the Missouri Synod was organized.

1. The Saxons had permanently turned their backs and separated from the church in their homeland because of the pervasive rationalism and authoritarianism;
2. They had rediscovered the Gospel under the spiritual leadership of Martin Stephan, who had become despotic and authoritarian and as a result expelled from the community. Abject chaos followed;
3. Increasingly Walther discovered that Scripture, the Word of God as confessed in the historic Lutheran Confessions was the only certainty of the Gospel, both with respect to faith and life--not outward forms of the church, nor office of the bishop, nor anything else.
4. During this time, Lutheranism in America, perhaps belatedly in comparison to Europe, seriously affected by rationalism, together with the Americanization and Anglicanization of the church, abandoned totally the subscription to the Lutheran Confessions.

21. Walther and his friends were not yet identified with any Synod. Thus one of the fellow immigrants, George Albert Schieferdecker applied for membership in the Pennsylvania Ministerium. Schieferdecker related the grave difficulties which the Saxons had experienced in Germany with the rationalistic state church, the reasons for immigrating and the difficulties encountered with the collapse of Stephan's leadership. What would have happened if the president of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, Dr. C. R. Demme (1796-1863) had welcomed him into membership? Would other Saxons have joined later? Was this a "feeler"? Dr. Demme's reply is quite significant. (The Schieferdecker letter is on file in the archives of the Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.) In his presidential report in 1841, Dr. Demme reported:

"He renders a most interesting account of his spiritual experiences and development. In my answer, I informed him that, in order to succeed

to his wishes, it would be necessary for him to appear personally before this body, and encouraged him that he join one of the western synods of our church." (Pennsylvania Ministerium Proceedings, 1841, p. 7.)

22. Though not at Walther's initiative, the very formation of the Missouri Synod was, in itself, a union movement. The pastors, teachers, and congregations which joined the Synod in 1847 had hardly known each other two years prior. But what brought them together was desire for fellowship with others of the same confessional stance. The unity of the faith as expressed in the Lutheran Confessions was to supply the bonding for them.
23. One large segment, forged into the Missouri Synod, was supplied by Loehe's work. Wilhelm Loehe had been directed to the sad plight of the German Lutheran colonists in America through a most gripping and heartrending appeal issued by F. C. D. Wyneken. (Friedrich Wyneken, DIE NOT DER DEUTSCHEN LUTHERANER IN NORDAMERIKA, Pittsburgh: Lutherische Kirchenzeitung, 1844.) The masterful presentation depicting the hopeless spiritual plight of the German immigrant appears in an English translation in MOVING FRONTIERS. (St. Louis: CPH, 1964, pp. 90-97.) As a traveling missionary and member of the Pennsylvania Ministerium, Wyneken had seen the spiritual hopelessness of large numbers of the scattered German immigrant settlements. By this time he had also become acquainted with Walther through Der Lutheraner. Lutherans were beginning to take note of the voice of Confessional Lutheranism emanating from St. Louis.
24. But, when the Loehe missionaries who joined the Ohio and Michigan Synods did not meet their confessional standards, they decided to take steps to sever their connections with both of these bodies. The men in the Ohio Synod took this decisive action when they met in Cleveland, Ohio, in September 1845. Criticisms against the Ohio Synod were lodged on two aspects, namely its confessional laxity and the use of the English language with all of its implications such as "Jesus said: 'this is my body...'" At the Cleveland September meeting, the Loehe men of the Ohio Synod resolved to seek a closer relationship with the Saxons in Missouri. Thus the second conference preliminary to the formation of the Missouri Synod was held.
25. Even prior to the first meeting, John Adam Ernst, a Loehe missionary, inquired of Walther what he considered essential principles of a synodical organization. Walther replied at length in a letter of 21 August 1845 in which he emphasizes especially:

"1. That the Synod organize itself, in addition to the Word of God, on the basis of all the

symbols of our church and if possible, include also the Saxon visitation articles. However, I shall not insist upon the acceptance and the binding nature of the latter.

"2. I wish that all synchronistic activity by synodical members be prohibited and banned by a special paragraph in the constitution.

"3. That the chief function of the Synod be directed toward the maintenance (Erhaltung) and furtherance (Forderung) and guarding (Bewachung) of the unity and purity of Lutheran doctrine."

26. Walther had already expressed himself as being vitally interested in Lutheran unity, but on the basis of the Word of God and on the Lutheran Confessions, expressed his opposition to syncretism and held that the chief function of the Synod was to be concerned with the unity and purity of Lutheran doctrine.

27. The second preliminary meeting to the formation of the Missouri Synod was held in St. Louis where the first draft of the synodical constitution was reviewed. It is also interesting to note that the three Ohio delegates all were invited to preach at the Saxon churches in St. Louis as a "testimony to the unity of faith" as Lochner said it. (MOVING FRONTIERS, p. 148.) In Fort Wayne with Michigan Synod members present, the third preliminary meeting was held. The formerly heterogeneous group found a complete meeting of the minds and confirmed its confessional stance accepting Holy Scripture "as the written Word of God and as the only rule and norm of faith and life."

28. When the April 1847 convention took place, all the pieces fit together firmly. C. F. W. Walther served as its first president, from 1847-1850 and another 14 years thereafter, from 1864 to 1878.

29. The very organization of the Missouri Synod under Walther's guidance, consequently serves as the "first plank" in the entire fabric of Walther's relationship to other Lutherans.

American Lutheranism

30. Because of the disastrous effects of the Schmucker-Sprecher-Kurtz revisions of the Augsburg Confession in 1855, Walther issued a trumpet call to all Lutherans in America to rally behind the Augsburg Confession and to initiate efforts towards the final establishment of one single Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. In the January 1856 issue of

LEHRE UND WEHRE, a theological journal which he had just founded a year earlier, Walther issued the following appeal:

"So we venture openly to inquire: Would not meetings, held at intervals, by such members of churches as call themselves Lutheran and acknowledge and confess without reservation that the unaltered Augsburg Confession of 1530 is the pure and true statement of the doctrine of Sacred Scripture and is also their own belief, to promote and advance the efforts towards the final establishment of one single Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? We for our part would be ready with all our heart to take part in such a conference of truly believing Lutherans wherever and whenever such a conference would be held, pursuant to the wishes of the majority of the participants; at the same time we can promise in advance the support of numerous theologians and laymen to whom the welfare of our precious Evangelical Lutheran Church in this new fatherland is equally a matter of deepest heartfelt yearning, and with whom we have discussed the thoughts here expressed." (L.u.W. II, January 1856 3-6.)

31. The appeal was met with success, and four conferences were conducted between 1856 and 1859. The conditions on which attendance was based was that only individuals, not representatives of ecclesiastical organizations, would attend and that they pledged subscription to the Augsburg Confession. (MOVING FRONTIERS, p. 249ff.)

32. Already at the first conference (Columbus, Ohio, on 1-7 October 1856), after some debate, it was determined that the Augsburg Confession, itself article by article, would serve as basis of the discussions.

(It is interesting to observe that:

"All questions pertaining to faith and conscience shall be considered;"

"But all others, resting upon mere consequences drawn from the words, or belonging to the domain of practice without involving a question of conscience, shall be excluded;"

"And finally after each article had been discussed the members shall express their agreement as to the meaning by rising and affirming."")

Walther reported enthusiastically on the first conference:

"Yes, even now the Lord, who reigns omnipotently at the right hand of God, has opened new doors for us. In prospect is nothing less than a union of the whole

American Lutheran Church under the banner of our genuine, uncorrupted Confessions. The effort, as foolish as it was presumptuous, of several parties within the General Synod to set aside the old, trustworthy confessional basis, the Augsburg Confession, has opened the eyes of other synods heretofore connected with them and has called them to arms for the protection and preservation of the old, unadulterated confession ... (MOVING FRONTIERS, p. 250.)

33. All four "Free Conferences" were open and closed with the singing of a hymn, prayer, recitation of the Apostles Creed, and the benediction. Truly, these sessions were of an "intersynodical" nature, seeking, on the basis of the Lutheran Confessions, a single, united, Lutheranism in America.
34. There are several reasons why these "Free Conferences" came to an end.
35. The first conference attracted 73 persons, 19 of whom were laymen. The second had 43 and the third 45 present. (We don't know how many were at the fourth.)
36. Even though a fifth conference had been scheduled for June 1860 in Cleveland, Ohio, (notices to this effect had been issued in the Lutheran periodicals), the conference was never held. Professor W. F. Lehmann had chaired the first three conferences, and in 1859 both he and Dr. Walther were absent. This was at the time when Walther was just on his way to Europe, and consequently in June of 1860 he was still not available to push this matter. Strained relationships between the Ohio and Missouri Synods over communion attendance and acceptance of a Missouri clergyman who was under church discipline by the Ohio Synod aggravated the fact that neither of the two leading personalities were present.
37. Even though no further conferences were held, we may assume that the Synodical Conference, organized in 1872, was successor to the important groundwork which had been laid.

Formation of the General Council

38. Lutheranism in the first half of the 19th century was in turmoil, theological uncertainty, and doubt. The effects of the transition from German to English, the vast geographical expansion following upon the heels of the Revolutionary War, the inaccessibility of English translations of the Book of Concord until 1851 virtually deprived eastern Lutherans of any acquaintance with the historic symbols of the Lutheran Church. In 1855, coinciding with the publication of the Schmucker

Recension of the Augsburg Confession was the very year in which the Tennessee Synod published its first edition of the Book of Concord.

39. Thus, with the Lutheran moorings, at best religated to the past and often preoccupied with other issues, Lutherans tended to become culturally integrated in the community.
40. The Schmucker PLATFORM caused divisions and schisms of major proportion among America's Lutherans and particularly within the old General Synod which organized as a federation of synods in 1821.
41. Could one assume that the "Free Conferences" of the 1850's contributed to the formation of the General Council in 1866? The Pennsylvania Ministerium issued a call to Lutheran synods, pastors and congregations "which confessed the Unaltered Augsburg Confession" to attend a meeting (Reading, Pennsylvania, 1866) "for the purpose of forming a union of Lutheran Synods." (Wolfe, p. 141ff; MOVING FRONTIERS, p. 255.)
42. Missouri appointed Professor Walther, Dr. Sihler, and Pastor J. A. F. W. Mueller, the first graduates of the St. Louis Seminary. Mueller conducted an opening devotion at this meeting. However, neither Walther nor Sihler attended. Why not? This seemed to be a fulfillment to Walther's dream about a single Lutheran church in America.
43. Walther attended the Missouri-Buffalo colloquy from 20 November to 5 December in 1866 in Buffalo, New York. A week later the exploratory meeting of the General Council was held in Reading, Pennsylvania, 12-14 December 1866. Thus Mueller was the only one to attend.
44. In addition to the timing difficulties, Walther sheds some light on this in a letter of 14 December 1866:
 "If the Pennsylvania Convention, as originally planned, had been held in Pittsburgh, I would have undoubtedly personally participated; since, however, it was held in Reading, eight days later than originally scheduled, we submitted our vote in writing and requested Pastor Mueller, our third synodical commissioner, to attend. This he did, as we have been informed in writing. I am living in deepest anticipation of the results." (Walther to Pastor and Mrs. Stephanus Keyl, Fuerbringer, Walther's Briefe, II, 62.)
45. A few days later, however, apparently after the report he had received from Mueller, Walther confided on 27 December 1866:
 "I do not regret that I did not go to Reading.

It would have been extremely painful for me to meet with such false spirits as the people from the Iowa and Canada Synods. My witness would have been lost even as that of our dear Mueller. It is true, the resolutions are for the most part fairly acceptable, but one becomes alarmed when thinking of all those who have subscribed to them, people who are in part open hypocrites, or who do not fully realize what they have done. I feel profoundly sorry for people such as Krauth, Krotel, Schaeffer, and others, because they were so weak and have sought strength in the union of such elements."

46. It is, indeed, unfortunate that Dr. Charles Porterfield Krauth, the leading proponent in the confessional struggle among English-speaking Lutherans in America and Walther were unable to unite their efforts in opposing "American Lutheranism" and establishing a confessional Lutheran church in America. Walther spoke of Krauth as a man "wholeheartedly devoted to the pure doctrine of our church." Perhaps the language barrier may be a part of the explanation.

47. After the constituting convention had been completed, in the absence of a synodical convention, the Missouri Synod responded via two district conventions. The primary gist of these responses was that Missouri felt that the formation of the General Council had been too hasty and was premature. Rather, it recommended a series of "free conferences" by which the participants would be strengthened and convinced that "unity in spirit must first be sought and attained before external union can follow...." (MOVING FRONTIERS, p. 255) A formal reply by the officers of the four Missouri Synod districts underscored the necessity of free conferences, and insisted that they must be "separated from officially organized conventions of ecclesiastical bodies."

48. This virtually terminated Missouri's dialog with the General Council. This situation was further aggravated when the question of the "Four Points" on the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth, whether non-Lutherans were permitted to commune at Lutheran altars, whether non-Lutheran pastors were permitted to preach in Lutheran pulpits, and on membership in secret societies. (Wolf, pp. 162-165.)

49. In spite of several attempts at resolving these issues, such as the "Akron Rule," these issues continued to plague the General Council with almost disastrous results. The Wisconsin Synod withdrew from membership in 1869, the Iowa Synod decided it could not enter into full membership in that body, and the Minnesota and Illinois Synods withdrew in 1870.

50. While the General Council was engaging in solving the problems between 1866 and 1872, the Missouri Synod engaged in a series of eight "colloquies" with synods with whom it was not in fellowship. Time will merely allow us to list them. Each colloquy had a heavy doctrinal agenda which usually covered the issues of church and ministry, confessional subscription, open questions, chiliasm, pulpit and altar fellowship, the Word of God and secret societies, etc.

51. In rapid, almost breathtaking order, the following were held:

1. With the Buffalo Synod November 20 to December 5, 1866, at Buffalo with the result that the Buffalo Synod split in two, and about half of the pastors, teachers, and congregations joined the Missouri Synod.
2. The Iowa Synod, November 13-19, 1867, in Milwaukee. It needs to be observed that George Albert Schieferdecker, President of the Western District and member of the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis was expelled from the Missouri Synod in 1857 because of his chiliastic views including the hope for a universal conversion of Jews and Christ's return to earth prior to Judgement Day to organize the millennial reign. Schieferdecker joined the Iowa Synod but in 1875 recanted his views and returned to Missouri. But it is apparent that the Iowa colloquy could chalk up a few areas of progress. However, the Iowa colloquants were forced to terminate the discussions on 19 November, so that they might attend the November 20-26, 1867, meeting of the General Council in Fort Wayne, Indiana. As a result, little became of these efforts.
3. Ohio Synod--March 4-6, 1868, at Columbus, Ohio. The request for a colloquy had come from Ohio itself, and the discussions were limited to the district presidents, an innovation, because Walther had always insisted that lay people be involved in doctrinal discussions. Church and ministry were the primary issues, and after three days, agreement was reached.
4. Wisconsin--October 21-22, 1868, at Milwaukee. We need not review the early history of the Wisconsin Synod and its relationship to Missouri because this is already well known. But what is so inspiring is the fact that this two-day colloquy provided complete agreement between these two church bodies on "open questions, church

and ministry, inspiration of Scripture, subscription to the Confessions, millenium, and the anti Christ."

5. Illinois--August 4-5, 1869, in St. Louis. This synod had been organized in 1846 and briefly had been a member of the old General Synod. It also participated in the formation of the General Council in 1866, but then left in 1870 when it was highly dissatisfied with the Council's position on the "Four Points." Hence the colloquy discussed chiefly the matter of open questions, pulpit and altar fellowship, chiliasm, and secret societies. The result of this colloquy was that the Illinois Synod merged with the Illinois District of the Missouri Synod.
6. Minnesota Synod--June 1872. The work of this synod was largely begun through Father Heyer in 1856. This synod was organized in 1860 and joined the General Council in 1866 but withdrew in 1870. At the colloquy it was reported that agreement in doctrine had already existed prior to the meeting as was evidenced from the convention reports. Minnesota entered into a union with Wisconsin in 1893.
7. The English Conference of Missouri, August 1872 at Gravelton, Missouri. This group had been an extension of Eastern English Lutherans, to a large extent, from Tennessee. F. A. Schmidt preached at the divine service which preceded the colloquy. Points of discussion centered on the Word of God, total depravity, the work of Christ, faith and good works, the Sacraments, and Christian liberty, church and ministry as well as the anti Christ.

Unanimity was reached and the English Conference was closely affiliated with the Missouri Synod until it became the English District of the LCMS in 1911.

The Synodical Conference

52. There is yet a third arena in which a tremendous amount of activity was taking place concurrently with the disappointments of the General Council and the strong encouragement of the successes of the "colloquies," namely, the formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference in 1872. Two preliminary sessions were held, one in January and the other in November 1871, with the formation of the Synodical Conference culminating at the Milwaukee session in July 1872. However,

Dr. Koelpin will treat this particular account, so we need not enter in upon this.

53. But in viewing Walther and other Lutherans, we need to deal with the predestinarian controversy. In Walther's marvelous series of essays delivered at the Western District conventions from 1873 to 1886, we see a masterful overview of his doctrinal position. His theme throughout the series of essays is:

"The Doctrine of the Lutheran Church Alone Gives All Glory to God, an Irrefutable Proof that its Doctrine Alone is True."

54. In Walther's essay at the 1877 convention he dealt at great length with the doctrine of predestination (Grandenwahl). Immediately F. A. Schmidt accused Walther of false doctrine and the controversy raged within all the synods of the Synodical Conference. Dr. Koelpin undoubtedly will cover this area.

55. However, the animosity created, the bitterness among fellow Lutherans, the deep-seated antagonisms which resulted from the predestinarian controversy modified and radically altered not only Walther's, but also the Missouri Synod's position on its relationship to other Lutherans. This is a tragic chapter from which few have recovered.

56. Even though Walther had anticipated that the Synodical Conference would become the ecclesiastical connection which would ultimately unite all Lutherans in America, his dream was severely shattered. It is interesting to observe that the fifth objective of the Synodical Conference was:

"To unite all Lutheran synods in America in one orthodox American Lutheran Church." (Denkschrift, Columbus, 1871, p. 5.)

57. In 1933 the Synodical Conference modified this in its constitution and listed as one of its objectives:

"To strive for true unity in doctrine and practice among Lutheran church bodies." (Synodical Conference Constitution, 1944, Article 42.)

58. It is apparent that a radical change in Walther's and the entire Missouri Synod's attitude towards other Lutherans resulted from the Predestinarian Controversy. The bitterness which unfolded in its wake cut most deeply. Whereas, prior to this time, Walther had extended open invitations to discuss doctrine with all who subscribed to the Augsburg Confession, there was an abrupt reversal when F. A. Schmidt accused Walther of false doctrine. This cut so deeply that Walther may never have recovered from it.

59. In a letter to G. A. Barth of Pella, Wisconsin, on May 9, 1880, Walther states:

"Instead of coming to us in a brotherly manner to seek to correct us, they have branded us as heretics before the entire world. They have given us the worst name they could find; namely, cryptocalvinists, who as is well known, did not only harbor false doctrine but tried to hide this and mischievously mislead by using words with a double meaning. Thereby they tried to smuggle their error into our church while we were frank and open with our doctrinal position. These lords have severed themselves from us and have appealed to our enemies. If they now want to discuss these matters in our Synod, it is too late. They have brought these matters before the public masses; before this tribunal the matter must also now be wrestled through."
(Walther to Barth, 9 May, 1880, Wadewitz, pp. 2-3.)

60. Walther also insisted that Schmidt not be permitted to dispute or defend his position in an open synodical assembly, since he himself had given up the right or privilege of brotherly discussion because he went public against the Synod and branded it a heretic. (Walther to Barth, 9 May 1880, p. 6 of Wadewitz.)

61. The position on prayer at meetings to discuss doctrine apparently was initiated during the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, colloquy of January 1881. This colloquy was held under the auspices of the Synodical Conference. Theological professors, synodical and district presidents were in attendance. Among those from the Norwegian Synod was F. A. Schmidt. This meeting of representatives, however, became quite acrid and no agreement was reached. Up to that time the session of the colloquy regularly opened and closed with prayer. The last session was an exception. One of the Missouri Synod representatives, an accused heretic, refused to pray with the "accusors," and consequently the meeting was closed with silent prayer. (Altes und Neues, Vol. II, p. 27; Suelflow, Th.D., p. 158.)

62. This may well be the first time in the history of the Missouri Synod that a member of the Synod refused to pray with another Lutheran with whom he was debating theological issues.

63. Amazing, isn't it, that less than ten years after the Synodical Conference was organized with the grandiose idea of ultimately uniting all Lutherans in America on the basis of the Lutheran Confessions, it was disrupted so quickly and schismatically. What a tragedy!

64. Perhaps we can sum up this presentation best by quoting Walther in his report on the first Free Conference in 1856:
- "For acceptance of the Augsburg Confession, with reservations is no acceptance of the Confession but a relinquishment of it. Because of this, we cannot expect the salvation of our church (in America) to come from the General Synod. An outward union, provided for by a constitution is not at all what we need. If one single Evangelical Lutheran Church, strong in unity, is to arise, this will occur only through the unity in faith, through the awakening of a consciousness of the presence of such unity and through a rallying around a single confession, as around a treasure which must be mutually adhered to and defended." (Der Lutheraner, XIII [21c October 1856]. p. 34, in a report entitled "Die Allgemeine Conferenz.")
65. Walther viewed his fellow Lutherans in America as friends and when some of them publicly declared him to be a heretic and violated Matthew 18, his direction, indeed, changed.
66. We would do well today to build on the foundation which Walther and his generation have laid for us, namely, to reconfirm our complete and total commitment to the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God--God's love letter to the entire human race, and the Lutheran Confessions as man's response and acceptance of that message of love through Christ.

Thank you