

Memoirs **of My Life**

for my Children and Friends
on my 50th Anniversary in Office

by

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Introduction. [↑](#)

I have long resisted the pleas of my children and friends to write down the following reports from my life and it is difficult for me to bring myself to do so. There is always something prideful about talking much about oneself, especially in print, and not only that, but the human heart is such a vain and prideful thing that it cannot refrain from talking about itself without a serious temptation to pride and self-aggrandizement, even if we are so firmly convinced that everything we are or do and have is only a pure and free gift and effect of divine grace. But who would like to bring himself into the danger of such temptation? and what honest Christian would not therefore prefer to remain in the deepest silence and secrecy until the great day of the appearing and revelation of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and of all his children with him? If, therefore, I nevertheless write down the following pages, it is with the heartfelt fervent sigh that it may only be done to God's glory and to the praise and glory of His grace, which has also revealed itself so wonderfully and gloriously in my life, likewise that God may destroy the devil with all his fiery darts,

evil thoughts and poisonous temptations under my feet, but that God may guide and direct both my heart and the hearts of all my dear readers in such a way that in all my following messages we may only recognize and praise the work, the wonderful, almighty ways and guidance of divine grace.

Apart from the pleas and heartfelt love of children and friends, which I do not want to resist, there are two reasons in particular that move me to write down the following pages. Above all, it is the conviction that fills me, especially in the awareness of my own complete powerlessness and unworthiness, that God has not only revealed and glorified his exuberant grace in my life in an extremely wonderful way, but that he has also shown in me, preferably, how it is only his free grace alone that saves and preserves us from complete destruction in the midst of the deepest ruin of sin and darkness, and makes us its vessels and instruments. Therefore, the following stories from my life can and must serve especially to praise divine grace, and indeed, God's grace, which has also made me, a poor wretched human being, who confesses from the bottom of my heart that I am worth nothing because of my inherent sin, worthy to be its instrument, is well worth being recognized and praised by many. How God's almighty hand has not only brought me out of the deepest darkness to the light and knowledge of His Word, but has also, through my small service, restored a Lutheran church in my fatherland, how God has wonderfully preserved and guided us Lutherans in Nassau in difficult internal and external struggles, how He has saved us from all aberrations in the confusion of faith of the present evil times, how God has shown His grace and faithfulness to us in a thousand ways: I would like to erect a monument of grateful remembrance here in these pages to these so gracious ways and guidance of God.

I would like to add the following. Both the course of my own life and the origins and history of our Nassau Lutheran Free Church have many peculiarities. Here in Nassau, Christianity and Lutheranism have formed in such a unique way and from the deepest roots of Christian and ecclesiastical development under God's guidance and leadership and have been preserved to this day, and God has brought us into direct personal contact with all the ecclesiastical movements and struggles of our time in so many different ways that the history of our development and the ecclesiastical struggles we have experienced in the process offers not only a rich treasure of divine grace, but also of Christian and ecclesiastical experiences. Fifty years ago, at the time when God first brought us from death to life and then a few years later led us to separate from the united Nassau State church and become a Lutheran Free Church, the deepest spiritual slumber of death still prevailed almost everywhere in Germany, especially in the small Nassau region. The faithful preaching of the Gospel could hardly be heard here and there from the mouths of a few and small groups of faithful Christians were to be found, but there was almost no sign of confessional Lutheran consciousness and life. For the whole of south-western Germany, the Wupperthal, Barmen and Elberfeld, as well as Württemberg with its Pietism, were the leading suburbs of all Christianity at that time. Only we Lutherans in Nassau, separated from all these Christian circles, were allowed by God to go our own way, and later pulled us out of the entanglements with so many other unhealthy and impure directions in the ecclesiastical field of our time, often under difficult struggles: I would like to make the history of all these experiences and ecclesiastical struggles useful and edifying for others in my following messages. I would also like to note that during the first ten years that I was in the preaching ministry and before that, I kept a detailed

diary (exclusively for my own use), the contents of which I will faithfully report below, albeit in a modified form. An excerpt from this diary can already be found in my earlier publication "[Kirche und Mission](#)" (*Church and Mission*) from the year 1878, and from there, information has again appeared in other publications. However, I hope that where the story of our church experiences has perhaps already been shared in these shorter narratives, the more detailed account of them in the following will be all the more welcome.

1.

My Youth. ↑

Before people thought it, God had already foreseen and ordained the tools and ways to form a free Lutheran church in Nassau. These ways reach back to the years of my earliest childhood and youth, which still fall into the time of the deepest darkness and reign of rationalism in Germany (I was born in 1819 at Schaumburg Castle on the Lahn, in the middle of the old Duchy of Nassau, where my father, a native of Anhalt, was court preacher at the princely court at the time). Until I was 18, I never came into even the remotest contact with Christian truth or believing Christians, but grew up in almost pagan ignorance. Thus I experienced for myself the complete alienation from God and all Christianity that rationalism leads us to, and my youth can also make a contribution to the church history of our century. But this complete exposure to all Christian knowledge and life in my childhood and youth, which is otherwise such a great misfortune for people, became

a means of salvation and blessing for me through God's wonderful providence: it not only facilitated my knowledge of sin later on, and thereby my conversion, but also preserved me from all possible harmful influences and false directions, such as were so easily and much found in those days, where there was still something left of Christianity, and which could then have been impressed upon me as an evil paternal inheritance even in childhood. Thus, when divine grace knocked on my door for the first time in my 18th year, I found a complete spiritual desert and emptiness within me, and I had to completely break with all my former thinking and life and start a new one when I wanted to become a Christian. And yet it was a most venerable, amiable and naturally noble man in whose hands my whole education and instruction lay until my confirmation; it was my own natural father, a man of such great natural goodness of heart, which he wore so openly on a face full of love and kindness, that as far as I remember he had no enemy in his whole life, but was held in the most universal veneration and esteem. But with the high gifts of intellect which he possessed, he carried within him the whole rationalistic education of his time, and the greater his natural goodness of heart, the more completely did he conceal every trace of a knowledge of human sinfulness, and the more deeply and firmly did he become entangled in the ideas of human virtue and self-righteousness. His main endeavor was to educate his children in the purely rationalistic views of God, virtue and the immortality of the soul and to keep away from us with anxious care all thoughts of enthusiasm and the like, to which he also counted devout Christianity. He succeeded in the latter to a rare degree. In the rationalistic thought that it was a desecration of prayer to urge underage children, who had no spiritual understanding of it, to pray (for example morning and evening prayers), my father avoided this

completely with me and my siblings; there was never any talk of home devotions and grace in my father's house anyway. So I actually lived to be a full 18 years old — it is almost unbelievable to say — without ever having had a serious thought about God, without ever having prayed! The only religious inspirations I remember from my entire childhood and youth were very few and extremely fleeting; only a great fire, which I experienced in my home town as a child and which filled me with great fear, drove me to a kind of prayer for help, admittedly only in the most superficial way. Just as fleeting and superficial was another religious impulse that I remember from the end of my time at grammar school. The older pupils were allowed to go to the balls that were held in the town on New Year's Eve; so I went, but at midnight, at the turn of the year, I was overcome by such a feeling of the emptiness and futility of dancing at such an important time that I immediately left the dance hall and went home. Once there, I picked up the Bible and turned to the first page of the New Testament, as I was otherwise completely unfamiliar with the contents of Holy Scripture. On my first search, I found nothing but the genealogy that St. Matthew the Evangelist gives on the first page, and disappointed as I thought I was, I put the book aside again. The whole thing had no lasting effect, and I am only telling it to give my dear readers a picture of the deep spiritual night and darkness in which I grew up.

I don't remember any encouragement or exhortation of a religious nature from my life at that time. Religious instruction and confirmation passed me by without a trace and without any impression, I never learned a catechism, never even knew one, Bible verses were only learned from a little book of sayings, songs from a roughly rationalistic hymn book, in which [Gellert's songs](#) were the best. *)

*) As a sample, I am sharing the first verse of the baptismal hymn from this hymnal, which was sung standing up at every public baptism, which is why I still know it today. It reads:

"Welcome to the poor of mankind,
Beloved child, welcome,
Be mild and warm from all of us
Accepted for education!"

Confirmation classes were taught according to a separate "Guide to Religious Instruction", in which the three articles of the apostolic faith and the holy Ten Commandments had no place, and in whose introduction Christ, Moses and Socrates were placed side by side as the three great religious teachers and sages of antiquity. It was a purely philosophical doctrinal structure, which in any case went right over the heads of the children (perhaps its greatest advantage). For the public examination at confirmation, 42 questions were set beforehand, answered in writing and these answers were then memorized to be recited during the examination. Since I have kept these questions and answers to this day, I cannot refrain from sharing some of them here as a faithful picture of the so naked and blatant rule of rationalism at that time. Will the dear readers believe that in these questions and answers, and thus in all my religious instruction, there was not a single word about a divine Trinity, about paradise and the fall of man, about Christ's death, resurrection and ascension, about redemption through Christ's blood and the forgiveness of sins, or about the divine inspiration of the Bible? After the doctrine of God's existence, attributes, creation, preservation and government of the world had been dealt with rationalistically, question 15 then asks: What is this blessed conviction and your entire knowledge of religion most excellently based on? Answer: On our reason and the exact knowledge of our inner nature, which is why the first principle is "know thyself". This is followed by question 16: What do we have to recognize

most excellently about man? Answer: His high merits or dignity, but also his imperfections and shortcomings, and finally his high destiny. Question 17: In what does his dignity chiefly consist? Answer: In his powers and high excellences, such as reason, free will, conscience and moral feeling. Question 18: By what means will you always assert your dignity as human beings? Answer: By always being conscious of it and always acting accordingly. Question 26: What is man's destiny? Answer: That he develops his spirit more and more and thereby attains the possession of truth, virtue and happiness. This is followed by the doctrine of an existence after death, where man reaches the goal of his destiny, the development of all his powers. Hence question 32: How do you live most worthily for eternity? Answer: When we strive to train ourselves more and more and never tire of working diligently on our improvement and refinement. Question 33: What can you count on in this endeavor? Answer: That God will send us the Holy Spirit, i.e. perseverance and courage to practice justice and virtue and to resist sin. — What I have said here is the whole sum of rationalistic religious wisdom that I learned in my childhood. Obviously there is no room in it to say anything about God's Word or about a Savior and salvation through Him. So the name of Christ is not mentioned anywhere, only at the very end is question 35: To whom do we owe the Christian religion and its holy institutions? Answer: To Jesus Christ, who redeemed us from ignorance, superstition and sin and is therefore also called Savior. Question 36: In which book are his teachings and the teachings of the prophets given to us? Answer: In the Bible, which is divided into the Old and New Testaments, in the latter of which the Christian religion is distinguished. Question 37: How have you come to know Jesus our Lord? Answer: As the greatest benefactor of the whole human race,

to whom we therefore owe the greatest gratitude, love, reverence and willing obedience. Question 38: How do you publicly confess Jesus and pay homage to his merits? Answer: By Holy Communion, whereby we partake of bread and wine in grateful remembrance of Jesus and renew our sacred religious vows. Question 39: What should faith in Jesus Christ and his religion be to you throughout your life? Answer: It should train our spirit, give it a sure direction and give us comfort and peace in the sufferings of our lives. — In truth, the whole apostasy from all real Christianity, which rationalism includes in itself, cannot be more openly and fully expressed than in the foregoing; Christianity and pagan philosophy or moral teaching are completely on the same level. How often, therefore, have I been told and impressed upon me that the pagan philosophical principle, as taught, for example, by Cicero, that one must do good "for the sake of good", is quite one and the same as the Christian doctrine of doing good "for the sake of God" or out of love for God. I had become so firmly entrenched in this false idea that it cost me the greatest struggle in my later conversion to discard it and thereby come to the realization that all merely natural goodness in man is still a world away from and far removed from the fulfillment of the divine law, that is, from the real love of God and neighbor. There is only one thing I can and must boast of from my upbringing and the impressions I received (which were probably based especially on my father's so venerable personality and his naturally pure, noble character, which was so completely without anything false), that the living awareness and sense of right, truth and moral duty were deeply impressed on me as the first and highest thing that man must absolutely follow. It was a preaching of the law and a tutor to Christ for me, which I had to thank my upbringing for, despite all my rationalism. Otherwise, however, I had to

experience deeply in myself the whole inability of rationalism to give man anything of real religion; despite all the teachings of God and virtue, which I received from the most dear and venerable mouth, that of my own father, I grew up in truth without God and religion, my heart remained completely spiritually dead in sins, indeed, I remained in the most terrible way a poor miserable servant of sin and the flesh. And it was not my outer worldly surroundings or my schoolmates, for instance, that tempted me away from the path of childlike simplicity and righteousness, on which I at least outwardly walked, to godless boyish deeds, no, my seducer was quite another, it was — my father's study. It contained many books which had formerly served a reading society at the Schaumburg royal court, where my father was court preacher, and which were furnished entirely according to the taste of such a court; they were entirely secular novels, plays, and so on, and above all there was a book that caused me unspeakable damage to my soul, namely the Arabian fairy tales known under the title of "[1001 Nights](#)", and the book did not contain these fairy tales in an adaptation for young people, but in their completely undiminished original form! So I sat for hours and days in my father's study, poring over the old reading society books, forgetting the whole world in the stories and the entertainment I found there. But I cannot describe how much my whole inner self, my imagination and all my thoughts were filled and poisoned by all the impure images I read in those novels, plays and fairy tales. In truth, they brought me to the brink of ruin, so that I would have perished irredeemably morally if God's saving hand of grace had not miraculously and visibly held me and, especially at the very beginning, when I started my university life, led me on its paths of grace.

The grammar school in Weilburg, which I attended for four years, could do little to change my whole mental life and condition. I had always had a quiet, withdrawn nature, which protected me from bad, dangerous behavior, and I was always a very diligent, dutiful student. But otherwise, even at grammar school, I was surrounded by the most naked rationalism everywhere in church and school, a life completely devoid of religion. We pupils had to go to church on Sundays, but we sat in one of the furthest corners of the large town church, where it was almost impossible to understand the preacher. I never took a single word home with me from church. Religious instruction at school, however, was given by the oldest, most incompetent of the grammar school teachers, who was no doubt thought to be good enough for this minor matter. The poor man also gave a pitiful lesson, which was a constant object of ridicule for us pupils; it was a firm rule that we did not pay attention to what was being said (and the teacher only gave lectures in religion lessons, never asked questions), but used the time to do other schoolwork. Only the Roman Catholic pupils had to go to their pastor in class. So my path at grammar school also went into night and darkness and God's hand of grace kept me from falling into a deep trap there. My father at home, however, never asked about my life and conduct, nor about my possible companionship, his rationalism and his whole personal nature blinded him to any thought of moral danger or temptation for me, my good school reports reassured him above all else. I was supposed to study theology (because the Schaumburg government had destined me to be my father's successor from an early age), but I had little desire or inclination to do so with my godless mind, preferring instead to devote myself to a secular profession, such as

medicine. However, I finally gave in to my father's wishes, and in the end, according to God's wonderful advice and will, a very small, minor circumstance tipped the scales in the matter that was decisive for my whole life. An uncle of mine, a brother of my father, who was a pastor in Wörlitz in the Duchy of Anhalt, invited me to come to the university in Leipzig, where an old pupil of his and a native of Wörlitz, the later mission director Graul, was studying theology, and whose fellowship would certainly be of benefit to me. To Leipzig, to this great and famous cosmopolitan city! That drew me and so the die was cast, I decided to go to Leipzig and study theology there, without suspecting that Leipzig and my uncle's house in Wörlitz would become the birthplaces of a whole new life for me. But how wonderful God's guidance was in this! Yes, I had to go to Leipzig according to God's will, because first of all, no Nassau student ever went there, so by staying in Leipzig I was completely torn out of my entire previous, purely worldly environment and comradeship, even from the influences of my father's house, because according to the traffic conditions at that time, Leipzig was so far away that any vacation trips home were impossible. And secondly, it was in Leipzig that I came into direct contact with the person who became my guide to Christ, the later mission director Graul.

My uncle from Wörlitz had pointed me in the direction of the latter, who was still a student at the time; otherwise I didn't know a soul in the big city. So when I arrived in Leipzig, I got off the train, where the mail coach I came in stopped first, and I arrived at the *Hotel de Pologne* at random. The famous trade fair was taking place in Leipzig at the time, a main market for Polish Jews, who had their main meeting place in the hotel. There I saw, as I had wanted to, the first wonder of the great cosmopolitan city, namely the throng of all the

Polish Jews in their foot-long beards and long black gowns, one dressed like the other, who all lived in the *Hotel de PoIogne* and went in and out there. To make matters worse, I had arrived 14 days too early, as the university was closed during fair, so my friend Graul wasn't there yet. So there I was, a young, inexperienced lad in a vast, desolate foreign land, and among all the Polish Jews to boot! But that's how it was supposed to be, I was supposed to wander around in a foreign country for 14 days, lonely and homesick at heart, so that when my friend Graul finally came and welcomed me with open arms, I would cling to him all the more fervently and firmly.

Graul was already studying in his last semester, so he was far ahead of me in age, studies and, moreover, through his unusual spiritual gifts; he had, even if only recently, come to faith and Christian knowledge, so it could not fail that his company and influence had to become decisive for me. He also attracted me to such an extent that he was and remained my only daily companion for the six months we were still together in Leipzig. It was no different for me than when a person suddenly steps out of the deepest darkness into the bright sunshine: I had never before heard anything of biblical teaching or of the saving name of the Lord Jesus, and now all of this suddenly appeared before my eyes in such a bright light, moreover in such a personally lively and deeply spiritual and cozy way as was characteristic of Graul. I had no prejudice or hostility towards biblical Christianity, because I had never known it before. So I accepted Graul's testimony openly and impartially, but not without the most serious scrutiny, reflection and research. A tremendous struggle arose in my soul, it was a matter of giving up all my previous thinking and being, and despite the infancy in which I was still walking in many respects at that time, it was not my way to swear by other people's words without my own clear and

lively conviction. My friend Graul would have it no other way. He himself was still in the early stages of faithful Christianity and so he also led me towards it at first. My own conscience, however, could not close itself to the truth, which at first settled deep within me like a thorn, that if I wanted to become a Christian preacher, I must first be a Christian myself, and likewise, if I wanted to teach Christian religion to others, I must first have it myself. So this immediately became the question of life that gripped and filled my whole being: **what is Christianity, what is truth and what about you?** I had never thought about such questions before, but now they gripped me with all their force and I had to come to terms with them. So in truth I forgot the whole world and all the people around me, not only the whole city of Leipzig with all its splendor, but also Leipzig University and professors, and hurried to Graul every day just to talk to him, often to argue, but in the main willingly to hear and learn from him. The fundamental question of all Christianity soon came very vividly before my soul: Christ and his grace, redemption through his blood, or on the contrary, as I had not known otherwise, my own wisdom and virtue, what is valid before God and what makes one blessed? The decision was not exactly easy for me; the rationalistic way of thinking that I had learned and was born with was deeply embedded in me and caused me a long, difficult struggle with the new Christian ideas that were penetrating me. Trusting in my own virtue was very much in line with my entire life and nature up to that point. Whether the naturally good in and of itself was already a fulfillment of the divine law, already something good before God, already real love for God: that cost me the main struggle, as already mentioned above. But it was precisely my previous life, completely alienated from God, that helped me to make up my mind; that pagans, like the ancient Romans and Greeks, who also

preach the love of good, as well as I myself, who had lived in the world without God until then, could not have any real love for God, despite all their other virtues, soon became undeniably clear and certain to me. So all my previous outward life of virtue, the only foundation on which I had stood until then, even if unconsciously, vanished into nothingness, while the complete inner estrangement from God in which I had lived until then, together with other youthful sins, now fell heavily on my heart and conscience. In addition, God did not fail to lead me into the school of temptation in good time and to teach me to deeply recognize the complete corruption of my inner being. However, God's mercy did not leave me and the new life in Christ increasingly took hold of me. — The first long university vacation, which I spent at my uncle's house in Wörlitz after about 4 months in Leipzig, was very blessed for me. The latter himself was a rationalist, just like my father, but he had a very hospitable house and my friend Graul, also a devout candidate of theology, and the second preacher in Wörlitz, also still very young and a firm believer, were very much at home in my uncle's house. So I lived in Wörlitz in a very intimate circle, which suited my soul's needs and my heart at the time. May God's grace be praised and glorified for these beautiful and happy days, which he allowed me to experience as a young child in Christ. I may well say that at the end of the first six months after I entered the university, I had become a new person, a believing Christian, even if my Christian knowledge was still limited to the lowest rudiments. At that time, more than 50 years ago, not much more was known about biblical truth than the one thing that one is only saved by grace through Christ.

I don't want to tire my dear readers with stories about the rest of my student days. All this time passed very quietly

and simply with my books. I heard very few lectures from professors, in Leipzig only one, biblical theology from the [famous grammarian Professor Winer](#), where I at least learned a linguistically accurate and reasonably faithful translation of the New Testament. Otherwise, rationalism still prevailed almost exclusively at all German universities at that time. Strangely enough, God's grace guided me again in the second half of my stay in Leipzig with regard to my social life. My friend Graul was gone, I no longer wanted secular contact, but whether there were other believing Christians in Leipzig and where they could be found was completely unknown to me, as was Graul himself earlier. Then, by chance, as they say, but this time certainly by divine providence, I found a person in a public garden in Leipzig whom I had once seen briefly with Graul. So I approached him and who did I find in him? A Jew, but one who was on the way to Christ. Like me, he had no friend or acquaintance in the whole of Leipzig and so we became very close. My new friend [Caspari](#) was soon baptized and then moved on from his studies of oriental languages to theology (he later became a professor at the University of Christiana in Norway), and so we both lived and worked in the same mind and spirit. A little later we were joined by a third orthodox friend, a candidate of theology, the later very well-known Pastor Schneider in Leipzig. So there were three of us and we forgot all about Leipzig, confining ourselves to our daily interactions. I always had the advantage of being by far the youngest in our small circle and was always able to learn a lot from my older and at the same time very talented and knowledgeable friends.

After 1½ years, I left Leipzig University at my father's request and then studied

for another year in Bonn and a year at the [Nassau Theological Seminary in Herborn](#). In these places, too, God gave me two like-minded friends with whom I was able to continue my hermit life in Leipzig. There was little to be gained from teachers anywhere, even there, in Bonn at most something from the very United-minded [[Prussian Union](#)] Professor Nitzsch, with whom I listened to dogmatics, found some good things in it, but also absorbed many very wrong concepts, which I later had to purge with pain. In the main, believing students at that time were only directed to private study, for which, of course, the right books were often still lacking. The church teachers of the old days and Luther in particular remained completely alien and distant to me at university.

I spent my two candidate years mostly in my father's house. My father, not to leave it unmentioned, was indifferent to my new life of faith, he was not an enemy of faith in and of itself, but it was completely incomprehensible to him, but he loved and appreciated the honest, heartfelt conviction he found in me. But how I must praise the wonderful grace of God so highly, which made me worthy to become a guide to faith and Christian knowledge for all my brothers and sisters! This did not happen to all of them immediately after my return from university, but gradually over the course of my later life. — On the other hand, I must mention another event here, which occurred immediately after the end of my student years and which I must not conceal if I am to recount all the remarkable divine blessings of which God has honored me in my! What will my dear readers say when they hear that I found a bride at such an early age, barely 21 years old, even though I had always lived so quietly and withdrawn from all major contact with people until then? It happened like this. My bride and future wife was an old childhood acquaintance, our families were close friends

and we had therefore known each other as children. When I went to the seminary in Herborn, I stayed there with her sister, who was married by then, and that's where we met again after a long separation. I did not remain silent to her about the Christian knowledge I had gained in the meantime, and she willingly accepted my word. As she soon began to change her former worldly way of life, people could not help gossiping that she was doing it for my sake and that there was something else behind it. So I had to choose one of two things to put a stop to this gossip, either to break off all contact with her or to become openly and honestly engaged to her. I did the latter. But, my dear readers will ask, what was so strange about this? Well, of course, not my engagement as such, but it was God's strange guidance by grace, which I only recognized more and more many years later, that despite my youth and great inexperience, God had nevertheless chosen and provided me with a life companion without all my own knowledge, who, although also a weak, frail human child like all the others, nevertheless had precisely those feminine qualities that suited my later life and without which the latter would have been poor and miserable, indeed in part quite impossible. Yes, it must have been one of the most remarkable divine experiences of life and grace that I have to praise. In addition, I soon left the Nassau State Church, which would have made it humanly impossible for me to enter holy matrimony if I had not already been in it. So God made everything well with me in this respect too.

When I look back on my student and candidate years, I would probably call them my spiritual childhood years. At that time, I had to work hard to penetrate faith through God's grace. At that time in Germany, the beginnings of biblical knowledge were only just breaking through the night of rationalism like small rays of light, nothing at all was heard or suspected of the church and

pure doctrine, even church edification and believing preachers were still lacking, at most something of believing preaching could be heard here or there, but then usually still so imperfectly that little encouragement in faith and knowledge could be drawn from it. Thus one was completely limited to oneself, to one's own search and research in the Holy Scriptures, or in books of edification, such as those still so unclear, immature times brought into one's hands. Despite all the knowledge that one could only be saved by grace through Christ, the greatest pity was undoubtedly that one had not really clearly recognized the actual doctrine of justification, nor the distinction between law and gospel (the biblical "to be justified before God" was to me quite synonymous with "to become pious"), and one understood nothing at all about the meaning of the means of grace, the Word of God and the sacraments. Thus, the bridge and the way to come to Christ, whom one had recognized as the only Savior and Redeemer, was actually still missing; there was no firm and sure handle to grasp and appropriate this Savior and his grace. I experienced this in myself through much pain and struggle. My personal characteristics were far removed from pietistic and Methodist feelings: Therefore, it was impossible for me to soar up to a dreamed-of heaven in this way, but I rather walked on the path of quiet and sober, serious thinking and reflection. I often felt extremely poor and empty inside and without a firm foothold. It may give the dear readers a picture of my state of faith at that time if I tell them a little more about it from my diary, which I kept in those older times. It says: "At that time I certainly had the sincere will to be a Christian, I also had a deep inner longing for salvation in Christ and a vivid sense of my sinfulness, but I still knew nothing of the certainty of the

forgiveness of my sins and would undoubtedly have been greatly embarrassed if anyone had asked me about it. So I still lacked the strength to live a truly Christian life. However, I kept myself completely away from worldly company, I had eager Christian conversations with my few friends, I bought Hofacker's sermons, which were already available at the time, and read one of them every day, I was probably sometimes moved to tears. I was generous towards the poor and even as a student I sometimes gave away everything down to the last penny, and I was also serious about crucifying my flesh, so that I once slept on the bare floor of my parlor for several weeks for this purpose. Nevertheless, Christ remained mostly distant from me; my faith was entirely dependent on passing inner moods and feelings. I had to re-examine the reasons for my Christian conviction, as I thought I had found them, every day, otherwise the inner doubts that kept resurfacing would overwhelm me. And if I had overcome them today, they would be there again tomorrow and I would have to fight them all over again. That tormented me greatly. My soul still lacked any objective support in God's Word; my whole life of faith moved in my own wavering inner life. At the same time, inner temptations often overwhelmed me to such an extent that all my struggling and praying against them did not help; indeed, they often became even more agitated and lively precisely because of them, so that I sometimes thought I would rather refrain from prayer altogether. Again I realized the imperfection of my whole state of faith and thought I had to help myself by praying against it. So one day I decided not to get up from my knees until the Lord had given me the faith to overcome the world, as he promised in his word. So I really did pray halfway through the night, starting again and again with renewed fervor, and I felt I had to force it.

At last I was so excited that I thought I had really overcome it. But it was a completely fruitless storming of the heavens and everything remained the same with me. I still lacked the right hold of faith in the Word of God." — The year I spent in Bonn was, on the whole, not conducive to my life of faith. I continued in the same religious way as in Leipzig, but in Bonn I had more external distractions and also had the opportunity here and there to enjoy external pleasures, especially through short trips in the beautiful Rhine region. Faith and Christianity were often pushed back into the innermost, most hidden corners of my heart and only glowed like a spark under the ashes. I tried to build myself up every day, but it had little power, I felt cold inside and fell into a sad state of mind. I left Bonn with bitter pain and the firm resolution that things would have to be different for me in the future. — My stay at the seminary in Herborn really did bring me some improvement, especially because I had to start preparing sermons and preaching them more often. This certainly gave me a salutary inner stimulation, but in the main I did not find a better foundation for my faith in Herborn either, but remained completely stuck in my old inner, purely subjective moods and feelings. At that time, nothing but dry rationalism prevailed at the Herborn theological seminary, as in the church there, and a heart eager for salvation, such as I brought with me there, could not find the slightest encouragement anywhere. — My two years as a candidate, which I spent mostly at home, were the most unhappy time for me in religious terms that I remember from my entire life. Instead of becoming more certain of my salvation in Christ and learning to take firmer steps on the path of life, I almost completely lost all inner stability, all comfort and peace of my soul and fell into complete inner turmoil. I recognized and felt the bonds in which I was

trapped, but I was unable to break them; I tormented myself with unspeakable inner self-torture, but the gulf still remained between Christ, his grace and me. So I had no strength to overcome sin; I remained a poor, miserable servant and prisoner of it. The unfavorable external circumstances in which I lived were often to blame for this. I lacked any firm external vocation. First my theological examination, then my employment in the ministry, were very protracted and kept me in suspense for years and days; in addition, my bride lived very close by, so that I had the opportunity to see her often, and I had to experience the withdrawal of this relationship very deeply and vividly. Thus I was driven to and fro like a reed by the wind and often came to the point where I hardly dared to consider myself a believing Christian. I often suffered unspeakably under these circumstances and was sometimes greatly comforted by the saying in Matthew 11: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden" and so on. But alas, I did not know the way to find rest for my soul with Christ, and so everything remained only temporary, fleeting touches. It was a heavy burden that fell from my heart when I finally received the news of my appointment in Runkel (towards the end of 1842). I fled from home as if from a shameful captivity, Runkel seemed to me like a promised land in which the Lord would dwell for me. My own inner life had become an unbearable burden to me, and I was filled with a burning desire to be delivered from it and to finally belong to the Lord. With this state of mind and in this mood, I took up the holy preaching ministry.

2.

My First Years in Office. ↑

An almost indescribable spiritual darkness prevailed in my first congregation in Runkel with its three parishes (including Steeden), as it did in the whole of Nassau at that time. In fact, every trace of Christian knowledge had been extinguished in the parish, as it had only had crude rationalists as preachers and teachers for decades. Every memory of old catechisms and hymns, even of the Ten Commandments and the Apostles' Creed had completely disappeared. Even at baptisms, the latter was no longer used. The Nassau State Catechism, which had been in use for more than an age, was a completely rationalistic booklet in which the question: Who was Jesus Christ? was answered quite nakedly: "He was a man like us, who was in the most intimate union with God"; the Holy Spirit is taught to be "God himself, insofar as he works for our betterment and sanctification", and the means of this divine work for our sanctification are then cited: Teaching, good examples, circumstances and destinies, etc. But even such a booklet was not rationalistic enough for one of my predecessors, it seems, because he taught his confirmands according to a self-made catechism, the first question and answer of which begins with the four elements, air, earth, water and fire, and the whole religious doctrine is then built up on this natural basis. This man had stood in Runkel for many years; after him as my last predecessor had come an older man who read fine sermons in a barely audible voice (I had then been placed at his side as assistant preacher on the 4th Advent of 1842). No wonder that church attendance had almost completely ceased and the congregation had become so weaned off it that even at one of my first sermons there were only five men

in the church. As was once the case with myself, it was now also the beginning and foundation of a completely new Christian and church life in the Runkel congregation.

But that didn't bother me much at the time. At that time I was still completely lacking any concept of the church, church discipline and order, the means of grace, and so on. Just as I had occasionally raved about it as a student, it was now a favorite thought of mine to see myself as a missionary among pagans, a thought that was all the more obvious to me, since I could not have expected it any other way than to come to a completely ignorant and unconverted congregation, and so it was quite right for me to go out as among pagans and like a missionary to first look for and gather a congregation. I explained this to everyone I went to in the parish of Runkel, especially when church attendance was so poor that I began to go from house to house and told everyone I met that since they wouldn't come to me, I had to come to them. — My preaching style and other practices at that time were still far from being Lutheran in any way. I still had far too little Christian knowledge for that. All my actions and activities were probably rather pietistic, even if not in a conscious and pronounced way — I had never yet come into personal contact with actual pietism — I acted in simplicity, as best I knew and understood it, and I was guided in everything by a certain Christian sense and tact, as far as it had formed in me at that time. I was not yet able to preach the Law and the Gospel with a clear distinction; my guide, according to which I preached and taught, was often my own experience of Christianity, and in accordance with this personal experience of repentance and conversion I tried to show everyone how a person must come to the knowledge of sin, then showed by

examples, St. David, St. Peter and others, how the feelings of repentance manifest themselves in a person, how one must then turn to the Lord, ask for forgiveness of sins, etc. That one can only be saved through Christ and by grace, that Christ alone through his suffering and death has acquired for us the forgiveness of sins and salvation, but that it is now also necessary to seek this salvation with earnestness, that the way to hell is wide, but the way to heaven is narrow, and therefore only a few find it, these were almost exclusively the truths that I taught. To awaken the spiritually dead hearts from the sleep of sin and to bring them to a salutary horror of sin and the danger of their souls, that seemed to me to be the first great main thing. My motto was especially the text: "Work that ye may be saved with fear and trembling", and: "Strive that ye may enter into the narrow gate", and the conclusion I drew from this, which I drove into the hearts and consciences of all my listeners publicly and especially, in the pulpit as well as in daily private conversations and during home visits, was this: only those who struggle and work for it can be saved; you have not done this so far, therefore you are all lost if things do not change with you. I tried very diligently to distract people from all trust in their own virtue and merely external works; I even presented the merely external divine service, baptism and communion as vain and void in this sense, admittedly not in order to turn people into sectarians and enthusiasts and to mislead them into the right use of the means of grace, but only to first of all direct their eyes away from everything merely external to their inner being, to their previous earthly mind and state of heart. Thus many in the congregation were awakened from their sleep of sin by God's grace, but doubly praise be to God's grace that it subsequently, when time and need brought it about, led both myself and the souls in the congregation who were eager for salvation to the knowledge of the

true consolation and foundation of faith in God's Word and the holy sacraments.

After a short time, already in the first weeks of my stay in Runkel, the first traces of an incipient powerful movement appeared throughout the parish. In the beginning, it was not so much my sermons that brought about this movement — as I said, they were only attended by a few at the beginning and were not well understood — but the main impression was made by my daily house visits. This had never been heard or seen before: A priest or pastor who cared for his congregation, who explained to everyone that he was coming to look after his sheep as a shepherd, or as a pastor to ask how their souls were doing, when until then they had lived a completely safe and carefree life and had never worried about happiness, and never thought about death and eternity, so now it struck like a bolt of lightning in hearts everywhere that such things were not just talked about from the pulpit, just habitually or even for the sake of the dear bread and the salary, but that the concern for salvation was held up to everyone face to face. Next to the house visits, my funeral orations made a great impression. I spoke little about the persons of the deceased, and God saved me in particular from the grave sin of calling people blessed whose state of grace I knew nothing about. No, in my funeral sermons I approached the congregation quite openly and honestly from the beginning and said that I did not know the deceased and therefore could not know what the state of his soul was, only this was infallibly certain from God's Word, that the soul of the deceased was now standing before God's judgment and had received what it had done in life, be it good or evil, heaven or hell. This simple truth, which no one could deny and which no one could hold against me personally, went like a sword through the hearts and separated soul and spirit, even marrow and bone, and became a real judge of the thoughts and senses of the heart.

I may well say that the fear of God fell upon the whole church. After all, those were very different times than now, not just in Runkel, but everywhere. After such a long period of rationalism, when everything lay in the sleep of death, God had drawn near to his people with a new visitation of grace. In Saxony and Hanover and other places, for example, associations of believing preachers gathered and where the Gospel was preached, there was soon a new spiritual life, in some cases great spiritual movements (just think of Harms in Hermannsburg in Hanover, Loehe in Bavaria, etc.). Thus the 4th and 5th decades of this century were everywhere the time of a new awakening and fresh blossoming of Christian life, whereas now there are more times of calm and stagnation (in many places, unfortunately, times of decline). The events of that time in the parish of Runkel also bear witness to this: wherever it was proclaimed, the Word of God soon awakened life and movement.

My diary from that time, from which I faithfully take the following, tells of the heavy heart with which I began my house calls in the very first days after taking up my post. Completely inexperienced and unpracticed in such matters, and, moreover, being quiet, taciturn and introverted by nature, I found it extremely difficult to approach people and seek an opportunity to talk to them. I worked out questions and answers in writing for this purpose, as if for a catechesis. But the conviction of the absolute necessity that I had to go from house to house in search of lost souls if I wanted to achieve anything drove me inexorably forward and forced me to overcome my natural stupidity. I began the matter with fervent prayer, especially humbling myself before the Lord in the feeling of my weakness, and commanding everything to Him. And so I was soon able to

experience the Lord's gracious help. Above all, my visits to the church were made extraordinarily easy for me by the most accommodating love that I found everywhere; I don't remember a single repulsive encounter, everywhere I was welcomed as if with open arms and with the most visible joy and warmth, people didn't even know what to do for me out of love and joy at my coming. God visibly opened my heart and paved the way for me. Right at the beginning, I also had some other experiences that cheered me up and strengthened me. I had thought I would only meet completely ignorant and spiritually dead people everywhere, but it wasn't quite like that. Some time ago, a mystically enthusiastic craftsman had come to one of the nearest villages in the parish of Runkel, where he had found a longer residence and had acquired a small following, which was not difficult for him given the complete lack of any other and better spiritual nourishment in the parish. Such people always know how to dress themselves up in pious appearances and adorn themselves with biblical phrases. I myself was deceived by the latter for quite some time until I saw through the deception. For me, however, it was a strange and gracious providence of God that on my first visit to Steeden I immediately met one of these so-called "saints", as they were called everywhere, others came along and so I unexpectedly found myself in a circle of people who spoke with great eloquence about spiritual things and in whom, in my own great ignorance, I thought I saw miracles of highly enlightened Christians. Of course, it was only a few months before God revealed the vices of fornication into which the devil had already plunged one of their leaders and, in great mercy, saved me and my work in the church from all the harmful influence they could have brought us. But at first I was very encouraged to find people in the church with whom I could

have spiritual conversations, and this helped me a great deal to overcome the initial stupidity that stood in my way. I was now all the more confident in reaching out to others. But I was particularly encouraged by another wonderful experience that I also had on one of my first visits to Steeden. Still undecided as to which house I should go to, I saw a young woman standing at her door and approached her; she grabbed me with both hands, pulled me into her room and told me how she had recently been hit hard by the death of her three children and how she had begged God on her knees in the attic of her house for light and comfort, which she had not been able to find from anyone so far. It was with great joy that I opened my mouth and brought her the comfort of the Gospel, which she eagerly received. Later, her husband was also converted as a result of a serious illness and both of them became the forerunners who were soon followed by many others. Encouraged by such experiences, I eagerly continued my house visits in the community, and by the end of the first quarter of the year that I spent in Runkel, the question of God's Word was becoming more and more common. My joy was overwhelmingly great. Especially my visits to two of the parish villages were full of joy; everywhere in the houses where I spoke, a crowd soon gathered around me and I had to stay until late in the evening; accompanied by a large crowd, to whom I had to speak on the way, I then usually went home, so that I had to stop myself in the end so as not to cause a public stir. It was most intense during the Holy Passion period, when I held the Passion Week services not only in Runkel, but also every week in the chapels of the individual villages, so that I had to preach five times a week. But this was the best way to awaken and strengthen church attendance, and so from then on it increased more and more, so that by Easter the Runkel church was packed. It was also very helpful for

church attendance that my old superior soon withdrew completely from all official duties and left the work to me alone, which I was glad to do.

With the onset of summer, my house visits came to a halt, partly due to the country people's field work and partly due to my marriage. But with renewed zeal I resumed my visits to the villages in the autumn and the second winter I spent in the village was an unforgettable time of grace. In my diary I wrote: "What a rich blessing God has bestowed on my ministry! How I must bow down in the dust when I look at all the riches of grace that the Lord has given me in the church! It is not as if I were something of myself; on the contrary, even the best that one does is only a blessing as soon as it is not done in complete humility and with sole trust in the Lord's mercy and help. I have experienced this a thousand times. Therefore, what I am now writing here about the miracles of the Lord should only be done for His glory and I do it in the deepest heartfelt humility, so that God's blessing is not taken away from my ministry and my church through my self-exaltation. O Lord, forgive all pride and vanity and finally remove the evil seed from my heart!" — In addition to my house visits in the second winter of my ministry, another thing that particularly contributed to the awakening and promotion of spiritual life was the distribution of books, which I started and pursued with great zeal. I founded reading associations in Runkel as well as in the villages, to which everyone had to contribute, and traveled to Frankfurt myself to select and procure edifying books from the existing Evangelical association there. In addition, Bibles and Christian writings, namely Hofacker's sermons and the books of the North German Association, especially "The Narrow and Wide Gate" and the "Passion Book" of this association,

were distributed in such quantities that a special colporteur had to be employed for some time. Then, in the fall, I began to preach regular weekly sermons in all the chapels of the various villages, preaching first on the Ten Commandments and then on the Apostles' Creed. The choice of precisely these subjects for my sermons was a particularly blessed one and the latter made a deep impression everywhere. In addition, however, there were the Bible lessons that I had to hold, which came about as if of their own accord. I have already told you how crowds of listeners flocked to my house visits and so I had no choice but to take Bible texts and explain them to those gathered. But soon there were so many listeners that there was no room for them in the houses, they were forced to go into the schoolroom and so it gradually became the custom to hold a Bible lesson in the school in the evening after the end of the actual weekly service. In Runkel, I held these Bible lessons on Sunday evenings, but whole evening groups of 12-14 people often met in my house during the week. In addition, when I was at home, my living room was rarely free of people seeking instruction from God's Word throughout the day. So the newly awakened spiritual movement in the congregation made ever greater waves, especially in Steeden, after I had completely broken off all contact with the disreputable fanatical saints there and thereby purged myself of all suspicion of unity with them. Church attendance increased to such an extent that all the rooms, stairways and aisles of the church were filled with people. The parish villages, in particular, were almost migrating to the church on Sundays. The weekly services and Bible studies that I held were just as crowded. It soon had to be decided to enlarge the Runkel parish church and rebuild its interior. To this end, I preached every Sunday for almost

half a year in the Runkel castle courtyard from the high castle steps in front of a large crowd. And it was not only outwardly and habitually that people flocked to the sermon, but hearts were also deeply moved and awakened inwardly, as I was often allowed to experience. Everywhere, not just in the houses, but on the paths and streets, I was approached by those who confessed their sins and asked about the way of salvation, even people who had fallen into a deep depression were seized by the movement and you saw them in church on Sundays. Stolen items that had long been almost forgotten were returned to their owners without hesitation. In Steeden in particular, people stopped going to the pub altogether and it happened that I held Bible study in the pub room. Yes, the people had been languishing and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd, so the first drops of the divine rain of grace fell as if on a thirsty earth. How many sweet traits of individual conversions of the living and the dying I could recount if space permitted. But let me remember at least a few whose joyful victory over death and hell on their deathbeds is recorded in my diary. A young woman dying of a hernia passed away in half a week under the greatest pain. In all her suffering she clung strongly and firmly to the Lord and bore witness to the faith that was in her; she often spoke of the future glory that awaited her and of which she seemed to have a deep impression, she often repeated the opening words of the hymn: "I have already seen from afar, Lord, your throne ..., that was so glorious what I saw in the spirit", a touching contrast of the joy of the spirit against the pain of the body. She finally submitted to an operation on her evil against her own will, only out of obedience to her husband's will. — A schoolteacher's wife also died in the first period of the newly awakened life of faith; it was a soft, sensitive soul, full of anxious concern for her only child.

I therefore feared for her whether she would come to the right overcoming on her deathbed. But lo and behold, in the proximity of death all her worries were taken away and her soul was completely freed from everything that had previously bound her to earthly life, and she died with the joyful confession: "Christ is my life, dying is my gain". A few days before her death she said that she had dreamed that angels were standing around her bed to take her away, that a cloud had come between her and them, but that the hand of the Lord had snatched her away. — The most wonderful manifestation of divine grace, however, was the death of another young woman who had been ill for a long time. She was the wife of one of the aforementioned false saints, but she was a childlike, simple soul who had been searching for peace for a long time, but had not been able to find it with those saints until I came to her house and showed her the right reason for faith and comfort. Then, on her deathbed, the Lord gave her such a high degree of joy overcoming the world and death that she lay there as if with a transfigured face and her mouth often overflowed with loud words of praise and glory to the Lord and of admonitions against her husband (whose wrong ways she now clearly saw through) and others. Her joy of faith expressed itself so loudly and overwhelmingly that many from near and far gathered at her deathbed to see and hear her. — It may well be that those mentioned here, with the lack of deeper knowledge that still existed at that time, only had an emotional experience and grasp of divine grace, but as beginners in the faith the Lord protected them from more serious trials and carried them home in his arms of grace like young children to the eternal abodes.

As far as the newly awakened Christian life in my congregation was concerned, it was of course quite naturally different from that of those who are brought up from childhood in Christian knowledge and piety and who thus gradually grow into the Christian life.

On the contrary, all without exception in my congregation had lived in completely blind ignorance until then and were only called to repentance in adulthood by the memory of death and eternity. So the latter came more at a certain time, as with the prodigal son, and initially more emotionally. In this respect, the Christian life of the new converts was initially more pietistic, as was my own, but by God's grace it remained without the harmful excesses of actual pietism. It was based on a lively realization of sin, remorse and horror over it and a serious desire for the kingdom of God and the salvation of souls. This mood of repentance was the predominant one for a long time in the early days; people especially loved sermons and books that worked towards this and awakened the feeling of sin as much as possible; hymns of repentance were the most popular for a long time. But on the whole, a sound mind and Christian simplicity prevailed; mere intellectual conversion and, on the other hand, the one-sided expression of enthusiastic feelings remained uniformly absent. But God's grace, as I mentioned above, gave us the necessary foundation and support of faith from God's Word at the right time. My diary reports that only one man, a farmer with a violent disposition, and therefore in his earlier unconverted life preferably rough and wild, fell into false, enthusiastic feelings and perished in them. He had struggled for a long time in self-help against sin and after a long struggle and fight he received in prayer such a high degree of inner consolation of divine grace and joyfulness of spirit that his eyes shone in truth and his mouth overflowed. This joy lasted for weeks, so that he often seemed to be floating in heaven and his mouth became so eloquent that he seemed to want to sweep the whole world into his joyful frenzy. The sincerity of his heart could not be doubted; his whole life proved that he had become a new man. Nevertheless, the

evil consequences of his enthusiastic feelings did not fail to appear; he insisted on the same joyfulness in others as he had, and he increasingly made this the measure of conversion, and where it was lacking he called it unbelief. But it was undoubtedly a sign of his senses that this overflowing emotional nature repelled most people and they rejected it decisively. As a result, the aforementioned man became more and more lonely, and traces of spiritual arrogance became more and more evident, which completely spoiled his relationship with everyone, and finally his emotional nature did not stand the test and he fell back into the world. So God protected me and the congregation from such aberrations. The latter mostly belonged to a naturally simple and strong peasant class, and so their natural nature had absolutely no susceptibility to the exaggerated emotionalism that Pietism and Methodism love. Even individual contacts with the Moravian Brethren therefore had no influence on us, but the Word of God alone, as far as we understood it at that time, always remained the center around which everything revolved and gathered. So gradually, especially in Steeden, a lovely circle of faithful Christians formed (they have now mostly all gone home), in which one could feel at ease from the heart. The natural simplicity of most of them protected them from dishonesty and mere hypocrisy, the depth and seriousness of repentance and conversion protected them from the mere outward appearance of Christianity, while the simplicity of rural life helped to push all the differences of refined sociability and even of class, wealth and age completely into the background. In truth, the crowd of believers was one heart and one soul, and they were united daily, not only on Sundays, but also more often in the evenings during the week, where they edified each other by reading sermons. The monthly missionary meetings, which were always held in Steeden, the easiest and best place for

everyone to gather, were particularly blessed days. Many came to these mission meetings from all over the surrounding area, where the Word of God and the call of the local movements had reached from Runkel, and so these mission meetings often became formal little mission festivals. These meetings in Steeden have become a rich source of blessing for many people from far away. But the Sunday services in Runkel also attracted listeners from all over the surrounding area.

I cannot conclude this section of my story without mentioning something else about how I myself and my own heart stood in the great time of grace that I was able to experience in the very first years of my ministry. Above all, I would like to say and praise how faithfully and graciously my God and Savior sought to protect me from sinful self-aggrandizement and to always keep me always poor, small and lowly. I was helped by the great burden of my ministry and my work, as well as the whole task that lay upon me and often weighed me down almost to the ground. The preparation of my sermons cost me unspeakable effort, especially in the early years. I often sat at the study table for a whole day and could not find a beginning, and now the time came when I was so overrun by people eager for salvation that I completely lacked all time for preparation, especially for the weekly sermons and Bible lessons. Of necessity, I had to gradually get used to speaking freely, which at first was extremely difficult for my nature. I often dragged myself to the pulpit like a sheep to the slaughter. But I had to learn, and was to learn, that it was not due to human running and walking. When I had finished my first free sermon in Runkel with unspeakable trembling and trepidation — I had not gone to the pulpit at all, but had stood downstairs in the church in order to be able to run away sooner if I could no longer do so — but I was asked for it

in writing afterwards, because they thought they had never heard me preach like that before. I had indeed stammered more than I preached, but God had moved hearts through his Spirit. This remained an unforgettable healing teaching and experience for me. — But God also gave me a painful stake in the flesh in the second year of my ministry, when the spiritual movement in my church came to its full outbreak, "so that I would not exalt myself," as St. Paul says. Whereas at the beginning, when I was able to see the first fruits of my work, I often felt a great inner upliftment and joy, and I was sometimes able to preach with great enthusiasm, the second winter that I was in ministry was a completely different story: states of mind such as I had experienced earlier returned, and God led me into a dark and difficult time of complete spiritual emptiness and poverty, and sometimes even severe temptation. How I often stood there sighing deeply in the midst of the crowd of happy people who surrounded me every day and rejoiced in the first light of the heavenly sun of grace that illuminated them! I was often in a very miserable inner mood, a prey to inner temptations that assailed me without ceasing, even the grossest doubts about the truth of the Word of God, but not as if my Christian conviction had wavered at all, but I felt clearly that it was only the fiery darts of the devil that tormented me like spawns from hell. Only God's grace kept me from perishing completely. There were times when I stood in my study with my head against the wall, crying out for mercy and help when I had to preach, and yet nothing would come out of my empty heart. But the aforementioned temptations of unbelief in particular often brought me the most difficult struggles. When I went out into the villages, I would sometimes stand there in despair, wondering whether the inner evil voice would not yet be silent; I would rather have hidden myself in the last corner than

go out in front of the congregation and teach what I did not have. Once this feeling overwhelmed me to such an extent that after a Bible study I could not refrain from pouring out my martyred heart, so that the listeners looked at me in amazement and dismay. Thank God they could not yet understand what I was saying and were thus protected from offense. And yet God wanted to humble me even more deeply and break me completely. In the third year of my ministry, he visited me with a very peculiar physical ailment in my throat. It left me otherwise in perfect physical strength and health; in ordinary life I did not feel it in the slightest when eating or speaking, only when I came to the pulpit and tried to speak louder did my voice go out and I could only produce sounds with constant stuttering. As it turned out later, this ailment was due to a nervous paralysis of the organs of speech caused by overstimulation. So God put a chain on the very part of my body that I needed most every day, my tongue. All my strength and expression in preaching was now gone; I had to take a full three months' vacation in the spring of 1845 to give my voice time to recover, but in vain, only after years did the ailment gradually heal, but I never regained my former strong and good voice, I kept a stiff, forced pulpit tone forever, even in later life, when I had to speak and preach so much in public all over Germany on my missionary journeys, and where, in human opinion, I could have achieved so much more with greater eloquence. But this physical suffering never brought me temptation and discouragement; I recognized and felt too deeply the good and gracious purpose for which God had ordained it for me, namely to save my soul and to keep me from being completely overcome by temptations to pride and vain glory. So I must confess once again, with praise and thanksgiving,

that God did everything well, that He always made me realize that everything He accomplished through me was not my work, but His. Therefore, from this time of my first great ministerial experiences, in view of my still so little Christian knowledge as well as my other great weakness, the truth is indelibly imprinted in my heart and memory: "Out of the mouth of babes God has prepared praise" and: "God has chosen what is weak before the world, and that which is nothing, that He may bring to nothing what is something, so that no flesh may boast before Him".

3.

How I Became a Lutheran. [↑](#)

It didn't happen all at once, but it took a long hard road. After all, at the time I am writing about, especially in the whole of western Germany, there was still no knowledge of Lutheranism or Lutheran doctrine anywhere. At that time, the truth had to be sought everywhere with much sighing, praying and struggling and one had to fight one's way through the aberrations of Pietism and other false directions. Accordingly, it was not the path of mere science or scholarly study that led me to Lutheran knowledge, but I first got to know Lutheranism through practical experience. God brought me to this in the school of severe trials of which I have already spoken. I therefore still lacked a complete theological knowledge of pure Lutheran doctrine to a great extent at first, and it took me a number of years to acquire it after I had already separated from the United Church and converted to the Lutheran Church. At first I only grasped the basic principles of the Lutheran

doctrine of the Word of God and the holy sacraments as the means of grace which alone can give the believing soul the certainty of the forgiveness of its sins and the only firm foundation and support of its faith.

The trials and inner struggles described above were of great benefit and blessing to me in two ways. They taught me what the Holy Scriptures say: "In temptation we learn to listen to the Word" (Isaiah 28:19 [LED]). But there is certainly no other way to become a true and genuine Lutheran than in this school. After all, the first foundation and cornerstone of all Lutheranism is that God only deals with us and gives us all grace only through His Word, written in Holy Scripture, and that therefore faith must adhere only to this firm prophetic and apostolic Word and base itself on it in adversity and death. My whole life since I entered the sacred ministry has been driven towards this goal. This was due to the circumstances, for consider how my inner Christian life at that time still lacked a firm hold on the Word of God and was highly dependent on feelings and changing inner moods, which had been greatly increased by my life without a call during the candidate years. Now, of course, a huge change occurred in my whole life as soon as I took office. I became very busy from morning till night; I have already told you how difficult it was for me at first to prepare my sermons, and yet I soon began to preach not only on Sundays, but also regularly during the week, for the sake of the needs of the congregation, and moreover, in my house calls, which I made almost daily, I had only the intention of preaching Christ to the people, and it was my standing custom, after a few introductory words, to turn the conversation immediately to spiritual things. In addition, the first spiritual movement and revival soon arose in the congregation and I was visited daily in

my own home by those who sought instruction from God's Word. Despite the spiritual upliftment and joy that all this initially brought me, I could not help but suffer a setback; quite apart from the external burden of work that rested on me, I often found myself in the most terrible inner turmoil. I was often not at all in the inner mood for spiritual work; my whole state of faith, which was even more emotionally wavering at the time, was not up to the latter to the extent that God had given it to me. And in times of inner spiritual dryness and emptiness, such as so often prevailed in my second year of ministry, the incessant spiritual work often weighed on my heart like a terrible pressure, I often felt completely incapable of it. My diary tells me that life and my whole profession often became a burden to me. For a long time the song "O how blessed you are, you pious ones who have come to God through death" was my favorite hymn and the daily refreshment of my soul, in which my prevailing mood was expressed. My diary speaks of the "torment of hell" that I often endured. When I got up in the morning, my consolation was often that I would go to bed again in the evening and then have rest. Yes, that's how hardship drove me to Lutheranism, the waters that went down to my soul taught me to seek the Lord where He alone can be found, in His Word! I needed Him daily, hourly, I could not be without Him, I could not accomplish my daily spiritual work without Him, and where was I to find Him, to grasp Him and hold on to Him? My own inner being was so often cold and empty; so I had no other refuge than God's Word and promise, to which I learned to cling more and more. I got to the point that sometimes, in hours of distress that I had to fight through, I laid the open Bible in front of me so that I could cling all the more firmly to the divine

promise through the sight of the eyes. Thus my whole inner life gradually took on a different direction, I learned to look more and more to the Word of God in all these inner struggles and to hold on to it as the only solid ground of all comfort and peace, I became more and more accustomed to no longer asking about the changing moods of my sinful evil heart, but to become sure and certain of the nearness and grace of my God and Savior in His Word and His promise alone. The Word of God became more and more the firm foundation on which my whole thinking and life rested, the only light that shone for me in the darkness. And so it has become more and more and has remained until today, in my old age: God's Word is the new heavenly world in which the Christian soul lives and weaves, it is the only certain thing here on earth, where I find and have the living God and Christ, the Shepherd and Bishop of my soul, to which I must flee daily from the darkness of the world and my own flesh, and with this sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith overcome all the fiery darts of the evil one. God be praised and exalted that he allowed me to learn this more and more during the difficult first years of my ministry in the school of great hardship and hard battles. Thus I was prepared and made inwardly receptive to grasp the Lutheran doctrine of the means of grace when it first came clearly before my soul.

But this preparation for a true Lutheran life of faith also happened in another, much more direct way, according to God's gracious providence. As my Christian life progressed, the question of the actual certainty of the forgiveness of my sins had to force itself upon me more and more, and I lacked this certainty as long as I was not clear about the Lutheran doctrine of the means of grace. The inner need of my soul drove me to the Word of God almost involuntarily, but I was still completely in the dark about the holy

sacraments at the beginning after I took up my ministry. I didn't really know what to think about it. Even theologically, the distinction between Lutheran and Reformed doctrine was still completely unclear and hidden from me. I remember from that time how I sometimes stood at the altar during the distribution of Holy Communion, holding bread and wine in my hands and thinking, who knows who is right, Luther or Calvin and Zwingli, whether you are holding and distributing bread and wine badly or Christ's body and blood? They are both such great learned men, I thought, Luther and Calvin, so how can you poor ignorant man presume to be the judge of which of them is right and which is wrong? With such uncertainty about the doctrine of Holy Communion, the whole celebration of it must naturally have been of no value to me; my heart and mind remained confined at most to the reformed, purely symbolic meaning of the Holy Sacrament; I could not grasp it as an actual means of grace. And Holy Baptism was completely incomprehensible to me, infant baptism often almost made me sick, because I saw in it the main cause of the whole ruin of the church, namely the sad mixture of world and church. If only adults and truly converted, believing people were baptized, this seemed to me to be the main means of keeping the many completely godless and unconverted people, the coarse worldlings, away from the Church. I had not the slightest idea of the actual purpose and benefit of the holy sacraments, and especially of the oral partaking of the true body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion.

Just at the time when the development of my inner spiritual life had led me to seek and search for the deeper, firmer hold of faith and especially for the certainty of the forgiveness of sins, a visit from my old

close friend, the mission director Graul from Leipzig, became decisive for me. The same man had become a Lutheran since I had not seen him and now also pointed me to the Lutheran doctrine. I told him of all the distress in my soul at the time, the lack of inner clarity, firmness and certainty of my entire state of grace, my inner dryness and emptiness that often weighed so heavily on me. How surprised I was when my friend Graul replied that I was in the right state of mind to become a Lutheran, that this was Lutheran Christianity, to cling and hold on to the Word and the promise of God alone in all poverty, darkness and temptation of the soul, and to have it sealed most firmly through the holy sacraments. For the first time in my life I now learned the meaning of the Lutheran doctrine of the means of grace, especially the holy sacraments, and it became clear to me quite easily and quickly that only here was the right sure ground on which to stand.

In this way of the inner need of the soul and the living experience of the healing power of the Lutheran doctrine, Lutheranism won the victory for me and my congregation. As dark and at first completely untouched as many questions remained for me at that time, I nevertheless grasped the first letters of the Lutheran doctrine with my whole soul, and with the consolation that I was comforted with, I was now able to comfort all those who desired it from me. And there were many of the latter in my congregation. It was God's wonderful guidance of grace that at the very same time that I myself was inwardly driven to seek a deeper and firmer hold on my faith and state of grace, it was also the case with many in the congregation who had allowed themselves to be led to repentance. While in the first times of revival, as already mentioned above, the mood of repentance prevailed in a quite natural way and the awakening of souls from their previous deep sleep of sin was in the foreground,

later the question of the forgiveness of sins and the certainty of the state of grace became more and more important to everyone. At first, there was no lack of a purely emotional grasp of divine grace, as I myself did not know it any other way at the time. This feeling was particularly evident in some women, and they thought they had the right faith in it. But the one man among the new converts, of whom I have already mentioned above that he had been given such a high degree of inner joy of the spirit that he now began to make it the standard of faith and conversion, was the most determined and strongest in pressing in this wrong direction. Even before I had a clear understanding of Lutheran doctrine, however, I was repelled by all the exaggerated emotionalism, and I recognized the error and deception of soul that lay therein so much that I eagerly opposed it and, as much as I was able and knew at the time, set the Word of God against it as the only ground of our faith. I got through everywhere, and the clear Lutheran doctrine of Word and Sacrament found all the more joyful and fuller acceptance in all hearts as I became more and more able to teach it. The doctrine of the holy sacraments in particular, as my diary reports, was the subject of lively discussion everywhere and many came to a clearer understanding of this doctrine as a result. Even those who had already been infected by this false sentiment and had fallen into a certain confusion, came to their senses and found peace in the sound teaching of the Word of God. My diary mentions one man in particular who received visible comfort and peace when I explained the doctrine of the means of grace to him; another thanked God with tears that he had come to the clarity and certainty of his salvation. "What would it have mattered," my diary exclaims, "if God had not given us the right doctrine of the means of grace at just the right time? How the consciences of many would have been confused and their salvation ultimately

jeopardized!" Particularly important and decisive for the victory of Lutheranism in the whole circle of believers surrounding me was a day in Steeden, on which there had been a missionary lesson, to which, as usual, many had come from near and far, even from outside my own congregation. Among the latter were also some somewhat older believers who had previously been in contact with the Herrnhut Brethren congregation, but without any conscious opposition to Lutheran Christianity. After the missionary hour had been held, spiritual matters were discussed with great zeal until the evening, this time exclusively on the Lutheran doctrine of the holy sacraments, and God helped to explain and expound this doctrine and its whole significance for the Christian life so clearly and overwhelmingly for all those present that many still spoke later of the great blessing of this day and praised the benefit they had gained from it for eternity. Thus, as may be said in praise and glory of God, the Lutheran doctrine became a strong and living possession of many hearts, a real power of faith and life in the whole circle of believers that surrounded me. Without a doubt, however, the fact that all of us, both I and my congregation, had outwardly belonged to the Reformed Church in our fathers, and that Lutheranism was therefore all the less something merely outwardly inherited, pushed us to an independent and decisive conviction of the inner truth of Lutheranism.

It may well be of interest to my dear readers to hear how my theological conviction of the truth of the Lutheran doctrine was formed in me, all the more so since I was entirely dependent on my own searching and research in this respect. The above-mentioned visit by my friend Graul gave me the impetus for the latter, but it was far too short and temporary for it to have any more effect on me than merely a stimulus and a pointer to the goal I had to seek. Afterwards I was completely

alone, I had no brother minister or theologically educated friend from whom I could have sought advice and further instruction. And what was almost the worst thing at that time was that there were still no Lutheran books in which I could have been instructed; the writings of Luther and the old Lutheran church teachers were still completely buried under rubble and ashes and forgotten (with the exception of a few individuals who owned them and knew their value), other more recent Lutheran books did not even exist at that time (only Rudelbach's [*Reformation, Lutheranism and Union*](#) appeared at that time, as the first fruit of Lutheran faith and sense), and there were also no Christian or theological journals and papers that bore witness to Lutheran doctrine and church. The emergence of the Missouri Synod in America, which took place in the 1840s, was not yet known anywhere in Germany. It was only a full ten years later that Walther's book *The Voice of Our Church [on Church and Ministry]*" etc. came into my hands as the first book from which I became acquainted with the teachings of the old Lutheran Church. What a poor time it was in this respect 40 to 45 years ago, compared with now, when the testimony to pure Lutheran doctrine, despite all hostility to it, is still set high on the lampstand as a light and its glow goes out far into the darkness! But the little that I had perhaps heard of Lutheran doctrine at university in the history of the church and dogma had passed me by without a trace and had been forgotten. So I was left entirely to my own searching and research, and it is God's wonderful grace that allowed me to come to clear and firm biblical knowledge through God's Word alone, without any help from human science and scholarship, and even without human teachers and counselors. —

My thoughts, as they developed naturally out of the course of my whole inner life, and as I wrote them down at the time, were connected with

the fact that it was impossible for me to arrive at clarity by means of human scholarship, and that I could not, from my own weak judgment, trust myself to be the judge of such great men as Luther and Calvin. But was I now to give up for ever trying to be sure who was right in his doctrine, Luther or Calvin? I had so often stood at the altar with doubts about this, especially during the distribution of Holy Communion, and had tormented myself with the question: should the words of institution mean "this is my body" or do they only mean "this signifies my body"? Who on earth wants to give me certainty about this? A certain timidity kept me from following Zwingli's gross unbelief; I was very much inclined to accept at least a spiritual partaking of the body and blood of Christ according to Calvinist doctrine, but I had to tell myself that I had no compelling biblical evidence for such a spiritual partaking, no undoubted certainty that I really should have received Christ's body and blood when I had partaken of Holy Communion; I saw all this as merely pointing me into the realm of possibilities, it could perhaps be so, but I lacked the joyful certainty, it is so, it must be so, the doubt and the wavering back and forth between "that is" and "that means" robbed me of all possibility of solid biblical proof. So the conviction forced itself upon me that clarity and certainty, first of all in the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, is only possible if we remain with the wording of the Lord's words of institution "This is my body" in childlike simple-minded faith. I realized that there is only one clear and unquestionable decision: either we and the whole Christian Church must forever remain in doubt and ignorance as to what Baptism and the Lord's Supper are, or we must hold fast to the simple wording of the words of institution, then, and only then, is everything clear and certain. But by God's grace I had so much

simple-minded Christianity that I could not trust the Lord Christ to leave us and His whole Church in doubt and uncertainty about the holy sacraments for all time and thereby deliberately cause centuries of controversy and discord among His own. My heart and conscience also had enough experience in struggle and temptation, so I had to tell myself that the holy sacraments would completely fail in their purpose of bringing us comfort and peace in temptation if they could not give us full certainty, or if a preacher had to refer a soul in difficult struggles and especially in mortal distress, where it requires Holy Communion, only to a completely uncertain, ambiguous and ambivalent interpretation of the words of institution. But who would take it out of his conscience to make the words of Christ uncertain to a soul in its greatest need and thereby deprive it of its comfort and support? I was particularly struck by the last thoughts mentioned here. If my soul was primarily concerned with finding the firm foundation of its salvation and faith, the certainty of the forgiveness of its sins, then it could not remain hidden from me that this clarity and certainty can only be found in faithful Lutheran adherence to the word and letter of Holy Scripture. This is how I experienced it in my early youth and how it has been confirmed to me to this day in old age: if the exploration of divine truth, faith and the peace of the soul becomes an object of inner distress and inner struggle, a matter of conscience that torments us, then there is no other way for the heart and conscience to find rest and peace than by firmly clinging to the Word and the letter that came out of God's mouth. Staying with this Word, but blindly leaving everything else to God in faith, is the safe haven of peace in all adversity and doubt. This applies not only to the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, but in general to all faith

and all doctrine that has ever been disputed in the church.

At that time, however, I already clearly recognized the actual nature of the means of grace according to Lutheran doctrine, as an act of God or as the divine hand, through which God, for His part and quite apart from our reception, actually offers us all the goods of his grace, which Christ has acquired for us with his blood, so that man, in order to partake of and be certain of the forgiveness of his sins and his salvation, needs nothing more than to believe and through faith to grasp and appropriate what is promised and given to him here in Word and Sacrament, then he has it. There I learned to recognize where I had to seek and find Christ and his grace alone, I learned to grasp him and the forgiveness of my sins with joyful confidence in his Word and Sacrament: here, in the preaching of the Gospel and in the holy Absolution, Christ the Lord himself stands before me and tells me, be of good cheer, my son, your sins are forgiven; here in the water of Holy Baptism the streams of the Holy Spirit are present, and I know by sure witnesses that they were once poured out on me too, here in the bread and wine of Holy Communion I have received Christ's body and blood, therefore He is now in me and I am in him, and "if Christ now wanted to cast me down to hell", my diary exclaims triumphantly, "he himself would have to go with me, for he has given himself to me in His Word and Sacrament and he cannot take himself away from me again, but I hold on to him in faith and will never let him go". So the certainty of whether I have received Christ and the forgiveness of my sins and now really possess them does not stand on my own repentance or on my weak faith, my salvation does not stand on the doubting question, which must be quite frightening, especially at the hour of death: is my repentance and conversion also sufficient before God? but my consolation and my

confidence stand solely on what God has done for me, what God has given me, and if I only rely on this with faith, no death or devil can rob or take it away from me. The whole task of faith is therefore not to storm heaven in the Methodist manner and bring Christ down, or to pray and fight to obtain forgiveness of sins, no, but faith has only to grasp what God gives in Word and Sacrament, and not to doubt that it receives God's grace therein, if only it does not willfully despise and reject it. And precisely this last question of a doubting, fearful heart, whether it has not willfully despised God's grace or perhaps received Christ's body and blood in Holy Communion unworthily, is nullified according to Lutheran doctrine by the fact that precisely such a challenged and fearful heart, hungry for grace, is the most worthy before God, with whom God has promised to dwell (Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 51:19). Thus the Lutheran doctrine of the means of grace, as my diary testifies, "gave me for the first time in my life the clear, full and certain conviction of faith that I am a Christian and with God in grace, and in this faith lies heaven itself, all that a poor, lost sinner has to seek and attain on earth".

I have written the above mostly literally, as I wrote it 48 years ago, as a testimony to how the bright light of Lutheran truth began to break through in those dark times. However, with the level of knowledge I had already attained at that time, it could not remain hidden from me that the difference between Lutheran and Reformed doctrine and church was not merely a matter of insignificant theological views, as our friends of the Union today believe, but of two fundamentally opposing currents and directions in the whole of Christian life. Even then I recognized how the Reformed Church removes as far as possible all external value from man, diminishes the objective

power and significance of the means of grace, the Word of God and the holy sacraments, and instead places all weight only on man's own inner life. Therefore, according to the Reformed and all related sectarian doctrines, the main aim is to awaken and rouse man from his slumber of sin (as I myself did at the beginning) and, above all, to preach true repentance to him, so that he may be shocked by his sins, and then to point man to the area of his own inner life, through prayer and inner experience, in order to obtain forgiveness of his sins, comfort and peace. The rest of the Christian life is organized accordingly, on the one hand the one-sided emotional life, on the other hand the insistence on external works of love, missions and the like, with which the inner life is to be cultivated and given the necessary nourishment. According to Lutheran doctrine, on the other hand, the Gospel is in the foreground as the consolation of the soul, the blessed message of salvation in Christ is brought above all to the lost world and offered in the preaching of the Gospel as in the holy sacraments, so that the heart, afflicted by its sins and hungry for grace, may draw and drink from this fountain of salvation. Thus the Lutheran doctrine leads man to a firm foundation and to the certainty of his salvation, and it therefore has no need to impose false crutches, whether of human feeling or of external works of love, in order to assure him of his state of grace and his Christianity. But that precisely with regard to the objective communication and assurance of divine grace and salvation, as the Lutheran Church faithfully teaches according to God's Word, there is no difference at all between Zwingli's and Calvin's teaching, and that especially in Holy Communion the spiritual enjoyment of the body and blood of Christ taught by Calvin, with which the starving soul should comfort itself, does not give us the slightest assurance, that in the Holy Sacrament

I have received Christ and his grace myself, but that I am only ever referred to my own repentance and my own faith with regard to the certainty of the forgiveness of my sins, in short, that even according to Calvin's teaching Holy Communion only outwardly symbolizes what should happen inwardly in the heart, all this already became fully clear to me at that time. On the other hand, it still remained completely hidden from me at that time that in the area of the Lutheran Church today there is also a false superimposition of the doctrine of the holy sacraments, according to which the sacraments have an effect even without personal believing acceptance of sacramental grace, i.e. they are also supposed to be a communication of certain gifts of grace to the godless and unbelieving person, whereby the latter becomes a true, even if dead, member of the body of Christ. Only a later time brought me clarity about these false Romanizing concepts.

4.

The Separation. ↑

The separation from the United Nassau State church and the formation of a free Lutheran congregation was a direct fruit and necessary consequence of the newly awakened Christian life in the parish of Runkel and its surroundings. Even from an external perspective, this life would have been stunted and would have been deprived of all spiritual care and nourishment for the future if I had been transferred from Runkel to another parish and an unbelieving or at least completely unLutheran preacher had succeeded me, as would have been the case in the Nassau State Church. Not only I myself, but also the believing Christians who surrounded me, we had all become too clearly and decisively Lutheran inwardly for the natural

development of Christian life and knowledge not to have brought us into conflict with the ecclesiastical union. From the Lutheran doctrine we had to come to the Lutheran Church, and if the latter had not happened, the former could not have been preserved with us in the long run, a truth that is so often misjudged today by those who want to be and remain Lutheran and yet allow themselves to be held captive by the bonds of the United Church. However, a very special divine grace and providence revealed itself to me and the believers in my congregation in that we were led in such a gradual development of spiritual life until we were mature and capable of ecclesiastical separation from the Union. First a number of souls were spiritually awakened, then they were led further to a firmer foundation of their faith and to Lutheran knowledge, and when faith and doctrine were in place, the Lord opened our eyes at just the right time to see and find the way to the Lutheran Church. Yes, God be praised and glorified for such abundant grace!

But God also prepared the separation and the formation of a free Lutheran congregation in many external ways. Above all, the fact that after the time of the first great movement, which gripped the whole parish of Runkel soon after I took office, there was a natural sifting and separation between those who were truly converted and believers and others who were only superficially and temporarily moved. The latter soon more or less fell back into the world, although the diligent church attendance in Runkel continued for a long time, whereas the former, the believers, gathered in fixed circles. They were driven to do so by the natural need for Christian fellowship. After all, the first Christian congregation in Jerusalem was also united daily. It was the same with the believers in my

congregation in Runkel; they came together almost daily in their homes, on Sundays after attending church services and on weekdays after completing their daily work. Gradually, however, fixed gatherings were formed, in which people entertained and edified themselves by reading Christian writings and sermons. Thus there were separate and closed circles of believers even before we separated from the State Church, an inevitable fruit and consequence of the whole sad state of our State churches today. Since the latter are no longer real churches, i.e. communities of faith, believing Christians in them must be driven to unite in other ways in order to satisfy the necessary need for Christian and ecclesial fellowship. — However, the separation of a smaller circle of believers in the Runkel parish was also due to another, albeit apparently only coincidental and completely external event that I mentioned above, namely the loss of the strong and expressive voice that I had in my first years of ministry, so that I actually stuttered in the pulpit. The dear readers can easily imagine that the hearts of many who were not really interested in the Word of God grew cold, whereas those who were truly eager for salvation and faithful remained and gladly heard the Word of God even from a stuttering mouth; on the contrary, the longer they stayed with me, the closer they became. All this contributed not a little to preparing our divorce and separation from the large group in the latter even before we left the national church.

As far as the external course of events and the history of our separation from the Nassau regional church are concerned, I prefer to tell it again directly in the words of my diary, as these give the freshest, most immediate impression of what happened. I wrote there in the middle of summer 1847, about a year after the separation took place:

A year full of the strangest events lies behind me. May I only be able to describe in a faint outline the wonderful and gracious guidance of God that I have experienced! What I had not even remotely suspected or imagined as possible before, what in individual hours was perhaps only an unattainable fantasy, I see realized. It is as if a sweet dream had suddenly become a reality, as if I had really been transferred from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, indeed, as if I had entered a new world! So surprisingly has the LORD changed the religious and ecclesiastical circumstances among us and guided them into a new direction, so strangely and wonderfully has he led everything, so effusively has he blessed beyond all pleading and understanding. Just as Thomas was once unable to grasp the reality of the Lord's resurrection, perhaps because it seemed too wonderful and glorious and therefore quite unthinkable to him, but when the unthinkable became real and suddenly stood before his eyes, he sank down at the Lord's feet in surprise, adoration and praise, so it is with me, I am redeemed from the deep night of ecclesiastical corruption that surrounded me and in which I lay imprisoned as if in Satan's chains and bonds, and through the most wonderful and glorious guidance of God I see the true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ resurrected among us, even in its outward appearance, and myself as a member and servant of it! How long and ardently I have often longed, when I saw the so complete secularization of the Nassau State Church, for the restoration of the church in its right apostolic state, but I could not think of any way in which it should and could go out of this labyrinth of ecclesiastical ruin again, and now behold, the rope is broken and we are free, with rejoicing and thanksgiving I may walk to the house of God with the crowds who celebrate there! And all this has come so suddenly and

surprisingly, so visibly guided and victoriously led through by the Lord, so clearly and brightly does it now lie before me, how the Lord has prepared, begun and completed the coming of His kingdom among us. Even if it is small and slight in outward appearance, it is nevertheless there, the Church of the Lord with all its heavenly gifts of grace in its pure Word and Sacrament and right ecclesiastical order, it is there completely and fully, purely and purely founded on God's Word. The Lord has given us a full, pressed down, shaken and superfluous measure. We are glad of this!

The winter of 1845 to 1846 passed quietly as usual, except that my old superior in Runkel, to whom I had been assigned to help out, died during this time and was replaced by a younger man who needed no help. So I was about to be transferred away from Runkel, which meant a big change in the church situation there. But it was God's grace that held up my transfer through all kinds of circumstances until it had been decided that we would leave the United State Church. Otherwise, the latter would have been very difficult if I had already left Runkel and been separated from my congregation there. This had not yet happened when I wrote a letter to my old Saxon friends explaining the state of affairs here and emphasizing in particular how the Lutheran doctrine had gained general recognition and dominance among the believers both in the Runkel parish and in the surrounding area who had joined us. My old friend Graul gave this letter to [\[Gottlieb Christoph Adolf\] von Harless](#), who was then a professor in Leipzig and later became the head consistorial president in Munich, and asked him for an expert opinion on our circumstances. I soon received replies from both of them, explaining to me the necessity and duty of leaving the Union as a Lutheran and professing my faith in the Lutheran Church. This report came into my hands at the beginning of May. It was indeed no different to being struck by lightning from the open sky.

I was completely unprepared to take Harless's advice to convert to the Lutheran Church. I had never seriously thought of such a thing. Of course, I had already sighed and complained often and much about the great and obvious corruptions of the Nassau State Church, about the rationalism and unbelief that generally prevailed there, but all the questions of the church in general and of union had remained far removed from me until then. I had never heard a syllable about separation and separated Lutherans, as they already were in Prussia at that time; in this respect I reassured myself with the thought that all responsibility for the corruptions that had broken out in the State Church rested solely on the heads of the church; the members of the church themselves, I thought, had nothing more to do than to suffer patiently and bear the heavy yoke placed on them. It had never occurred to me to investigate the actual constitution of the Nassau State Church, its legal basis, the validity of the symbolic books in it, etc. I had never thought of doing so. So the whole area of the ecclesiastical issues involved here still lay before me like a dark, unknown chaos. I had been deeply moved, excited and shaken by Harless's report. A time of intense inner struggle and fighting began for me. Day and night the matter was on my mind so that I lost sleep over it and my health wavered. But I had grasped the basic principles of the Lutheran doctrine of Word and Sacrament too clearly and vividly (even if only in the roughest outline) for it to have been difficult for me to progress to the doctrine of the Church. In addition, there was the whole abomination of desolation that stood before my eyes in the United Nassau State Church: preachers and congregations everywhere in almost pagan ignorance and secularization, with no trace of an old orthodox catechism anywhere, but instead the very crude rationalistic Nassau State Catechism, alongside a watered-down rationalistic State hymnal and

a similar agenda. And if you look at the Union Charter, on which the United Nassau State Church is legally founded, it says that it is built "on a religious veneration of the teachings of the Gospel alongside the most complete freedom of faith". Nowhere is there any mention of an ecclesiastical confession. So my decision could not last long. Not all kinds of theories and scholarly reasons, but simple passages of Holy Scripture, such as Rom. 16:17, Tit. 3:10, struck a chord in my soul. All the passages in Holy Scripture about shunning false teaching, about rejecting notorious unbelievers and the ungodly from Holy Communion and from church fellowship soon brought it home to me, that the believing Christian does not merely have the duty of tacitly tolerating such publicly prevalent ecclesiastical abuses and sins, but that these are holy commandments of God, the fulfillment of which is a duty of conscience for every Christian, if one does not wish to partake of other people's sins. But that the actual practice of the divine commandments mentioned was completely impossible in a State Church such as the Nassau church (as it is no longer possible in any State Church today, whatever its name may be), became all the more easily a victorious certainty to me, the more I, in my simplicity and ecclesiastical seclusion at that time, knew nothing of all the objections and excuses with which one knows how to get away from the duty of ecclesiastical separation today. — But my faithful parishioners were even quicker than I was to leave the Babel of the Nassau State Church. The sight of the anti-Christian conditions prevailing in the State Church was too clear and obvious, the feeling of the ungodliness of the latter too deep, for everyone not to have been ready to leave as soon as the justification and the divine commandment to do so was shown. In addition, the imminent danger that I was to be transferred away from Runkel and that a completely

rationalistic, unbelieving pastor was to take my place was particularly powerful. That it could not be God's will to take such a man as preacher and pastor, but that it had to be resisted at all costs, even if it cost goods and blood, everyone was absolutely certain without much persuasion. In Steeden in particular there was only one voice, everyone prepared to leave Egypt, the external circumstances regarding the formation of a separate congregation and parish were discussed with remarkable speed and brought to a preliminary conclusion, all hearts were unanimously prepared to make the necessary external sacrifices. In addition, there was an external circumstance that made things easy for us, of course not money and property, but — I was still young, only 27 years old (although already a father), and around me was a large circle of young men and women of the same age; in short, God, according to his mercy, gave us a heart full of fresh, youthful courage, and in response to the faithful assurance of some of them that I should only stay with them confidently, as long as they had something, I should also have something, I happily let go of all worries, the State Church and Runkel salary, together with all the prospects that were given to me in the event of a transfer to the State Church, and gladly stayed with those to whom my whole heart was attached. So we said farewell to the State Church happily and carefree, and it never occurred to us that anything bad might happen to us on this way, but the Lord hid from us what was to come, otherwise we might have been frightened and hesitated. How highly I must therefore praise the grace of my God, which at that time lifted me out of the Babel of the world and the Union, as it were on eagles' wings, and led me into God's city, where the holy dwellings of the Most High are! How little was my knowledge of Lutheran doctrine and the Church at that time, and I had no clarity at all about all the heresies of recent theology, most of which were still completely unknown to me. In addition, I was so completely lonely and abandoned in external relationships in Nassau, so far away from all helpers,

friends and advisors. In addition, dear readers would be very mistaken if they thought that a large congregation, perhaps the whole or at least half of the Runkel parish, had immediately joined our withdrawal from the State Church. Oh no, even with regard to those to whom the Word of God is preached and who experience a strong pull from the Father to the Son, as was the case with so many in the Runkel parish, the word of the Lord applies in a frightening way: "Many are called, but only a few are chosen". When it came to the decision in the Runkel congregation in 1846, of the many who had initially heard the Word of God with such great eagerness, there were ultimately only 26 families, the majority of whom lived in Steeden, who followed me when I left the Nassau State Church (although many of those who stayed behind were still devoted to the Word of God in their hearts and thus also to me in their old love). But as one carries a little child in a mother's arms, so the Lord helped us over all mountains, he led us like the youth (Ps. 48:15).

Our fight against the Nassau State Church began with a sermon I preached on the second day of Pentecost in 1846. In it I openly expressed my convictions regarding the Union. I received a sharp reprimand for this. I had not expected otherwise, for I knew that in Nassau we were facing a completely blind, unbelieving world, which could not be expected to show the slightest understanding for the step we wanted to take. This was also the reason why I did not think of publicly declaring my opposition to the Union in wider circles; indeed, I did not even try to instruct my Runkel congregation as a whole about the duty of separation. The conviction that all understanding for this was lacking kept me from doing so, and so I limited myself to signing the declaration of our conversion to the Lutheran Church on

July 6 in silence with the small circle of decided believers who were in complete agreement with me and submitting it to our Nassau State government.

After four weeks I was summoned to the State Ministry in Wiesbaden. There, too, there was no understanding of the inner religious reasons that moved us and drove us to separate. It was seen as nothing more than exaggerated, youthful, enthusiastic activity on the part of the members of the congregation, based mainly on mere personal love and attachment to me. They therefore hoped that the matter would be dealt with easily and initially tried to dissuade me amicably from the idea of founding a Lutheran congregation. It was therefore suggested to me that they should try to satisfy the religious needs and demands of the parishioners within the State Church, while I myself should accept a transfer elsewhere. With pen in hand, they offered me any position in Nassau, be it parish or school, that I might wish for, in order to secure it for me immediately in writing. Without doubt, the only right thing on our part would have been to thwart all such plans of our opponents by clearly declaring our separation from the State Church, but it may be that a certain fear of man, but mostly stupidity and inexperience — for it was the first time in my life that I had been standing before such high lords in Wiesbaden — held me back. In short, I kept quiet, and the main thought that filled me was to convince the State Government above all else that it was not just personal love for me that moved my followers, as I was always accused of, but their own religious convictions. I therefore declared that if my co-signed parishioners withdrew their declaration, I would allow myself to be separated from them. Of course, I knew in advance that neither would happen. But it was a snare in which I had allowed myself to be caught and which the devil wanted to use to ruin our

whole cause if God's grace had not torn it apart. For our opponents triumphed too soon and let it be known what their real opinion and intention was, namely to separate me from my believing church members and to strictly forbid me all contact with them, in the hope that our whole matter of faith would then gradually grow cold and degenerate of its own accord. But that was not what I had meant with my declaration in Wiesbaden. So I went there again without delay with several members of the congregation, where we now, each of us individually, openly and resolutely reaffirmed our conviction of faith and at the same time I submitted an explicit request to leave. So now everything was clear again.

Our state government now had no choice but to confront us by force. Perhaps it had less in mind to practice an actual persecution of our faith or to want to suppress the Lutheran confession altogether. No, on the one hand they were firmly of the opinion that the Lutheran confession could just as well exist within the Union and the State Church, where, as they said, they wanted to leave it all freedom, but on the other hand they stood firmly on the right that only the sovereign, by virtue of his total episcopate, was entitled to church government over everything that was called Evangelical or Lutheran (Methodists and Baptists were therefore allowed the ecclesiastical freedom that we Lutherans were denied). So Mr. Privy Councilor Wilhelmi appeared in person as a representative of the state government in Runkel, handed me my resignation and at the same time verbally announced that I would be expelled from the entire district of Runkel by the police. And lo and behold, I had not yet wised up, but once again allowed myself to be caught in a snare. Instead of facing the enemy openly and honestly with the weapons of faith and clear confession, I wanted to play the clever one, kept quiet again and only said in a careless way that I was inclined to comply with the police expulsion (no official explanation was demanded of me). I had come up

with the idea of moving to the neighboring Prussian town of Braunsels, where some families of separated Lutherans lived, who would join us as soon as they heard about our separation in Nassau; there I thought I could live in peace with my family and from Braunfels I could continue my ministry with the Nassau Lutherans until further notice. This was probably a very cleverly conceived human plan, but nevertheless — although one is not guilty of voluntarily betraying the ways in which one intends to escape their attacks to enemies who persecute the cause of faith and the church and seek to suppress them, I had nevertheless, albeit without any malicious premeditation, brought upon myself the appearance of a criminal concealment of my actual intentions, and this later became the cause of malicious gossip, indeed, my above-mentioned statement was even interpreted as a formal "promise" (which it was by no means, but only a free opinion, which I was entitled to change again at any time with better insight), so that I was then accused of breaking my word when I later did not leave the Runkel office after all. In any case, I reported the latter to the authorities myself as soon as it happened. In the meantime, I had to learn with pain what the consequences are when you think you can serve and help God's cause with carnal prudence. But God's mercy also forgave this time what was lacking in weakness and imprudence and did not allow any harm to come to our faith. God also put our opponents to shame no less, when Privy Councilor Wilhelmi had all the parishioners involved meet at the Steeden town hall, explained to them the government's ban on their leaving the State Church and tried to distract them from it. He found firm, cheerful resistance from all of them, and God strangely enough guided it so that on the very day when

Privy Councilor Wilhelmi was in Steeden, the parishioners brought the first timber for the new Lutheran church to be built in Steeden before his eyes.

My next step was a trip to Saxony, which I immediately undertook in order to seek advice and strength from my old Saxon friends. I arrived just in time for the missionary festival in Dresden (where the missionary institution was still located before it was moved to Leipzig) and it was of great importance to me that I made my first acquaintance and friendship with the Prussian separated Lutherans, Privy Councillor Huschke of Breslau and Pastor Wermelskirch of Erfurt. I was received everywhere with the greatest love and joy as a confessor of Lutheran truth and was amply comforted, strengthened and encouraged from all sides. (At that time it was only a fight against the Union, not yet against State Churchism in general). On the way back, I spent several days in Erfurt, where I made my Lutheran confession in a public service before the separated congregation there and my ordination was then confirmed. Pastor Wermelskirch told me a lot about the history of the persecution of the Prussian Lutherans and gave me some salutary advice from his own experience (but I missed all and every rebuke from him regarding Lutheran doctrine, of which he never mentioned a word; he even declared the *colloquium de orthodoxia*, which is customary for converting pastors, to be a mere unnecessary formality, a sad sign of how little importance the Breslau theologians attached to doctrine). Following the unanimous advice of all my friends, I then returned to Nassau to resign freely and publicly as pastor of the Lutheran congregation in Steeden. I declared the latter to the State Ministry without delay after my return, invoking the state laws on religious freedom. At the same time, I held the first Lutheran service and Holy Communion in Steeden. In the same week we

prepared my family's move from Runkel to Steeden, and it is easy to imagine the emotions involved. But trust in the Lord's help and guidance, joy over what we had already achieved and what had happened was the basic mood that filled us. God's grace, however, protected us from any thought of abandoning and denying the public confession we had once made, so that I do not remember ever having had even one such temptation. God clearly helped and paved the way for us. However, our state government soon issued repeated instructions to remove me from the Runkel office. But because it was based on the supposed promise I had made to Mr. Wilhelmi, the church councilor, this gave me the best reason to firmly deny such a promise and make counter-arguments. Meanwhile, we faithfully and firmly insisted on our position and continued our church services in Steeden despite the interruptions by the police and willingly had a fine imposed on us for a baptism. Then an order came directly from the ducal cabinet that I was to leave the office of Runkel within 24 hours on pain of a fine and imprisonment and that I was no longer to be allowed to perform any pastoral duties in the duchy. At the same time, the parishioners were forbidden all religious gatherings and even all religious intercourse among themselves and with strangers. However, there was still a slight delay in the storm that was to hit us, for God gave us a faithful friend in need, the Runkel official, who dared to send back the Wiesbaden express messenger and raise objections to the execution of the ducal order he had brought. But he gave me a hint about the danger I was in. So we had to hurry; we used the delay given to us by God's visible providence and our loyal Steedeners quickly came to Runkel to overtake me with my wife and child and all our household goods to Steeden.

In a few hours the transfer was complete and I was standing firmly on the ground where I still am today, in the middle of my Lutheran congregation. It was difficult for me to help my wife furnish the apartment in Steeden, completely uncertain whether and for how long we would live there. But it was of God that my wife did not let me rest until everything was ready before I went into exile, for God knew in advance that we would stay in Steeden despite all human prohibitions, and I was comforted in all the darkness by the thought that God, who had so obviously helped us to move to Steeden, would also keep us there. — The renewed ducal order for my expulsion and, failing that, my arrest was not long in coming, and when the Runkel official told me in confidence how things stood, I thought it most advisable to withdraw from open violence for the moment by voluntarily leaving Steeden. However, I had absolutely no intention of leaving my flock as a faithless shepherd; I only considered it permissible, indeed even a duty, to avoid violence in order not to sacrifice myself uselessly, but to preserve my personal freedom, on which so much seemed to depend for the prosperity of the cause of Christ. After a short absence, I therefore returned to Steeden under the veil of night and from then on I stayed in my apartment in Steeden in quiet seclusion for over four months. I was only allowed to go in and out of the house at night and often did so in disguise; when the police made inquiries about me, I had to seek refuge in the closet on various occasions. It was of great advantage to me that the officers closest to us only obeyed the higher orders given to them with reluctance, so it was not difficult for me to escape their notice. So I was able to be constantly active, giving Bible lessons and especially singing lessons in the houses. All of course only at night and in the deepest

secrecy. But the Lord also proved to me during this time that he does not allow hope to be put to shame; even though I was in a serious mood in this battle with our supreme authority, the Lord still protected me from all despondency, he never allowed the devil in particular to touch my soul with challenges about the divinity of our cause and with doubts of little faith, but God always kept me in cheerful, confident faith, clearly and firmly founded on his word and his promise. And that's how it was with the congregation as a whole and on a large scale; there was never so much and cheerful singing in Steeden as in that first year of our time of persecution. I myself often spent many hours and days singing, especially hymns of praise and joy, and while I was hardly able to sing a note in the past, I learned to do so during this time. The main struggle for me was the long periods of sitting in silence in seclusion, which prevented me from working and carrying out my ministry as freely as I would have liked. In particular, it was extremely difficult for me to let the congregation hold its services without me. However, greater hardship arose when news came from all sides that my family would no longer be tolerated in Steeden, which caused my wife, who had always followed me confidently until then, to fall into such complete spiritual despondency that she almost despaired of everything. She wanted to break away the sooner the better, to move to Braunfels, she almost closed herself off to all counter-arguments and consolations and it was only with great difficulty that I was able to hold her off from day to day until the arrival of Pastor Wermelskirch from Erfurt, who had promised to visit us. After a long and ardent wait, he finally came and gave us comfort and courage again, and especially put an end to any thoughts of a possible move to Braunfels, and so my wife allowed herself to be reassured by him, so that she could hold out in hope in Steeden. And no doubt it would have been unspeakably damaging

for our whole cause if we had moved away from Steeden; I would then really have been driven away from there and cut off, perhaps forever. God mercifully prevented this and again showed us his very visible guidance. Even though my direct ministry in the church was often hindered for the moment, I always remained with my flock as a shepherd, was able to guide and oversee everything and, above all, my presence kept the courage and hope in the hearts of the church members fresh and alive, even if I had done nothing. So everyone remained firm and confident, apart from a very few who had only joined us outwardly and now stayed at home.

Meanwhile, we tirelessly continued our negotiations with the authorities. At first, the latter had hoped to scare us apart so much that we would not even think of insisting on our cause, and we were hardly believed to have the courage to dare an open fight with the authorities. After all, they only saw a purely human, personal attachment of the parishioners to me, which is why they were only ever called my "supporters". It was therefore particularly important for our state government to show the members of the congregation their own conviction of faith and firmness. To this end, deputations of the latter often went to Wiesbaden to testify to the State Ministry and finally to the Duke himself of their determination to hold firmly to their beliefs and to ask for toleration. I also presented myself to our duke at the time, who listened to me at length. So it seems that the mood against us gradually softened, even if the prohibitions once imposed on us were not exactly lifted, and after some time it became apparent that the police measures against us were losing their force. Our faithful friend, the official in Runkel,

relaxed his orders against us when he realized that Wiesbaden was no longer so strict about it. So it finally came to pass that everyone knew of my presence in Steeden without asking any further questions. After several months of waiting, I went to our Minister of State (there was only one in Nassau at the time) and asked if I could first "visit my family in Steeden", and lo and behold, I received an affirmative answer! Admittedly only verbally, but when the lower authorities refused to recognize my appeal to the verbal permission given to me by the Minister, the latter also gave it in writing. So the bonds that held me were broken and I was allowed to leave and enter Steeden freely again! It is easy to imagine with what joy and gratitude to God I did this. The strong arm of the Lord had helped us to be victorious and had defeated the attempts of our enemies against us. Yes, even more. Our state government feared that our estates would want to declare themselves against the unconstitutional restriction of religious freedom that was being practiced against us. For our part, therefore, we also intended to take our ecclesiastical matter to the Nassau Estates, after all our requests for toleration from our state government had been in vain, and to ask them to protect our legal religious freedom. It turned out that our state government did not want to anticipate the decision of the estates, and so what we had hardly dared to hope for happened: we were given permission to worship freely again. It was just at the beginning of the holy Passiontide in 1847 and the first Passion Sundays became blessed days of celebration and joy for us. A baptism that I had already performed in secret in the winter, as all requests to be allowed to perform it had gone unanswered, was forbidden to me even now. But this only resulted in a new triumph for us; when the

Runkel State Church pastor appeared in Steeden in clerical regalia and accompanied by the police in order to carry out the baptism in question by force, he was told that the child had already been baptized, and so he had to leave again in shame, accompanied by a large crowd of people. The government, however, did not dare to do anything further for the time being. So we were able to experience the wonderful help of the Lord and his guidance in all things.

In the spring, the time came for the Nassau Estates to meet. There we had to make new, for us strange experiences, we had to realize that there is no comfort and no help to be found for Christians from men and especially from the unbelieving world, but that God alone reserves the right to carry out his holy cause with an almighty hand. Despite the perfectly and undoubtedly clear Nassau law, which gives all subjects the freedom to practice their faith and religion, the liberal Nassau estates apparently all voted against us out of hatred and enmity against the cause of our faith, with the exception of four Catholics, who for their part defended us out of enmity against the evangelical State Church. However, according to God's will, the negotiations of our estates brought us a great benefit and blessing: through them, our entire matter of faith came before the public, both the religious and ecclesiastical reasons for our withdrawal from the United State Church, as well as the questions of civil law and legislation that affected it, were widely discussed and thus publicly testified to our cause. God wanted to use our estates for this and that was purpose enough, also for us, to see God's finger in everything that happened. Thank God we had learned not to build our hope on people.

Throughout all this, the Lord visibly blessed the outward growth and the inner spiritual development of our congregation. During the winter we had already practiced church singing diligently, especially the early church liturgical hymns, and so we were now able to introduce the beautiful and full early church form and

liturgy into our services, which brought us much joy and blessing. And the Lord also gave us a mighty increase in the outside world, as more and more of the faithful Christians in the surrounding area joined us, who had already sought the preaching of faith from me when I was still in Runkel and had joined us. And not only that, but we were also able to experience new revivals and conversions in various places and so our Lutheran congregation gradually spread to 10 to 12 villages in the surrounding area. What a lovely, blessed community of believers formed around us! What uplifting, glorious feast days it was when so many gathered from all sides for worship and the celebration of Holy Communion in Steeden, and new conversions to us took place almost every Sunday! The farmhouse parlor, in which we still had to hold our services at that time, actually became a beautiful, glorious house of God for us, where the Lord was in our midst and we were able to experience and feel His nearness and presence. That was truly ample compensation for all the struggles and tribulations we had gone through. So we walked on confidently and in good spirits at the Lord's hand, even though we were completely uncertain about what the future would bring us. After all, all our experiences of divine help and guidance had mightily strengthened our faith and given us the certainty that God would continue to help our cause of faith to victory and would not allow the light of his word, which he had so obviously placed on the lampstand, to be suppressed again.

5.

Continued. ↑

A year later, in the summer of 1848, my diary continues:

Recognize that the Lord leads his saints wonderfully, his counsel is wonderful, but he leads it out gloriously, — I would like to exclaim as I prepare to continue what I wrote earlier. No sooner had I written down the story of the battles I had experienced and the victory I had won last year than the Lord led me once again from the joy of victory into the most difficult struggle, in which not only human enemies but death itself confronted me. But the Lord has given me a new song in my mouth to praise our God! So I rejoice from the bottom of my heart with the holy psalmist. It seems to me as if the times of the apostles and prophets had returned, when God revealed himself to his people through miracles and signs and so often miraculously saved them from the violence of their enemies with an almighty hand. I can often hardly believe that I have experienced such a direct demonstration of the living God through such extraordinary events, and yet the undoubted full reality stands before my eyes, I have truly experienced everything myself, how the Lord unexpectedly, suddenly, as if by directly stretching out his almighty arm, helps his own, just where all human help has come to an end. Yes, such a direct action of divine providence, such a wonderful divine help, such a strange coincidence of events, as one is almost only accustomed to find in poetry, I have to recount below in order to preserve it for life as a delicious treasure of experience in which the soul can always be refreshed, edified, strengthened and comforted.

The times of ecclesiastical persecution are now over, a new and fresh life has begun for me,

full of great hopes for the building of the Church among us. I have lived through times of long and difficult divine affliction (although I must confess to God's praise that He has always made every cross so easy for me that I usually hardly felt it, it was only hard and difficult according to outward appearances and human judgment), the more the thought now stirs in me that after the sowing of tears the harvest of joy will now follow according to God's gracious order and way, i.e. a new fresh and joyful blossoming and growth of our Lutheran congregation and church.

After the conclusion of the state proceedings last summer, our state government initially behaved very quietly towards us, probably with the intention of first allowing the public uproar over our cause to calm down a little. Then it began to act as quietly as possible, but with even greater determination, as it believed it now had a free hand to resume the earlier war of extermination against us and our religious cause. Their plan was the old one: to separate me from Steeden and from the Lutheran congregation there so that it would gradually wither and die of its own accord. But they wanted to clothe themselves as much as possible in a semblance of justice, so they opened a whole series of official investigations against me, so that for a long time I was summoned to court almost every week, many witnesses were sworn in and interrogated everywhere and my parishioners who did not want to testify against me were thrown into prison. Thus it was officially established that I had committed clerical acts contrary to the earlier ducal prohibition against me, and now the cause was found to take action against me again. My sentence was that I should leave Runkel within eight days, this time with my family, and choose a more distant place to live, where I should then be placed under the strictest police supervision (which by law is only imposed on vagrants and prison convicts).

Counter-arguments on our part remained in vain. So, in the same autumn days as the year before, I had to take the travel bundle and leave Steeden, but I went alone, as my family had subsequently been allowed to stay until I found accommodation for them.

I left home and church with heartfelt sorrow, but my heart was confident and my courage unbroken, based on all my previous experiences of divine help. Good advice on what to do was expensive for the moment, especially as there was no hope that our government would lift its new measures against us any time soon. I went blindly out into the world for the time being, hoping that God would lead and guide me and show me what to do every day. At first I knew nothing more to do than to withdraw from the eyes of the authorities and seek advice and comfort from friends. As in the previous year to Saxony, so this time I went to Bavaria, first to Neudettelsau to Pastor Loehe. At that time there were still none of the institutions that were later established in Neudettelsau, but Pastor Loehe lived quietly and alone in his rectory. He took me in with the greatest love and friendship, because what later separated us was still in the deeply hidden womb of the future. In addition to many Christian and especially practical theological teachings, Pastor Loehe advised us to publish more of our entire Nassau Lutheran church affairs in print, but he then rebuked all direct and open transgression and defiance of the government's measures (completely contrary to the advice I had received from the Breslau separated Lutherans the previous year), (quite contrary to the advice I had received from the separated Lutherans in Breslau the previous year), even secretly visiting the congregation in Nassau would not agree with him, but he advised me to keep more quiet and distant, serving the congregation as far as circumstances allowed. (Of course, under the circumstances, that would have meant not serving it at all, just writing a few letters of exhortation and consolation to it). After

a few days I traveled on from Neudettelsau to Nördlingen to Pastor Wucherer, who shortly afterwards announced our Nassau church separation in his paper and zealously defended it, but without any perceptible consequences and effects with regard to the proceedings of our state government against us, although we tried to distribute Pastor Wucherer's paper in extra copies in Nassau if possible. Then I went to Fürth and Nuremberg, where I was received with great interest. In both places the believing pastors gathered to discuss our cause, but on the whole it was still too new and strange for them to say anything really well-founded about it, but it did strengthen and encourage me to hear so many different views on it. Finally, I visited Erlangen to hear the advice of Professors Hoefling and Thomasius there. Both took a very warm interest in me, but their advice was, as the saying goes, truly "learned and wrong". Like the Nassau state government, they too valued mere human law more than God's Word and commandment, which is why they declared: "I and my congregation had been sorely mistaken in withdrawing from the supreme episcopate of the sovereign and the government of his state church, so the first thing to do before anything further could happen was to make amends for this mistake and ask for readmission under the Nassau state church government; if the latter were to be refused, then the government's proceedings would have to be attacked in public papers". Deeply displeased by this talk of the learned professors, I left Bavaria and traveled home.

Not much improved by all the human advice I had received in Bavaria, and made wise about what I had to do, the Lord now took me in his hand and guided me according to his advice. On my way home I met a faithful brother and fellow believer in Wiesbaden, Mr. Locher, a landowner near Saarbrücken, who had come to

Wiesbaden for a visit quite by chance. He belonged to the Prussian separated Lutherans, some of whose scattered families lived in the Rhineland at that time, not only in Braunfels, but also in and near Saarbrücken, Cologne, Düsseldorf and Essen. Pastor Wermelskirch from Erfurt had previously visited them once or twice a year and ministered to them spiritually, but when he became acquainted with me, he handed them over to me for this purpose. By God's gracious advice, however, my faithful friend and brother Locher had come to Wiesbaden just then, because when he heard how things were with us, he urgently invited me to come to his estate with my wife and child and spend the winter there. The stay there, the prospect of being able to conduct my ministry freely among the Lutheran families in the Saarbrücken area and to visit the Nassau congregations from there, seemed so beautiful and enticing in every respect that I gladly recognized the will of God in it and decided to accept the invitation extended to me. Once again I went through the Nassau region in secret, visiting my scattered church members everywhere, then I traveled with my family in the Lord's name to Prussia in the first days of November. Thus the Lord had led me quickly and unexpectedly along a path that I had not even remotely thought of, but the future proved that these were richly blessed paths of God that I was allowed to follow. From then on I stayed on the Locher estate for four months, diligently visiting the scattered Lutheran families in the surrounding area, holding Bible studies and Sunday services for them, but God blessed my work among these Prussian separated Lutherans so abundantly and allowed their numbers to grow so considerably that the following year, when I returned to Nassau, the separated congregations in Saarbrücken and Cologne were able to appoint their own Lutheran pastors. Thus all the measures taken by our enemies and persecutors brought only rich blessings

for the Lord's cause and only helped to gloriously reveal God's almighty arm and his wonderful ways and guidance. In addition, my stay in Prussia brought me the personal advantage that I could deal with my family freely and unhindered, not just behind bars and in constant fear of discovery, as it would have been in Steeden if I had stayed there. But the Nassau police were so misled by my departure from there and were completely unaware of my whereabouts that I was able to evade their supervision with little effort and visit the Nassau communities. At first they had police officers watch me day and night in Steeden, even lurking in the streets, searching every corner of my house for me; but since all this was in vain, they soon grew tired of it. Twice that winter from 1847 to 1848 I visited my Nassau parishioners in all their homes, and I was often allowed to experience how the Lord guided all my movements in such a way that I always escaped the eyes of my enemies. But how uplifting and solemn it was for me when we gathered in small groups here and there, mostly at night and in small back rooms by the sparse light of a small oil lamp, as they had in villages at that time, to hold church services and Holy Communion. In Steeden, in particular, our little room was so small and narrow, about 10 feet into the square, that we had to repeat our service several times, each time filling the room fresh to satisfy everyone. But I would not like to give away these spiritually richly blessed experiences and services of that time for much. During the day I usually rested or talked with individuals, hardly realizing that I was a prisoner; in the evening or at night I went from place to place, accompanied by one or more people. Of course, there was often much discomfort, storm and rain, snow and cold, ditches full of water that filled my shoes,

long marches in the dark, etc., but my strong body endured it all with ease and God's grace always kept me healthy and cheerful. So, in truth, I paid no attention to anything I encountered, and I hardly felt that I was suffering anything.

In the meantime, my community also remained faithful and firm in its confession and persistently resisted the state government that was persecuting it. The gentleness that had been shown to it the previous year now ceased. The church tax for the state church was forced to be paid by confiscation, parents were forced to send their children to the United public religious education through school punishments, emergency baptisms, which were often performed in my absence, were prohibited with a four-day prison sentence, and in this way the congregation's resistance was gradually broken. But in vain; official interrogations, executions, fines and imprisonment were endured steadfastly and joyfully, especially in those cases when holy baptism had been administered by me here or there and the fathers of the baptized children were then thrown into prison to force them to testify against me, which they refused to do. Yes, such suffering for Christ's sake only strengthened our faith and inflamed our zeal, so that we praised and thanked God that we not only had the light of the Gospel again after such a long night and darkness, but that we could now also experience in person what the Bible and church history teach about the persecution and enmity of the world against Christ and His church. We, both I myself and my church members, had to tell ourselves that all our sufferings were nothing compared to the sufferings and persecutions of Christians in earlier times, just small mosquito bites, as it were, compared to the teeth of the lions and tigers that tore Christians apart in ancient Roman times. To the praise and glory of God's grace we must therefore confess and praise it aloud: all the measures taken by our enemies and persecutors have never brought us even

the slightest disadvantage; on the contrary, they have only strengthened our faith, promoted our church cause and, in sum, God's work and church continued unconcerned about them and unhindered by them in great blessing.

But despite the confident and joyful courage that God's grace gave us as a whole during our time of persecution, it was not to be without sighs and tears, as is God's holy order for all Christians. When our state government persisted in its measures against us, when there was no prospect at all of any change or improvement in our ecclesiastical situation, and when one month after another passed and our enemies triumphed, as if it were now completely over for us and our cause, there were sometimes clouds of gloom and heaviness settling on our hearts and minds. In addition, my outward and physical situation was not easy either. I hardly want to mention here what, thank God! that I and my family did not have a steady livelihood at that time and we only lived on the occasional gifts of love that were given to us (God's gracious care never left us wanting, but quite literally every day provided for its own), but the hardest thing for me was that I lived so completely outlawed, inactive and without a home, often almost without knowing where I would lay my head each following night, and without any prospect of where and how I would ever get a home of my own again. Such a life goes on for a while, but the soul cannot bear it for long without getting homesick. So it was no wonder that towards the end of that winter I was often overcome with melancholy. Then there was the harsh winter of that year; I could hardly stand walking around Nassau in the snow and rain all night long. Moreover, summer was just around the corner, when there were no more dark nights, and how could I hide from

the eyes of my pursuers? In grateful remembrance and praise of God's wonderful and gracious guidance, let it be said that it was on the last night of my arduous wanderings in Nassau at that time that I almost collapsed under the weight of physical and spiritual toil. The long-lasting winter cold had just turned into a thaw, the rain had been pouring down all day, the river Lahn, which flows close to Steeden, had burst its banks and flooded everything with heavy ice floes as high as a man. Under such circumstances, I made my way through rain and shoe-deep mud, over high ice floes, which I had to climb over, and through deep ditches, until I finally reached my destination at 3 o'clock in the morning. On this, my last nocturnal walk, my otherwise strong, iron-hard body succumbed for the first time, as did my otherwise cheerful courage. Exhausted and almost drained of strength, and already in the gloomy spiritual mood of which I spoke above, I sighed on the way from the bottom of my heart: "It is enough, Lord, now take my soul from me". Yes, it should now also be enough; in God's counsel the hour of salvation had already come for us, without anyone being able to guess how and from where. But suffering is quickly forgotten; so when I had happily returned to my family, I soon fought down all my gloom and lived on in hope, even though there was nothing to hope for from a human perspective.

Meanwhile, my situation became increasingly difficult and serious. My friend and brother Locher could not keep me and my whole family in his house and feed me for long, I had to leave there and then where would I find a place of refuge? Bringing my family back to Nassau soil or to Steeden itself hardly seemed feasible or advisable, especially as it was to be expected that my own person would then be searched for more rigorously. Finally, an event tipped the scales. In Prussia there is a

law that the pastors of the separated Lutherans must be children of the state, so that foreigners must be admitted to the Prussian subject association [*Unterthanenverband*] in order to be allowed to administer the clergy of the separated. It was at this time in the spring that I was summoned to appear before the Saarbrücken District Office, where I was informed of the aforementioned law and forbidden to perform any clerical duties in Prussia until further notice. What was to be done now? I did not want to become a Prussian subject, I wanted to sit there idle even less, so there was no other way out, God's finger clearly pointed out that I should return to Nassau. So I set off there with my family, completely unsure of what would happen to us there and without the slightest idea of what surprising, extraordinary events awaited us on arrival at the Nassau border. On the one hand, however, we were not reluctant to leave; the long stay in a foreign country, without a household of our own, had many difficult and unpleasant aspects that made our departure from there easier. Even if we did not know what the future would bring us, we were satisfied that our situation would at least be different again, and it was enough for us to know for the moment that this was the Lord's will and guidance. We left everything else up to God, especially as all our own doing and worrying could not help at all, but we had to let ourselves be driven blindly by the circumstances.

At first we thought of making the far more beautiful journey from Saarbrücken via Trier and Koblenz down the magnificent Moselle valley; but there were many reasons against it, and I also had a dark suspicion that if we traveled via Wiesbaden we would learn something completely new and special about our fate. I had therefore said several times before that our Moselle trip would certainly come to nothing. And so it happened, we made our way directly over the mountains to the Rhine in order to reach Wiesbaden by the next route.

So we traveled like Israel of old, with Pharaoh behind us, who drove us out of Prussia, and the Red Sea in front, where there was neither path nor bridge. But like Israel of old, we also experienced God's sudden and wonderful help: on the same night that I spent with my family in the mail coach, the famous March Revolution of 1848 broke out in Wiesbaden (the first in all of Germany and therefore all the more surprising), and when I arrived with my family early in the morning in Bingen on the Rhine at the Nassau border, the people over there were already celebrating their victory with flags and firecrackers. At the inn where we stopped, we were astonished to hear talk of the revolution that had taken place in Nassau, without the slightest suspicion of its results. Then the innkeeper brought us the newspaper and an extra sheet containing the demands of the people and the concessions made to them by the Duke. I quickly skimmed through it and lo and behold, at the end it was printed in large letters: "the removal of all previous restrictions on religious freedom"! May the dear readers imagine our surprise and joy, our praise and thanksgiving! As if in one fell swoop, all our misery was over, the day of complete freedom had come, the door to the Nassau region was opened to us, just at the moment when we stepped in front of it, like Pharaoh, our persecutors were so suddenly submerged in the waves of the revolution. As so often, this time too the godless world with its attacks had to be the instrument to carry out God's eternal counsel for the salvation of His own. It was such a marvelous and visible coincidence of circumstances and revelation of the hand of the Lord. We had been walking our way in complete darkness and now we suddenly stepped into the bright sunshine, as if from faith into sight. The Lord had rescued us so unexpectedly and powerfully from the hand of our enemies, and He had done it all by Himself and without our

help, on a path that no man could have foreseen, indeed, not other than by a miracle. — We entered Wiesbaden in the evening by the light of the illumination with which the people glorified their victory. All these lights of joy shone for no one more than for us and, according to God's wonderful providence, all this radiance of light and rejoicing had to help to glorify our homecoming. We were like those who dream when the Lord redeems the captives of Zion, our mouths were full of laughter and our tongues full of praise; the Lord had done great things for us and we were glad.

My stay in Wiesbaden was not long. I left my wife and children there in order to get to Steeden all the quicker and, above all, to share the joy of my new freedom with the congregation and to praise God with them. We really had reason to do so when we looked at the whole course of our church struggle and our experiences. In faith, as a small little group, abandoned by all human help, we had dared to resist the world and its powerful forces, and God had revealed to us so wonderfully and gloriously that faith is the victory that overcomes the world. — How we now set about reorganizing and reestablishing ourselves in Steeden with heartfelt enthusiasm and zeal, and above all what a new and lively zeal filled us to do the Lord's work, to build his kingdom and his church among us, hardly needs to be mentioned.

But the Lord's thoughts were once again different from ours. After all, it costs so much to keep a human heart in humility and lowliness, and especially with such great experiences of grace as we were allowed to have, how easily vain self-exaltation and carnal arrogance creep in. That is why the Lord must lead us again and again into his school, to make us poor and small and to strip us of all that is our own, so that Christ alone may have

dominion and honor with us. So all of a sudden the Lord threw us down again from the rock on which he had raised us so high. For the mob in Steeden and Runkel, who were hostile to us, had watched our victory with fury and could not bear that they, who had so often laughed and mocked us, should now be put to shame with their scorn and that laughter should now come to our side. Under the protection of the general freedom and lawlessness that prevailed in 1848, they therefore devised a plan to expel me from Steeden by force and make it impossible for me to stay there in the future. I was even publicly threatened with death in a fit of rage. At first, I took the whole thing lightly, especially as only a few people were actually the instigators and leaders of the whole riot. But one evening a few days after my arrival in Steeden, a mob armed with sticks and shotguns, drunk on brandy, marched through the village and came after my house in search of me. This was probably not much use for the moment, as I had been warned early enough and had already left, easily hiding in the deep darkness a few steps outside the village. The noise was soon over and I wouldn't have thought much more about it if the angry instigators of the whole thing hadn't also run to Runkel and stirred up the security committee there (as such committees were supposedly formed in all towns at the time to protect public order) against us. And when my family arrived from Wiesbaden two days later, the storm broke out all over again. The aforementioned Runkel committee even came to Steeden several times, held meetings with the rebels and, out of their own obvious malice against us and our religious cause, made so much noise and fuss about the matter that in the end we only had the choice of either taking matters into our own hands and striking if it came to a

real attack, or voluntarily avoiding the enemy. The decision cost us an unspeakably difficult battle. Even in the first joyful celebration of our arrival in Steeden and the freedom we had gained, to turn back straight away, to leave the place to which God had just led us so wonderfully and to wander into a foreign country again, that was hard, very hard, especially for my wife, whose heart was almost torn apart, so that she was unable to sleep at night because of her grief and tears. But as Christians we could not remain in doubt for long about what we had to do, we had to give way and tolerate. I have almost never experienced greater pain and misery for myself and my family than when we left Steeden to go to Runkel, where we wanted to stay for the first few days. I would rather have died than experience that. I will never forget the time when I led my weeping wife out of the village by my arm, followed by two faithful Christian farm girls who carried our two children after us. We were glad that we were no longer so inexperienced in the ways of the Lord and knew very well why he humbled us so deeply. And he did not lack rich consolation; as always, he went before us again to prepare our way and carried us as if in his hands. In Runkel we found ourselves welcomed with the greatest love in a house that had been a close friend of ours from the past and was Christian-minded, and everything was prepared for our reception. A beautiful large back room, completely hidden from the eyes of the world, was given to us as a temporary home. There we sat in the deepest silence, believing, hoping and praying. Once again, there was no human help everywhere, no one wanted to take care of us, wherever we turned. Even a deputy whom we sent from Steeden to the duke on our behalf was received unfriendly and seemed to have little hope from this side either. But lo and behold, we had hardly been in Runkel a week when

the duke nevertheless sent word confirming our full freedom. Many of our opponents, especially the Runkel committee, now withdrew, but the Runkel office stood up more firmly and completely shut the Steeden screamers up. But there the Lord had already stretched out his hand and struck our enemies. The main leader of them, who had always been at the forefront, especially as an orator, and had cheered the crowd on, had said to my wife that we had to get away from Steeden, even if it "cost him his lungs". And it did cost him his lungs and his life. For the excitement he had experienced may well have contributed to the fact that at the same hour, around noon, when we left Steeden, he was suddenly brought home from the field ill, pneumonia had attacked him and in a few days he died from a senseless rage and fury. This judgment of God was powerful and clear to understand. From then on, no one dared to do anything against us in public, although for a long time, even our opponents in the provincial government secretly laid all kinds of snares to get us away from Steeden again (pretending that our being there was a cause for riot and unrest, etc.), but in vain. One Sunday we entered Steeden for the second time, this time also in joy and thankful to the Lord for the renewed, glorious salvation, but not with the loud rejoicing as the first time, but more quietly and bowed, still imbued with a melancholy memory of the days of suffering we had experienced and therefore also devoted to the Lord for everything in the future.

Thus ended the time of our struggles at that time, which brought about our separation from the Nassau State Church and the founding of our Lutheran Free Church in Nassau. In truth, it was a time of great rich blessing for us, which far outweighed all the suffering we experienced through the manifold rich experiences of divine grace and help. In this

time I learned in fact and truth through my own experience as never before what it means that the Lord is with his own every day and guides them with a gentle hand, that the ways of the Lord are often dark and wonderful and yet go out gloriously, but that the Lord keeps and fulfills his promises without fail if one only dares to do so in faith at His Word. Yes, even today what is said of the Lord's disciples in Acts 1:3 is still being fulfilled in us, that the Lord showed himself alive to them through various demonstrations. But to experience this for ourselves is an everlasting treasure and consolation and a strengthening of faith for our whole life.

It was with particular pleasure and joy that we now set about building our church and rectory, especially in Steeden. Both were to be united in one building in such a way that the space for the church took up the entire lower part of the building and the parsonage was located on a floor above, an arrangement that made it possible to gain even more space for the church and the parsonage. In this building I found the opportunity to utilize the gift that God had given me in such external matters and which was to serve me so much and so often throughout my later life as a great blessing for me and the Lord's cause that I had to lead. The preparation of the building plan, as well as the entire management and execution of the construction, was solely up to me and our faithful Steeden parishioners, who not only made the necessary contributions with great sacrifice (often at night after completing their other professional and field work) with great love and zeal, but also carried out the entire construction as bricklayers, carpenters, etc. with meager daily wages, so that we were able to complete it at very little cost. But it is certainly true that God helped us to build! How he always showed us his divine guidance, helped us out of all the hardship and embarrassment that so inevitably arises in all building work, especially when, with as little money as we had, we were completely dependent on ourselves in all

matters, as was the case with our building work. Oh, there was often great pressing need, as if everything had come to an end and we could go no further, but the Lord's wonderful goodness and faithfulness did not leave us wanting for anything in the end, but even if sometimes the distress seemed to have reached its highest peak, the Lord always gave what was needed at the right time, be it the necessary money or building materials and labor. So it couldn't have been any other way; with God's help, which was also so visible in this respect, our building had to turn out well, as all those who see it to this day confess. On Ascension Day 1849 we were able to consecrate our new little church. What a great day of celebration and joy for me and our whole community! It was a day of joyful harvest after a long and difficult sowing of tears, on which we rejoiced and triumphed before the face of the Lord our God, for the Lord had turned all our lamentations into a round dance and had rewarded us with the most humble things for all our knighthood. — The parsonage was only completed and occupied in the summer of 1849. It was extremely beautiful, functional and everything we wanted it to be. The feelings with which we moved into the new apartment, which was to remain our home for the rest of our lives, and the words that floated into my heart and mouth almost every day were those of the holy psalmist: "My lot has fallen on me in a lovely place, I have been given a beautiful inheritance". How the Lord has fulfilled His promise to me and mine, that whoever leaves houses, fields, etc. for His sake, as we did when we renounced our church benefices, shall receive it again a hundredfold in this world! The Lord does not give riches, but I know of no place in the world that would seem so lovely to me and where I could feel so comfortable and at ease as here in my Steeden and in it the bright, friendly little church and the splendid parsonage with its beautiful view, surrounded by gardens. I am certain

that I would never have felt so content and happy in any parish in the state church, even if I had found such a full pot of flesh there, as I do now in Steeden. In truth, I can proclaim with St. James that I have had enough, I wish and desire nothing better or different in this world. Oh, if only I could set myself before everyone as an example of the unspeakable grace and blessing of the Lord!

But in the middle of the time of our church building and the great time of blessing, which I am telling you about, another heavy divine visitation fell, as it is no different in God's ways, it always goes down into the depths, just when God wants to exalt us, and only through ever new humiliation are we prepared and able to receive God's blessings. In the spring of 1848, we had barely settled down and settled in peace in Steeden when God visited our house with a serious illness. After our youngest child had lain unconscious for 11 days between life and death from a brain infection just after Easter, but had then recovered, my wife was seized by a nervous fever at Whitsun, which soon increased to a life-threatening severity. She lay there like a corpse and only when you bent over her could you feel her breathing. But in her greatest distress, when all human help had come to an end, God took pity on her and kept her alive. At the same time as her, our landlord, a young man from our community, fell ill with the same fever and, according to God's counsel, he died. I was only just able to attend his funeral, although I was already unwell and seized by shivers of fever, when I had to lie down myself and soon the fever rose so high that I was beyond the reach of all medical help and many despaired of my life. Only I myself did not do the latter. The impression of the divine salvation and guidance of grace I had experienced on my return to Steeden and the freedom I had regained in the church was too

deeply and vividly impressed on my mind for me to fear that God would now so suddenly call me away from the place and the ministry to which he had so wonderfully led me. Filled with this awareness, and certainly according to divine providence, which governed me, I therefore gave my wife the consolation, on the very day before the illness rose to the highest level and the feverish fantasies robbed me of consciousness, that she should not be afraid, whatever would come, I would not die. And so it was by God's grace, my illness was not to be my death, but only the way to new great divine proofs of grace, which the Lord wanted to honor me with in the time that followed. But my strength recovered only very gradually; while my wife, contrary to expectations, quickly regained her strength, it took me many long weeks before I could even stand on my feet again, and even at the first baptism, which I performed again, two men had to stand by my side and hold me upright under both arms. It was not until September [1848] that I was able to leave the sickroom again, but the traces of the illness remained for a long time. This time of affliction, however, was again filled with countless experiences and proofs of divine help and grace, from the greatest, the salvation of life, down to the smallest, the daily care of our household, as well as the necessary care of our children and the sick. Not only did God ensure that our household was always richly supplied, but the necessary people also came from near and far to help and care for us, so that we were often amazed at the strange coincidence of circumstances and the help we received in times of need. Once again the Lord carried us as if in His hands and did not let us be tempted beyond our ability, but proved to us anew that His yoke is easy and His burden light. Even in this divine visitation we could only praise and glorify God

for all the mercy and faithfulness he had shown us. Yes, blessed is he who trusts in him!

But I must also mention a second bitter drop that God mixed into our cup of joy after we regained our ecclesiastical freedom. We had hardly consecrated our new little church and I once again had the joy of being allowed to stand and preach from a pulpit when my former sore throat returned with renewed vigor. There I was, standing in the new pulpit, in the beautiful little church, facing a faithful congregation eager for salvation, and often I could hardly speak! Oh, that was a heavy thorn in my flesh, so that I should not exalt myself! I was often on the verge of bitter tears in the pulpit. And for years after that time I felt this heavy torment on Sundays until I was able to speak freely again. Yes, then I had to learn what the holy Psalmist says, the words that I put at the beginning of this section of my story: "Recognize that the Lord leads his saints strangely". I had to realize for myself that the Lord often breaks his instruments first when he wants to accomplish something through them, so that the work and the glory may be God's alone and not man's. Therefore may his name be praised and glorified forever and ever, even when his way passes through deep waters.

6.

The Expansion of the Lutheran Free Church in Nassau. ↑

After we had barely inaugurated our new little church in Steeden and had only enjoyed our beautiful services for a short time, a completely new phase in the ecclesiastical development and expansion of our Nassau Lutheran Free Church soon began.

During these years, individual persons and families continued to join our Steeden Lutheran congregation, so that the latter soon counted its members throughout the entire Nassau region and far into the distance. In the midst of our persecution by the Nassau state government, many had already joined us in the towns of Mensfelden, Kirberg and Bechtheim to the south of Steeden, up to a distance of 3-4 hours, and when we received church freedom, special places of worship with altars were set up everywhere in these places, where often so many listeners gathered in church services and Bible studies that the room could not hold them, but usually the forecourt and stairs were still filled. I spent one Sunday a month at each of the places mentioned, and for many years our Steedeners did not fail to accompany me there in large numbers, often 10-20 people, so that these Sunday visits from out-of-town congregations took on the character of festive joy and fellowship. Even in Wiesbaden two families joined us, among them first my biological brother and his family. Even further north, beyond the Westerwald, four families also came to us, prompted and won over to the Lutheran doctrine and church by a journeyman tailor (later the now blessed Pastor Engelbert in America), who had become a Lutheran in Dresden on his travels and then visited us in Steeden. To the east of Steeden, at a distance of 8-9 hours, lies the Nassau district of Usingen, where two believing families in the small town of Wehrheim also joined us during our time of persecution. And finally in a westerly direction, 3-7 hours from Steeden, in Diez, Fachingen, Nassau and some of the surrounding villages, little groups of believing Christians gathered everywhere to join us. The dear readers can easily imagine what hard work and long marches (all of which had to be done on foot, as there were no railroads in our area at that time

and there was no other means of transportation) the church care and service of all these widespread members of our congregation caused, especially in the years 1849 and 1850, when I still had to administer the spiritual ministry in Nassau all by myself. But God's gracious counsel and wise providence were particularly evident in the peculiarity He gave me for such a job. Not only did my body easily endure such marches and felt comfortable in every quarter, as well as with every meal in the smallest farmhouse, but such a missionary occupation, as I had to lead it in those years, was my great favorite thing, which I have always done with particular pleasure and joy. To wander from house to house and from place to place and to seek out souls eager for salvation everywhere, to gather in every farmhouse parlor and around every table whatever listeners could be found, to read a passage of Holy Scripture or the catechism and to explain simply (mostly in questions and answers) the way to salvation, the foundations of Christian doctrine — that was the field in which I felt most at home. I am also aware that it was in this way that I contributed most to the promotion of Christian knowledge and thus to the gathering and firm establishment of Lutheran congregations in Nassau. This way of teaching, which required no lengthy preparation, for which I lacked all the time in my itinerant life at the time, was also the easiest for me. — In 1850, however, there were completely new and much more powerful ecclesiastical movements. The year 1848 had brought with it a time of excitement and movement in all areas of life. All the old shackles and bonds seemed to have been loosened at that time, and in particular the desire had awakened everywhere to seek out all the old damage and abuses in the previous conditions, both in the political and ecclesiastical sphere, and to change and improve them with the help of the great upheaval of that revolutionary period. Added to this was the

completely free external movement, especially the free right of assembly, which has prevailed everywhere since 1848. All of this greatly facilitated the expansion of our Lutheran Free Church in Nassau and contributed to the powerful ecclesiastical movements that we experienced, especially in 1850, and through which two new, independent Lutheran congregations were formed. Thus we grew into a majority of Lutheran congregations and pastors, a new, exuberantly great grace of God for us.

In the above-mentioned district of Usingen, which had previously been entirely Lutheran before the Union, small groups of souls had for some years now been growing fond of the Word of God and seeking it in nearby Hesse and Homburg, as they were unable to find it in their own State Church. When the families who had already joined our Steeden congregation there in 1847 repeatedly invited us to visit, we decided to accept the invitation at St. Martin's Day 1849, and I set off with a group of our Steeden congregation members to celebrate a Sunday there. Our plan had become known in the meantime and many people from the district of Usingen gathered for our service. The Lord gave abundant blessing; the significance of St. Martin's Day, which we used to commemorate the Reformation, gave cause to talk about church conditions, and such a movement arose among those gathered that it would not have taken much for most of them to immediately decide to leave the State Church. Everyone unanimously asked me, in order to achieve complete clarity about the church's circumstances and questions, to write to them for closer examination of what had been discussed orally. This prompted me to write my little pamphlet about leaving the Nassau Evangelical State Church, in which I tried to say as simply as possible what seemed appropriate for the particular circle of my readers. The Lord then had the pamphlet sent out, to say what He wanted to use it for.

The year 1850 began with a hard time of new affliction for me personally, and this gave me the impression right from the start that it would be a rich year of grace. I only mention this so that the dear reader will always know something of the sighs and tears that preceded the coming joy. This time, too, the Lord prepared the vessels into which He wanted to pour His blessing through much cross and trial.

In February of that year [1850], I once again traveled to Usingen. It was one of the sweetest and most blessed journeys that the Lord has led me on throughout my life. My pamphlet about the State Church had stimulated the church question in many places, and many, especially in the villages of Schmitten and Arnoldshain, had already made up their minds to convert. I was invited everywhere, indeed, I was literally besieged for visits, and was able to make a missionary journey through the entire Usingen district. Everywhere large crowds gathered around me to hear the Word of God, and a visible blessing prevailed everywhere. The word was received everywhere with joy and great eagerness for salvation; the people were languishing and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd; the conversion to the Lutheran Church was declared by many as a salvation from long hardship, as the object of long-cherished longing, with childlike willingness and simplicity of faith, and was increasingly gaining ground. *)

*) All the more freely and unhindered, as at that time the Nassau State Church was completely lacking in believing clergy who would have stood in the way of separation.

I held Bible studies in Anspach, Westerfeld and Eschbach, where the rooms could hardly hold the listeners. In Westerfeld in particular, many were still standing in the street, asking for the windows to be opened, listening and singing along outside. The first Sunday service that I held in Schmitten was a great celebration with an extraordinary crowd. — Full of heartfelt praise to the Lord, who had honored me to proclaim His Word to so many, who had moved hearts so powerfully everywhere,

and in the firm confidence that the way had now been broken for the church in the Usingischen, I returned home, my heart and mouth filled with the old Luther song:

"Summer is just around the corner,
Winter has passed,
The delicate little flowers come here;
This has started,
He will also complete it."

During the Holy Passion of this year, I was once again in Usingischen, accompanied by the same blessing. In Schmitten and Arnoldshain in particular, the movement had spread and a number of dear, faithful souls were added to the congregation. In some places, the old leaven of former dishonesty showed itself and the honest ones increasingly separated themselves from the others. I held church services and Bible studies in many places again. The impression of a funeral in Wehrheim was particularly blessed. More and more people who loved the Lord and sought His salvation gathered. — During the spring and summer I was often in the Usingen ministry, teaching and preaching everywhere. A great, richly blessed feast day was July 24, when we dedicated the first prayer room in Schmitten. The number of people joining the congregation continued to grow, so that we could think about looking for our own preacher for our Usingen congregation.

Surprising new events occurred after Pentecost. Through a maid serving in Wiesbaden, my pamphlet about the Nassau State Church came to her parents in Gemünden in the county of Westerburg. Many people read it and it created a powerful stimulus in the town. The county of Westerburg, comprising 8-10 villages towards the northwest of our country, lies in the middle of a completely Catholic area; it used to be Lutheran, and in some external aspects, perhaps because of its isolated location in the midst of Catholics, it has preserved the Lutheran

church more than the rest of Nassau. Gemünden, for example, is the only place in the whole of Nassau, as far as I know, where lights are still lit for Holy Communion in the State Church. But the congregations there were almost unbelievably neglected at the time. Unprecedented things could be told about this, things that one could not believe if one did not hear them from the mouths of the most reliable people and if the very general public rumor vouched for them. One heard of sermons lasting five minutes, the length of which one wanted to have calculated exactly with a watch in one's hand, of funeral services at which the pastor stood behind the churchyard wall and watched as the congregation buried their dead without him, of communion loaves that fell to the ground on the church path and which the pastor let the dogs eat unhindered, one heard how the parish priest was always one of the first and most infallible guests at all the dances in the neighborhood, how a party, a visit was enough for him to suspend or shorten an official act, yes, even stories of drinking, fornication, abuse of the parish wives could be told. Naturally, with such pastors, the congregations themselves fell into ever deeper spiritual decay, and fornication, godlessness and unfaithfulness became more and more prevalent. Only a certain awareness of what was better seemed to remain here and there, a feeling that could not be eradicated: we must turn back from the path of corruption, otherwise we will perish. How deep or clear this awareness was among the individuals, I dare not decide; in any case, there could be no question of real spiritual revival.

In June, two people from Gemünden came to me in Steeden, told me about the movement they had started and brought a letter addressed to me on behalf of many people to invite me there. It reads quite literally:

"Your Reverence!

I venture to write a few lines to you. I am very pleased that a Moses has been found in our country who is concerned about the harm done to Israel. I sincerely wish that it would be introduced quickly in our country. I was 27 years old when the desperate religion *) was forged. For 33 years now I have not received Holy Communion according to the old Lutheran practice and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession. How I wish I could see you with us one day; we are waiting with longing for deliverance from doubt to come.

*) He meant the Union, which was introduced in Nassau in 1817.

The Lord has opened a great door for you, which is bearing much fruit, and there are also many adversaries. Do not give up promoting this work, the Lord will help you because it is from God. I commend myself to you with warm greetings and remain your faithful servant

J. G. M."

At first I took the matter rather lightly, since experience shows that such movements of entire communities are usually based only on earthly motives. But the letter addressed to me gave too clear evidence to the contrary for me to doubt the matter entirely, and since I was planning a trip in the same weeks that took me half an hour past Gemünden, I decided to inquire about the matter at least once.

I came to Gemünden for the first time on June 20 [1850]. I was immediately filled with fear and hope; I was constantly driven to prayer. My arrival immediately caused a great stir in Gemünden. I arrived at midday and spent the afternoon talking to small groups of people about the church

and what was needed. In the evening the whole village gathers, and as there is no room anywhere, there is nothing left but to go under the large lime tree in the middle of the village; there I spoke to the crowd, which had gathered in their hundreds, until about 10 o'clock. I first briefly described the history of the Reformation and the current relapse of the church, then I showed the difference between the old and new doctrine in the second article of the catechism in the doctrine of the person of Christ and the Holy Trinity, gave a few outlines of the small Lutheran and the current Nassau State Catechism, and then explained my conviction as to what was to be done, leaving it up to everyone to decide how they wanted to hold it. — In general, I found that the faith of the fathers was still remembered in Gemünden. Most of them felt their spiritual and ecclesiastical need, but were not clear about its cause and magnitude. Incidentally, when I made the most rigorous inquiries, I found that the people had no earthly interests in the matter; their pastor had not personally harmed anyone, but he was neglecting his office and everything was falling into decay, instead of the Gospel he only ever brought worldly things to the pulpit, etc. These were the speeches that were heard. Incidentally, the doctrinal differences I had explained were very quickly grasped and the old teaching, which had not been heard for so many years, was welcomed with great joy.

The next morning we had to consider what to do next. So that my further activities in Gemünden would not appear to be an unlawful encroachment on the rights of the State Church or be prevented by the police, I had a list drawn up without delay and those who were willing to convert to the Lutheran Church signed. There were immediately a lot of names. It was Friday; we had to act quickly to guide the agitated minds into the safest, most stable course possible, so I immediately agreed that I would come back the next Sunday and hold the first Lutheran service in Gemünden. With that I set off

for home, deeply moved by what I had experienced, knowing on the one hand what the new converts in Gemünden were still lacking at the moment, but on the other certain that the Lord was leading my way there and that a large number of souls would be truly won from the crowd. After all, the way was paved and the door opened to bring the preaching of the Word of God to the enemy; I relied on that.

On Sunday, June 23, early in the morning, still without any prospect or calculation of what was to happen, I set off from Steeden to Gemünden with 15 companions, who were driven to it by their natural interest in the matter. Even there, nobody knew how things were going to go, except that large crowds of people from near and far were waiting for the promised service. But of course, how and where? that was the question. There was nowhere to hold them all but under the large lime tree. So that's where we went after the service in the State Church had ended; a countless crowd surrounded me, the people of Steeden sang, I preached on the Gospel of Sunday, the 4th after Trinity, whereby I particularly adhered to the words of the 39th verse: "May one blind man show another the way? Will they not both fall into the pit?" which I explained quite simply and applied to the existing circumstances. The crowd listened with the greatest silence and solemnity, many hearts were moved to tears, God was visibly watching over the hour so that there was not the slightest disturbance of the service, only a few could be seen gently slipping away when I spoke in strong words about the "pit" meant in the text. Happy to have proclaimed the word of God, completely unconcerned about what was to become of it, I then went home, leaving the matter to my God. And God led them out gloriously; the word had accomplished what it had been spoken for, from that day onwards there were already around 100 families in Gemünden who publicly professed their allegiance to the Lutheran Church.

After 14 days I had promised to come to Gemünden again, this time not to preach, but to see how things were going and what further action could be taken. So I didn't leave until the afternoon. People had once again flocked from all over the surrounding area in the belief that I would be giving another public lecture; half an hour before Gemünden I was received by large crowds, the crowd grew from minute to minute, a colorful throng of people stood on the hill before Gemünden awaiting my arrival; I entered Gemünden surrounded by an almost incalculable number of people, estimated to be several thousand. Now good advice was at a premium; the police had already warned me against appearing in the open again for fear of disturbing the peace, and I really did shy away from leading the cause of faith in the world's way, in the world's clamor and crowds; I was concerned with a calm and thoroughly convincing proclamation of the truth. I therefore tried to achieve as much as possible; in the rather spacious house where I had entered, I had all the congregation leave and only strangers enter. There I spoke for about half an hour in the most dreadful crowd I had ever experienced; then I let them go home.

In the evening I once again gathered the Gemünden converts, now already 153 families, told them how things stood, and they all unanimously entrusted me with the task of finding them a righteous Lutheran preacher.

Thus, the way was initially broken for the preaching of the Word of God and the building of a Lutheran congregation in Gemünden. For the blessed progress of the cause, the Lord now used the best means there, as everywhere else: persecution, suffering and disgrace before the world. Unhindered, I held several more church services in Gemünden in the month of July, now regularly and orderly in a hall. The word of God was received with ever-increasing eagerness by the listeners

and their knowledge grew visibly from week to week. Then suddenly the authorities intervened with their power. Despite the complete religious freedom guaranteed in 1848, all official acts in Gemünden were forbidden to me, indeed, the entire withdrawal of the people of Gemünden from the State Church was not even recognized by the state government. At first, I could not explain these measures against us; it was hard to imagine at that time that they had a real suppression of religious freedom in mind. Finally, after several weeks of worry, drudgery and running around, the mystery was solved: the state government demanded an officially certified declaration of resignation from each individual in Gemünden in order to recognize the resignation from the State Church. Thus the obstacles we faced did not initially cause us any harm; some of those who were dishonest did separate themselves, which was only beneficial, but for most of those who had left, the resistance they experienced was precisely the means to awaken them even more spiritually, to lead them to the awareness that their cause was not a matter of the world, but a matter of faith and God, in which they had to suffer shame and persecution from the world. However, I was not at all angry with our adversaries for the fact that I personally was banned from all spiritual activities in Gemünden for some time; from then on I held Bible studies in smaller circles instead of the public church service. On the one hand, this saved me physical exertion, which I would not have been able to bear for the length of time, and on the other hand, it seemed to be even more blessed for the listeners, as Bible lessons met their greatest need at the time, the promotion of Christian knowledge, even more than actual sermons. The Lord so visibly blinded the minds of our adversaries that all their attacks had to serve only to truly further our cause. The power that the Word of God increasingly gained over the hearts in Gemünden was manifested in many proofs. The old had gone,

everything had become new, the taverns were shunned, old enmities were settled and reconciled, even former drunkards abandoned their evil deeds and introduced prayer into their homes, almost every evening the new converts were unanimously together, and the old books were sung and read back and forth in the houses. The Lord seemed to put faithful brotherly love into the hearts of many, and the love they unanimously showed me was often truly touching. My visits to Gemünden always seemed to be feasts of joy, which people had been waiting for all week; they would have liked to carry me back and forth as if on their hands, I was surrounded by many people everywhere and there was always the liveliest conversation, everyone's eyes shone and everyone's mouths laughed wherever they saw me. — Praise be to the name of the Lord, who moved hearts so powerfully!

While our faith grew inwardly, outwardly our cause seemed to come to a standstill. I was still forbidden to perform clerical duties, the appointment of a foreign Lutheran clergyman was also strictly forbidden and the state government left us completely unanswered to all other requests. My heart gradually began to grow heavy. Not that I was at all despondent about the Lord's cause, but — it had happened in such an unusual way when the Gemünden congregation was formed, whether this cause in Gemünden was therefore truly from God and not a ban: that was the thought that challenged me hard and often bowed me down completely; I went along for a long time without comfort and joy, it was as if the Lord's hand lay heavy on me day and night, that my sap dried up, as it becomes dry in summer, Sela.

In order to achieve some kind of goal, two emissaries from Gemünden went to Wiesbaden in September, and shortly afterwards I went there myself, to

enquire about the status of our affairs with our state government. There we learned a number of astonishing things. At first we were told that they had never intended to restrict our legal freedom of religion in any way; the measures taken against us seemed to be merely the result of exorbitant slanders that had been brought against us and only too easily believed; it seemed that we had only been kept waiting so long for better information out of our own embarrassment about the matter. We were delighted with this fortunate turn of events. The Lord did not allow us to be tempted beyond our means, but brought the temptation to an end in such a way that we were able to endure that our young congregation in Gemünden, in particular, was not allowed to encounter any harsher and longer resistance than was beneficial and necessary for it.

I could no longer have any reservations about holding church services in Gemünden again. We did so with great, unanimous joy from October 6 onwards. But of course, there was still a great need: how were we to find room for worship services for as many people as wanted to attend in Gemünden? We did not want to take back the hall we had previously used, which belonged to an innkeeper, as we now had to set up for a longer period of time. But here, too, the Lord graciously helped; he guided the mind of a man to give up his house for worship and to allow us to make a fairly bearable room by breaking down a partition wall. So everything was happily put in order until the first celebration of Holy Communion, which was to be on October 27th; an altar was prepared, pews were made and placed according to the church arrangement, and in the end the little house church didn't look so bad and when people crowded in, which always happened anyway, there were probably 2-300 people inside. I stayed in Gemünden for several days until everything was in order. In addition to the external arrangements that had to be made, many other things were put in order that would serve the existence of a proper

congregation, meetings were held daily, church singing was practiced, in short, everything was prepared so that the new minister, who was soon to be introduced, would find a congregation that was at least ordered and well-organized in the most necessary respects.

On October 13, we celebrated one of our most beautiful festivals in Steeden. Pastor Loehe from Bavaria had promised to visit us, and a number of Prussian ministers came with him; the more resolute among the defenders of the Lutheran confession in Hesse-Darmstadt were also invited. Thus the first conference of Lutheran theologians gathered in the otherwise so lonely Steeden parsonage. This was an indescribable joy for me in particular; how long I had to look for my nearest like-minded neighbors in Erfurt or Bavaria, and now such a lovely circle of Lutheran theologians, some of them from very close to us, was already gathering, and our little village of Steeden became a city on a hill. This is how the Lord lifts up the lowly and helps His servants. — The day was made even more special by the ordination of Candidate Ebert from Saxony, whom we had appointed for our Usingen congregation on Loehe's advice. The necessary steps were discussed with Loehe to appoint candidate Frommüller from Bavaria for our congregation in Gemünden, after other plans already made in this regard had been thwarted again.

Now that Ebert had been ordained, his soul seemed too powerfully moved for him to rest in Steeden for long. At his urgent request, October 16 was set for his introduction to his Usingen congregation. Accompanied by Pastor Rudel von der Saar, who stayed until late, we made our way to Anspach and were received with great joy by the waiting parishioners. It was a pity that the circumstances forced us to hurry too much, otherwise some things might have been more meaningful; however, despite the

working day, the service was well attended and passed off quietly and in blessing.

Eight days later, candidate Fronmüller arrived in Steeden from Bavaria. Without hesitation we decided on his ordination and introduction in Gemünden. The circumstances of the congregation there did not suffer at all from remaining without a pastor any longer; every week of delay threatened damage and danger for so many souls, and I myself could not bear the excessive workload that rested on me for another day. That's why this time the need drove me to act more quickly than would otherwise have been right and beneficial. But the Lord allowed everything to succeed, through pleading and understanding. — It was once again a great day of celebration for us when we ordained and dismissed Fronmüller in Gemünden on November 6. Ebert had come from Anspach, filled with fresh spirit and life from all the joyful and blessed experiences he had already had in his short time in office. On the Saturday before November 3, we set off for Gemünden. We were met by many people just an hour away, and on the border of the Gemünden district all the men of the community welcomed us with singing and so we made our way into the village in a large procession. The prayer hall was festively decorated. On Sunday morning, many of our church members from all over the country arrived, greeted and welcomed by their Gemünden brethren with great, visible joy and warm love. There was also a large number of strangers from the surrounding area. So, of course, the church service was crowded beyond all measure; but that is also a lovely flavor of such feast days, to see the surging and pushing of the crowds who come to celebrate, and we could not complain in Gemünden that the whole celebration of the day would have been disturbed by even a single discordant sound, despite the crowd that had flocked together. The service, sermon and ordination made a deeply moving and lasting impression on everyone. Late in the evening, Ebert and I bid

farewell to the people of Gemünden, accompanied by the blessings of the grateful congregation, who could not rejoice enough in their newly received pastor.

In other places in our Nassau region, too, it seemed as if people wanted to imitate Gemünden's example. Even a village not far from the Rhine informed me that the entire Evangelical community wanted to convert to the Lutheran Church. For 33 years it had had a pastor who was generally accused not only of the usual unbelief, but also of the most disgusting way of life, public scandals, drunkenness and even thievery. The congregation had already made many complaints in higher places; they had not been going to church for years, but in vain. I visited the village in response to the invitation I had received, found a few souls who were really eager for salvation, held a meeting and a Bible study, but that was all. The people had already fallen too deeply and firmly into the enemy's net; there was no trace of any memory of the faith and the church of the fathers, no old hymn book, no catechism, no truth of salvation was known any more, it hardly seemed that the people still knew the name of the triune God in whom they had been baptized, by which I tried to make the difference between the old and the new doctrine a little clear to them. I left the village with a sad heart, abandoning it to its misery and suffering, from which no help seemed possible for the people at the time. — Things were much better at first in Sch____, half an hour from Steeden. There, too, the local pastor had been offending the congregation for years through unbelief and other annoyances. In addition, some people in Sch____. had already converted to the Lutheran Church, I had been in and out of the village for a long time and from many statements one could conclude that the testimony of faith had not remained without a general impression. Then a dispute over a tax payment finally led the

community to a complete break with their pastor, the whole stream of long-standing complaints and grievances against him broke out publicly, no one went to church anymore, so that some Sundays the bell was not even rung; on the other hand, at Christmas the local council sent a messenger to me with the request to hold services in Sch____. I responded by explaining that although I had no business interfering the affairs of the Sch____ congregation, I was prepared to hold a service for my own parishioners, whom I already had in Sch____. Then whoever wanted to could come. A large hall was now eagerly prepared in the old manor house, where I preached on Matt. 6:33. One could see that the Lord had set out in great grace to visit the place, for the sermon made a deep impression, it would not have taken much for everyone to be persuaded to become true Lutherans, even former enemies of the Word of God went home beaten and overcome in their hearts. So I preached four times in Sch____ until the authorities intervened and put a stop to it. Then I held a series of Bible studies, which were no less blessed. Then God Himself intervened and threw me on a long, hard sickbed due to the complete exhaustion of my strength. A visible judgment of God for Sch____! In general, the congregation there had not accepted the Word of God, after much back and forth, things remained as they were, the hearts became more and more lost in the earthly quarrel with their pastor, through the seduction and machinations of the village tavern keepers, finally all religious matters were completely suppressed in the movement, a clear sign for anyone who had eyes to distinguish between Christ and Belial. That is why God so suddenly took the preaching of his Word away from Sch____. A small number of truly awakened and believing souls were won in Sch____ on this occasion and added to the already older members of our church there,

so that the whole event was a joy and blessing for us.

Thus the year 1851 marked the end of the period of growth and expansion for our Lutheran Free Church in Nassau, which the Lord had graciously granted us. Not counting individual conversions, the number of our Lutheran congregations in Nassau has remained pretty much the same from that time until today, a remarkable example of how the Lord ignites such powerful spiritual and ecclesiastical movements through His Spirit at certain times, while afterwards there are periods of complete silence and stagnation for many decades. It was only at Easter 1851 that we were able to experience a joyful outward event; Through the mediation of Pastor Loehe in Bavaria, who at that time took care of our Nassau Lutheran Church with particular warmth and supported it in every way (I had already visited him in 1847 and joined him closely at that time), I received an assistant preacher, Fleischmann from Bavaria, to whom I handed over all my parishioners outside Steeden and the surrounding area, for me a God-sent help just at the right hour, as my physical strength was completely broken for a long time. Nevertheless, after so long and complete ecclesiastical loneliness, my dear readers can imagine how happy I felt at the side of my three ministerial brothers, with whom I was one heart and one soul according to the state of my knowledge at the time.

7.

New Battles. ↑

It was hardly to be expected that the powerful flourishing of a Lutheran Free Church in Nassau could not remain without great hostility and persecution from the world.

In the district of Usingen, Pastor Ebert's sphere of activity, it seemed that after his introduction to Anspach, the center of the congregation there, events were about to take place. The local police authorities and the local Evangelical pastor opposed Ebert's stay with great bitterness. Encouraged by this, the mob did not refrain from the grossest insults; they reviled and made noise in the streets, threatened to maltreat him, so that for some time Pastor Ebert had to fear going out unaccompanied, dogs were set on the Lutherans, windows were smashed, and Ebert was even hit by a stone during the service, they threatened to riot themselves, sent letters of incendiary letters, etc., as it seemed, with the intention of persuading the higher authorities to remove Ebert. However, it was not according to the thoughts of men, but according to God's advice, so all their threats were in vain, Ebert remained, and in Anspach in particular the number of Lutherans increased not insignificantly. Even some families from nearby Hesse-Homburg joined our Usingen congregation, so that their total number rose to about 200 members, and the congregation was visibly blessed. This was no less the case in Gemünden, where the Lord worked great miracles of His grace on many souls in those first years of the existence of the Lutheran congregation there. The large number of people who initially converted to the Lutheran church were gradually sifted, but the majority remained, still a sizable congregation, to the great annoyance of the enemies of the truth, who tried with all weapons of malice and lies to bring down the Gemünden congregation, so that even the criminal court had to appear in the village on several occasions for judicial investigations. Our state government also showed its great annoyance at the emergence of a Lutheran Free Church in Nassau. My assistant preacher, Pastor Fleischmann, was denied permission to stay in Nassau,

so that he was only able to stay with difficulty for about a year (but just long enough for me to regain my strength a little). I personally was at first forbidden, though without any legal cause, to visit Gemünden at all on pain of immediate arrest (a useless prohibition, of course, since the Gemünden Lutheran congregation now had its own shepherd), and when I complained in an audience at the highest place about these so quite unlawful violations, they did not hesitate to tell me to my face that "they wished me to the devil", testimony and sign enough of how they felt about us. Well, thank God, I didn't go to the devil, but am still standing unshaken today at the post where God placed me, while all our adversaries at that time have long since fallen and gone to their place.

The year 1852, however, brought us completely new and difficult battles. In mid-summer, as a result of the political reaction that had taken place everywhere, the March freedoms of 1848 were suddenly revoked and everything was returned to its previous state of affairs. Our state government was happy to use this to start open warfare against us Lutherans again. They did not want to proceed as roughly as in 1846; they wanted to give a certain appearance of toleration, as they could not do otherwise, but we were to gradually die out, they wanted to cut the lifelines of our Lutheran cause, so that it would "not tear further into the people". Our two pastors, Ebert and Fronmüller, were also expelled as foreigners and denied further residence in the country. I myself was forbidden to perform any ministerial acts outside the village of Steeden, to whose territory my entire ministerial activity was to be restricted, and then a legal action was brought against me for public defamation of the Nassau Church (on the basis of an essay I had published in the Breslau Church Gazette), as a result of which I

was under investigation by the criminal court for almost two years (although in the end nothing substantial could be proven against me). Apparently, however, the intention was to declare me completely unworthy of the clerical office and then to take action against me if the judiciary had convicted me. — So a new and second period of persecution lasting several years descended upon us. I myself could not submit to the ban on ministerial acts among my out-of-town parishioners, but declared that I wanted to continue my ministry in accordance with my Christian duty until force would prevent me. The latter, however, was now much more difficult to avoid than before, as our congregations were much more numerous and therefore could not be gathered so easily in small hiding places, back rooms, etc. But we had the great advantage over that earlier first persecution that our church services in Steeden at least always remained free and unhindered; there was no need for such rough violence against me personally either, it just seemed more aimed at the gradual extinction of the Lutheran Church movement in the country. — Pastor Ebert resigned from his office in the Usingen congregation after a joint council and accepted a call to the separated congregation in Cologne. Pastor Fronmüller in Gemünden, on the other hand, tried to hold on to his congregation in Gemünden for another year. But in vain. He suffered many a severe, harsh persecution and unpleasantness when he sneaked in and out of Gemünden, especially to baptize children. Once he could only be saved from the hands of his pursuing enemies by breaking through a wall. The fact that he was a foreigner gave the police the worst possible means of dealing with him; he was simply expelled by the police and could now be thrown into a common prison every time he trespassed and transported across the border like any other unauthorized vagrant. The latter happened several times, demonstrating the impossibility for a foreigner to remain in the country despite the police prohibitions.

And so our church distress and abandonment grew, especially with my own physical strength still so weakened. But lo and behold, God sent us help again at the right time! In the autumn of 1853, just as Pastor Frömmlicher was coming to an end, God brought us a new fellow believer to replace him, **Pastor Hein**, who had come to faith through his close family connection with me and had now converted to the Lutheran Church. With fresh, youthful vigor, Hein soon joined in the work and faithfully stood by my side. His conversion was not without some difficult external struggles. But God's grace proved to be so abundantly rich in him and in us that we were not put to shame in any adversity, nor did we suffer shipwreck in our faith. Hein and his family first moved in with us in Steeden, in my parsonage. There we spent unforgettable times of brotherly love and closeness that are perhaps rarely bestowed on people. Not only did we draw entirely from one pot and one treasury (which was all the easier as we had nothing of our own, but both had to take daily from God's hand what He gave us), but my brother Hein and I were also in truth two people with one soul. Unfortunately, the growth of our two families did not allow us to live so closely together in the cramped Steeden parsonage for more than a year. For a short time Hein sought refuge with his parents and then moved to Frankfurt to take up residence there for a few years. **This was made possible by the promise of fixed annual support from the Loehe church circle in Bavaria**, as well as other help from friends from outside. Frankfurt seemed to be the most suitable place of residence for Hein at that time, because from there he could most easily reach the Usingen and Wiesbaden congregations, whose spiritual care he had had to take over since his transfer because of their distance from Steeden.

So these congregations became his professional circle and have remained so to this day. The small Wiesbaden congregation, however, grew considerably through Hein; partly some believing families from Nordenstadt, Hein's former State Church congregation, two hours from Wiesbaden, joined, partly our church services in Wiesbaden were also diligently attended by people from outside the spa as soon as they were held in a firmer and more regular church order. Hein's stay in Frankfurt also had the blessed consequence that he became known there too, and later a small Frankfurt congregation was formed, partly from some Frankfurt burgher families and partly from some Nassau parishioners who settled in Frankfurt, which belonged entirely to our Nassau Lutheran Free Church. It should also be mentioned here that Pastor Hein lived in Frankfurt until the early 1960s and then moved to Wiesbaden when the Nassau state government allowed it.

After Hein's conversion, the latter [Nassau state government] had by no means given him permission to live with us or to hold the clerical office. At first, all this had to be done in silence, as far as it was possible without direct public conflict with the authorities. Hein experienced harsh persecution in some places. This was particularly the case in Nordenstadt, where he was best known as the former local pastor of the State Church, and where he had attracted the anger of the mob through his devout preaching at the time. The mob rejoiced at the opportunity to vent their anger on the witness to the truth and to help the police track him down and hand him over. Amid jeers and rude insults from the mob, Pastor Hein in Nordenstadt had to allow himself to be captured and led away; on another occasion he almost only escaped the hands of the wicked at the risk of his life under God's apparent protection while hiding in a garden at night. But God preserved him and

did not allow the holy cause of His Church to suffer any damage.

The situation in Gemünden was the most difficult. Although our congregation there, by God's grace, was now so far established in Christian knowledge and faith that external persecution no longer caused it any offense or disruption, the devil brought it almost to the brink of destruction through another serious challenge. The Gemünden congregation was devotedly attached to their pastor Fronmüller; they could not help but want him for the rest of their lives and hoped that he could survive the storm of external persecution in Gemünden just as well as I could in Steeden. But when Fronmüller resigned from his office and left Nassau, the people of Gemünden were very upset; but they did not transfer this upset to their highly revered and beloved pastor Fronmüller (although I had expressly placed the whole matter in his sole discretion!), but to us other pastors, Hein and myself, as if we had expelled Fronmüller in order to be the sole masters and rulers of the Nassau Lutheran congregations. All the pleas and ideas did not help, hearts remained hard and bitter against us and for 1-2 years, after Pastor Fronmüller had already left Nassau, the Gemünden congregation stayed completely away from us. Oh, that was great hardship and cost us unspeakable sighs and heartache! In addition, the external circumstances were so difficult that I was not even allowed by the police to go to Gemünden freely to talk to the people, but was still forbidden by the police to enter the town; but the people of Gemünden didn't want to know anything about Pastor Hein, whom they didn't know personally anyway. So I had the same fate with our Gemünden congregation as St. Paul had with the Galatians; I had to give birth to them as my dear little children once again with fear. After much pleading and begging, I finally managed

to persuade some members of the congregation to accept the help I offered them in their complete ecclesiastical abandonment. At first I persuaded some of them to join me in a neighboring Roman Catholic village, where we celebrated Holy Communion together for the first time after a long interruption. Gradually, everyone else joined in again and the old wound healed. The congregation recognized the old love with which I served them again, and their old love for me was soon rekindled. I then regularly went to Gemünden one Sunday every four weeks, for a very long time, of course, only in secret. But for a number of years we held our Sunday services in quiet places in the forest, and especially in the summertime they gradually developed into beautiful, lovely open-air festivals, where everyone gathered in large groups without the authorities preventing us from doing so. — In 1854 we received a new minister of state in Nassau, who disliked the oppression of the Lutherans. This meant that the bans imposed on us were not directly lifted, but it soon became apparent that their implementation was slackening. Well-meaning officials soon began to ignore us completely and let us go quietly. So we were soon able to build up freely again in most places. Only in Nordenstadt and Gemünden were we met with very hostile sub-officials who applied the old police regulations against us with the greatest severity and rudeness as long as they had not been expressly repealed. So it happened that I was often arrested and taken away in Gemünden, but it had no effect; the local police still did not allow church services in the village itself, and we were forced to celebrate all our Sunday services outside in the forest in summer and winter until around Easter of 1860. Only then did our state government in Wiesbaden agree to give the local official in Gemünden a hint to put an end to such futile acts

of personal enmity. However, we did not obtain any further ecclesiastical concessions or recognition from our Nassau state government as long as it remained in power, until 1866.

8.

The Pure Lutheran Doctrine. ↑

These were paths of a completely different kind and a completely new direction in which both I myself and our Nassau Lutheran Free Church were led by God's providence in the middle of the 1850s, with which the previous section of my story concluded. While until then it had been a time of the first revival, gathering and founding of Lutheran Christians and congregations among us, it was no less a divine grace, for which we cannot praise and glorify God enough, that this time of the first building of a Lutheran church among us was now followed by an equally richly blessed time of inner development and especially of a deeper, clear and firm foundation in pure Lutheran doctrine. (It was only some time later that a genuinely Lutheran external church and congregational order emerged from this in our Nassau Lutheran congregations).

In order to lead us in this new direction, God first used a series of external circumstances and conditions. After all, it was a change in our entire previous ecclesiastical sense and aspirations, a diversion from the more external expansion of the Church to the inner, to the deeper inner foundation in faith and doctrine.

Since the first awakening of Christian life in my Runkel congregation and the subsequent first grasp of the foundations of Lutheran doctrine,

the resignation from the State Church and the associated struggles had followed so quickly, then came without interruption the time of the mighty growth of our Lutheran Free Church in Nassau and my ministry work thus spread out, which not only drew all my senses and thoughts so completely to this side, but also robbed me of all time for theological study. In addition, since my visit to Bavaria in 1847 I had been in close and active contact with Pastor Loehe, so that I exchanged letters with him almost every week, he was my closest advisor in everything, and what was of particular importance, I had received my three assistants in the holy preaching ministry from him. But Loehe's whole school of thought (as well as that of the Lutherans in Breslau with whom I had come into contact) had always been less focused on clear and firm foundations in pure Lutheran doctrine, but rather on church ideals in which liturgy, discipline and the constitution of the church were of paramount importance to him (his first booklet on the doctrine of ministry appeared in 1851, in which his false doctrine and direction were already clearly expressed). He also drew us younger men, who were guided by Loehe at the time, completely in this direction. In particular, my three young ministerial brothers from Bavaria had come to me directly from Loehe's immediate surroundings and school. So it really came about that we in Nassau also began to follow Loehe's ideas and to focus not a little on liturgy, external church constitution and discipline. I had already introduced Loehe's agenda in Steeden in 1847 in the absence of another one and we held our services according to it. There were even many chiliastic ideas among my fellow ministers and myself. With the powerful flourishing of the Lutheran Free Church in Nassau, as we had experienced it, we seemed to be the place where all of Loehe's ideals for the external building of the church, for which he had also inspired us, could be realized. But God looked into it with mercy and shattered all the

beautiful castles in the air that we had built for ourselves. First of all, it was of the greatest importance to me that my three Bavarian ministers could not stay in Nassau, but were forced to leave the land again after two or three years in office. Their influence on me and the further strengthening of Loehe's direction was thus substantially broken and nullified. But in addition, all our other external church hopes were now shattered. From 1850 and 1851 onwards, the external growth of the church suddenly and strangely came to a complete standstill, as already mentioned above. The authorities began to persecute us again and put all kinds of obstacles in our way. In addition, there were all sorts of other crosses that weighed heavily on us and made our hearts heavy, including the sad confusion with our Gemünden congregation reported above, which was annoyed by us and threatened to fall away from us completely. The glorious church dreams we had made for ourselves had come to an end and we had to learn to place the anchor of our consolation and our hope on a different and better foundation than Loehe's ideas and ideals of liturgy, discipline and constitution of the church. In this direction, from the more external building of the church to the inner foundation of faith, my personal circumstances finally helped me a great deal. The above-mentioned serious illness, a liver ailment, which had attacked me as a result of the great physical exertions I had experienced, as well as the constant extraordinary excitement in the years 1849 and 1850, weakened my body for several years and forced me to external rest and quiet. The illness had emaciated me to a miserable skeleton of skin and bones and it took a long time for the diseased liver to heal completely, but by the grace of God it did. For several years, however, I was almost completely incapable of traveling and going out of town, so that for two years I had to keep a small horse

(which my dear Steedeners took care of) in order not to have to completely refrain from visiting the out-of-town parishioners. (However, in order not to overburden myself too much with my proud carriage, it was also according to the old rule that God let me get into many a great hardship and discomfort with it, three times even in obvious great danger to my life, so that I was glad from the bottom of my heart when I could finally get rid of the horse and go on foot again). In addition to the physical discomfort, another external pressure weighed heavily on me and my family. We lacked a solid external livelihood and this often resulted in great hardship and grinding poverty. In the years 1846-1848, when I lived with my family without a fixed household and place of residence, we were content to live off the free gifts of love that were occasionally given to us, and God never allowed us to suffer from want. Even after that we continued to do so and as a result we neglected to give our Steeden church treasury the necessary external order and organization. The lack of proper concepts of external church order (in theory and practice), as it was still with us at that time, was certainly largely to blame for this. Added to this was human weakness, laziness and carelessness, which unfortunately is still to be found among believing Christians. Because we therefore left the income of our Steeden church treasury too much to the occasional free love instinct of the church members, without sufficient firm commitment to the same, it could not fail that there were many gaps in it, especially when the times of first love after our departure from the State Church were over. God always graciously helped us through every need, and when there was a shortage in Steeden, help often had to come from abroad, even sometimes from distant Norway, from my old, faithful university friend, Professor Caspari in Christiania. But things were often tight and difficult in the Steeden parsonage (especially as the number of children and guests

increased greatly). But God's fatherly goodness and mercy also allowed these times of hardship to serve our best interests; he used them to lead us further and further away from all the lofty church building plans into the depths, to save us from a merely external naming and running and to bring us to a quiet contemplation within ourselves. The mood that was created in me by my entire life in those years is expressed in the words that I wrote with my own hand in large Gothic script on the Steeden pulpit, where they had been written for years: "JEsus alone". These words were not meant in a pietistic sense, but in opposition to all false externalization of church life, which at least threatened us with danger.

But let us now return to our historical narrative.

Of course, we Lutherans in Nassau had separated ourselves from the Union; we wanted to be Lutheran. But I have already mentioned several times how little deeper knowledge of pure Lutheran doctrine we still had at the beginning, and in the first ten to twelve years after our withdrawal from the Union we still lacked all and any awareness of a diversity of parties and tendencies in the field of the Lutheran Church itself. At that time, however, the ecclesiastical parties and tendencies had not yet become as outwardly separate as they are now; they were not yet so well known, and the struggle between the parties was still dormant in Germany. Only in America had it already flared up between the Missouri and Buffalo Synods, and the Missourians had already sent two delegates over to Germany in 1851 to come to an understanding with Pastor Loehe, who at that time was particularly supportive of the American Lutheran Church. Unfortunately, this had the consequence that from then on Loehe and the Missourians became completely estranged and became more and more entrenched in his peculiar ecclesiastical direction. In the rest of Germany, however, including

in Nassau, the struggle of the Missouri Synod for the old and pure Lutheran doctrine was still completely misunderstood and mostly completely unknown in those 1850s; indeed, at that time the development of the Lutheran Church in Germany had not even progressed so far that one would have been able to make any kind of judgment about such struggles as the Missourians were waging. It was only from 1860 onwards that the struggle between the parties also awoke in Germany, and there, too, people were increasingly drawn into it. — I emphasize the latter in particular because the time in which we Nassau Lutheran pastors (Pr. Hein and I) came to a clear and firm ecclesiastical and theological position was in the years 1854-1858, that is, before there was any talk of theological party struggles in Germany or before any closer connection between us and the Missouri Synod took place (and especially before we had any thought of the later founding of the Steeden institution). *)

*) When Professor Dr. Walther visited me in Steeden in the summer of 1860, I was already in full agreement and communion of spirit with him before any personal or written contact had taken place between him and me. It was only as a result of this unity that he found in me that he suggested to me the idea of founding the Steeden Institute.

Our ecclesiastical position in Nassau was formed quite freely and independently of all this and has remained completely the same in all essential principles through all later struggles, as it was already formed clearly and firmly at that time by God's grace on the basis of pure Lutheran doctrine. **)

***) It was not until 25 years later that Pastor Hein's lamentable apostasy occurred.

It is therefore only with great injustice that we are accused that our ecclesiastical direction is only the fruit of our partisanship, our dependence on the Missourians, and so on. Our conscience gives us, thank God, the testimony that in our quite pure striving for truth, completely unclouded and independent of all human factions, divine mercy and faithfulness

led us in those years of our inner ecclesiastical development to a clear and firm grasp of the pure Lutheran doctrine. It was not until several years later that we in Nassau also came into the tangle of Germany's ecclesiastical party struggles on the one hand, and into closer contact with the Missouri Synod on the other.

The next external reason for us in Nassau to research the right Lutheran doctrine was the pastoral conferences that began in 1854 among our separated Lutheran pastors on the Rhine. In those years, Pastor Eichhorn had left the Union in Baden, as had Pastor Haver in Radevormwald, after whose assassination Pastor Crome came to Rade. Pastor Ebert had come to Cologne from Nassau, Pastor Hein had joined us in Nassau, Pastor Rudel had been called to Saarbrücken, and later Pastor Semm. We all joined together closely and formed a Rhenish pastoral conference in 1854. In that year we held it in Cologne and, at Pastor Crome's suggestion, discussed the doctrine of baptism. Among us pastors at that time, there were still remnants of old pietistic ideas everywhere, soon Romanizing errors, such as those emanating from the standard-bearers of Lutheranism at that time, Loehe in Bavaria, Huschke in Breslau and others, but nowhere was there clarity about all this, nowhere was there a clear and definite formulation and distinction of the individual ecclesiastical and theological directions, everything was still mixed up. This also came to the fore in our Rhineland pastoral conference. Personally, I was thunderstruck by this first experience of doctrinal confusion among Lutheran theologians; I had thought myself a good Lutheran until then and now I saw how completely ignorant I still was about so many important questions of Lutheran doctrine. I returned home from that first pastoral conference in Cologne deeply shaken in heart and conscience. But the wake-up call had not hit me in vain;

I now began a time of serious struggle and research into the true, deeper basis of pure doctrine, which soon led me to a completely new church life and awareness. I am not afraid to confess that only now did I come to real clarity even about such fundamental Lutheran doctrines as justification, baptism and the Lord's Supper, etc. In short, it was only during these years that I began to study and learn to understand Lutheran dogmatics, especially to read the writings of Luther and the old Fathers, which until then had been completely foreign to me, and my soul eagerly absorbed this basis of clear knowledge of Lutheran doctrine, which it had lacked until then. But again, it was God's special providence that the whole state of our external circumstances at that time, as I have described above, also gave me the necessary time for theological study.

In close connection with the doctrine of the holy sacraments, it was especially the doctrines of church and ministry, as well as the power of the keys, around which the theological struggle of that time revolved and about which I already then came to full clarity, in contrast to the Romanizing errors of our time. I cannot say that I was really fixed in the latter; I only swam unclear and confusedly with the great current of contemporary ideas prevailing in Germany, according to which one always ascribes a kind of authority and dominion over the congregations to the preaching office, even if one is not clear how and why. But one takes the greatest offense at the assertion that the highest judgment and rule should be and stand with the church, i.e. with the congregation. I also shared this offense at the time and I could not understand the basis of the symbolic Lutheran doctrine that "the keys were given to the church". Of course, the latter was so large and clear in our symbols that I did not dare to contradict it, but was inwardly convinced that it must be infallibly true, but

I did not know how to find the reason and cause of this truth. (As a curious example of the general lack of clarity in this matter, as it prevailed in Germany at that time, I could relate that in 1860, on the occasion of a synod in Breslau, in a company of 8 to 10 pastors, I was the only one who could give an account of why the church had the keys). But it took me two full years of pondering, researching and praying before I finally came to clarity. I had Walther's book "[*The Voice of Our Church \[on the Question of Church and Ministry\]*](#)" and brooded day and night over what the old theologians had to say about the church and ministry. "They understood it better than you," I was constantly saying, but thank God it never occurred to me to rely on the mere words of the teachers of the Church, I had no peace until I had a clear and certain basis from God's Word. It was Luther's words in his letter to those in Prague, where he says that the church has the power of the keys, "they must then be defended against the Lord Christ himself, if he dwells among two or three". That opened my eyes: Through faith Christ dwells in His Church, even if the latter are only two or three; through faith and by virtue of justification Christ is one with the church, therefore no distinction can be made between Christ and the church in all rights and goods; rather, everything that Christ has acquired with his blood belongs to the church. Therefore, as surely as Christ has the keys, so does the church, and as surely as Christ entrusts and transfers the keys to the pastor to administer them publicly in his name, so does the church; indeed, Christ, who dwells in the church, does all this in it and through it, and if the church does it, then Christ himself does it. To deny this is nothing other than to deny justification and faith. These were the biblical truths that

struck me and brought me to victorious clarity and certainty. From there I was able to see through the profound error in the Romanizing ideas of our newer German theology, I recognized what a profoundly consequential heresy it is to understand by church or congregation [*Kirche oder Gemeinde*] in the proper sense and according to its nature not the congregation of believers, who through faith are partakers of all the rights and goods of Christ, thus also of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, but an external visible institution, as the Breslau theologians and others want it to be. etc., in which all church authority is vested in the external offices established by God. It was at a conference in Baden in 1858, which was also attended by Alsatian theologians, that I was able to testify for the first time with clarity to the correct Lutheran doctrine of church and ministry. — The clear and firm foundation of Lutheran doctrine that I had gained in this, however, soon led me to clarity and decisiveness in all other biblical and Lutheran church teachings.

In this way I initially arrived at theological clarity and firmness in Lutheran doctrine quite independently of all external personal influences. The fact that such grace was bestowed upon me, while the whole of modern German theology has fallen into obscurity and confusion and into non-Lutheran ways, I must and can only attribute above all to undeserved divine mercy, which always chooses what is small and which is nothing to glorify itself in. Thus, for the price of divine mercy, the old pure Lutheran truth had to become clear and obvious to me, a very simple and unlearned man, while so many high and great scholars of our time, especially at German universities, and many others pass it by. My unfamiliarity with the errors of the newer theology, as I still had them at that time (even the whole Romanizing Lutheranism of our time, as well as the Breslau doctrine, was still mainly foreign to me at that time), as well as my external ecclesiastical

isolation, which kept me away from other ecclesiastical circles, contributed in any case to protect me from deeper involvement in false theological directions. As far as I am able to give myself an account of this, I may say that my whole position in Lutheran church doctrine, as well as my entire earlier conviction of faith, was not the product of mere academic study. Still less was it human authority or a sinful swearing by the words of Luther, Professor Dr. Walther and others that somehow determined me; least of all, however, was it a kind of Pharisaism, arrogance or other dishonest external intentions, as some opponents have accused me of, that drove me to my exclusive Lutheranism. In the most serious self-examination I am aware in my conscience before God that in all my theological searching and research I was only concerned with divine truth on the basis of Holy Scripture. In believing simplicity I knew that the Bible, and indeed the whole Bible from the first to the last letter in it, is God's Word, and that this whole Word of God is useful for teaching that everything in it, down to the smallest detail, is revealed by God for us, spoken to us, given to us for salvation and commanded to be kept. Therefore I was very serious about knowing and recognizing all this truth revealed to us by God, not regarding anything in it as unimportant and insignificant, but believing all that the prophets and apostles have spoken. Therefore I had no rest, I was driven day and night to ponder, search and pray until I had clearly recognized what has God said? what is written? what is truth? My heart and conscience were not satisfied until I had clarity and certainty of my faith and until I had found the firm and sure foundation and proof in God's Word in which my soul could rest. In all the great doctrinal battles that I have gone through in my life, it always cost me the

greatest struggle with myself before I dared to argue with my opponents. The responsibility of such battles and the resulting church divisions before God often weighed heavily on my soul, and it drove me to examine my conscience many thousands of times to see whether it was sure of the solid foundation of God's Word. Oh truly, in such battles of conscience, heart and kidneys are tested, purified and cleansed from all merely human running, from all merely human vain scholarship or carnal partisanship, placed and founded without falsehood and purely on God's Word. Yes, such a clear and firm position of conscience towards the Word of God, which is both far from all indifference to the truth revealed by God, and equally far from all personal ideas, as well as from all vain human science, which wants to master God's Word, explain its riddles and mysteries with reason and in this way builds straw and stubble on the foundation of truth, which is laid in Holy Scripture: this right attitude to the Word of God is above all necessary in order to arrive at the knowledge of pure biblical and Lutheran doctrine and truth and at real certainty of faith therein. My personal living experience testifies to this. Only in this way can we achieve what the holy apostle says: "It is a precious thing for the heart to be established, which happens through grace". God's free grace, and God's grace alone, has given this to me, not human stubbornness and prideful desire to know better than other people. For this I praise and glorify God with a grateful heart.

It was also of great and decisive importance for my entire theological development, as I had it in those 1850s, that the doctrine of justification was at the center of all my knowledge from the very beginning. I had already come to a vivid knowledge and experience of sin at my first conversion, so from then on

"by grace alone" was the foundation and source of my entire Christian and theological thinking and life. But the more clearly and fully I learned to grasp the doctrine of justification, the more my eyes were sharpened for the divine depth of the gospel, for the wonderful inner harmony and the coherence of all its teachings. For this reason, the false science of our time and the indifferentism that does not take the Word of God and its pure teaching so seriously, but always mixes the divine and the human, were completely incompatible with my clear stand in justification. A heart that has its only comfort and support in justification by grace alone clings just as firmly and exclusively to the Word of God, in which alone it finds grace, as it does to divine grace. Thus the right standing in justification in general brings the healthy and sober spirit of faith, which is based on Christ and his Word alone and holds fast to him, which is free from all false imaginary feelings, as well as from all vain works-driven activity, as well as from all other self-made consolation and false peace, from all self-delusion through one's own human ideas, but seeks its only support and peace only in God's Word. Without doubt, his clear and firm stand on the doctrine of justification and the foundation of all other doctrines in this center of divine truth and the saving gospel gave Luther in his time the unbending firmness with which he stood so steadfastly on the foundation of faith and pure doctrine in all battles, without yielding a finger's breadth to his opponents. I praise God's wonderful grace, which also led me to the same firm, faithful and pure Lutheran position in faith and doctrine without all my merit and worthiness, least of all through my own running and walking. It was only because of this mind and spirit that I was able, according to 1 Cor. 2:2, that I wrote the words on the Steeden pulpit at that time: "Jesus alone"; only this has

also prevented me from seeing in the great doctrinal battles of our time, as they were waged in those earlier years over the doctrines of church and ministry, as well as in general in all the errors of our newer theology, merely human squabbles or theological quibbles over which one argues, but I recognized deeply and vividly that in all this it was directly and in the deepest depths about the doctrine of faith and justification, that is, about canker sores that gnaw at the deepest root of the saving gospel. That is why I could in no way give in to the request made of me by both the Breslau and the Immanuel Synods to see in the doctrinal differences between us only theological views in which everyone should be left to his own opinion. Such thoughts have always been far from my mind; from the very beginning I had to oppose them with the clear and firm conviction that I was only concerned with the Word of God, with divine truth, with faithful adherence to biblical and moral principles. I was only concerned with the Word of God, with divine truth, with faithful adherence to biblical and church-Lutheran doctrine, and actually with the core and star of the whole Gospel, in which all other doctrines converge as their center, with the true doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone with all its consequences.

Finally, I must mention one more thing that had a great influence on my entire position in Lutheran doctrine: my position on the teachings of the orthodox Lutheran Church, Luther and the old church teachers. Their sayings have indeed become signposts for my search and research in God's Word. And the testimony of faith of the orthodox church, as it is found both in its symbols and in the writings of its great orthodox teachers, should serve us for this purpose. Not that we should accept the pure doctrine for the sake of it or consider it to be true because a Luther etc. taught it, certainly not, but the doctrinal writings of the orthodox church

should be testimonies of the right Bible teaching, signposts to it. That is what they have been to me, and that has saved me from many errors; it has especially driven me not merely to follow my own weak insight, not to regard my own personal understanding of Holy Scripture as the only correct and infallible one, no, I bowed with all my heart to Luther, M. Chemnitz, J. Gerhard and others, I dared not contradict them; I was filled with the consciousness that the wisdom and knowledge of such great men of God was far higher than my own; in addition, I was convinced of the existence of an orthodox church, which I had recognized as the Lutheran Church, the certainty that in the symbolic teaching of this orthodox church the right teaching of Holy Scripture, the apostolic faith, as it had been from the beginning in the orthodox church on earth, was laid down. So this awareness drove me to search and research until I had convinced myself from the Holy Scriptures of the divine truth and correctness of the teaching of Luther and the Lutheran Church, I searched and researched, although it took years, as I have told you above, until I had found in God's Word the reasons and proofs on which the pure Lutheran teaching is based. Thus God's grace enabled me to learn to recognize and understand the pure doctrine and not to stray into my own ways. But I am convinced that all theological research and study that does not follow the paths I have described here leads and must lead astray, as well as to the arrogance that ultimately makes one's own wisdom the arbiter and master not only of the teaching of the Church, but also of the Word of God itself. The whole course of development and state of our present-day learned theology bears witness to this.

My first personal contact with the Missourians in America took place just at this time of my earnest search and research for the basis of the pure doctrine. An old pupil of mine, who had been interrupted in his studies with me by illness, had gone to America

in 1851 to devote himself to farming. After a few years, however, when his health had improved again, he nevertheless entered the practical theological seminary, and so it was through him that Professor Crämer, then already director of the seminary, first heard about me and my passion and love for teaching young people. He immediately wrote to me and told me about the great need for preachers in America and the lack of students in the theological seminary since Pastor Loehe had turned his back on them in Bavaria. At the same time, Professor Crämer asked me to take Loehe's place in helping them to recruit students in Germany for their seminary. At that time I knew very little about the Missourians as a whole, and I myself was not yet sufficiently clear in my doctrine to agree with them, but by the grace of God I had already recognized that without unity in faith and doctrine no common church work was possible. I therefore wrote this quite openly to Professor Crämer, and it was precisely this statement, perhaps the first such that the Missourians had received from Germany, that won the heart of this dear, now blessed witness to the truth, so that he took the trouble to begin a very long and detailed correspondence with me about the theological questions pending among us (at the same time in the name of the Fort Wayne Pastoral Conference), which gave me great encouragement and support. However, this correspondence was not decisive for me, but only the above-mentioned statement by Luther opened the door to the right understanding of Scripture for me. Our Rhenish pastoral conferences, however, could not bring me any encouragement in this respect, they only brought me together with those who were just as unclear as I was, but they were one of the first places in Germany where the doctrinal questions of church and ministry were discussed, and where my first small treatise on the sacred ministry of preaching, written at that time, testified clearly and emphatically to the Lutheran truth, after I had

myself come to clarity in it. The members of our conference at least did not dare to contradict me; Pastor Crome even testified loudly and joyfully to his agreement with the doctrine I asserted, but unfortunately he did not remain faithful to this conviction, but later again gave room to false Romanizing ideas, because in our time, as he told me in explanation of his wavering, "it is especially necessary to emphasize the divine authority of the ministry", a sign and testimony of the reasons that dominate the hearts of many in our time, instead of giving glory to the Word of God and divine truth alone. — Another important consequence, however, was the little paper I wrote at that time on the sacred ministry of preaching, in which I made a special effort to prove from Luther's sayings what the correct Lutheran teaching on the ministry of preaching had always been, taking for granted the conviction among Lutheran theologians that the correct Lutheran teaching was also undoubtedly biblical. When Pastor Loehe had received and read my pamphlet, he wrote very briefly to the above-mentioned pastoral conference that had gathered in 1858 at Durlach in Baden with Pastor Eichhorn, "he regretted that Pastor Brunn was building his faith on Lutheran doctrines of men; in this way Lutheranism would come to nothing". How powerfully this statement by one of Germany's first theologians, who was generally regarded as a standard-bearer of Lutheranism, reveals how far one was not only from truly Lutheran doctrine, but also from a faithful Lutheran confessional ecclesiastical position in general, but how one remained trapped under the rule of one's own, purely subjective ideas in all supposed Lutheranism, in which one only absorbs just as much of Lutheran doctrine as harmonizes with these ideas! I wrote back to Pastor Loehe at length, relying in particular on the fact that among Lutheran Christians and theologians it was a self-evident, generally accepted conviction

that the terms Lutheran and biblical were completely congruent; but Loehe did not answer me and so my entire previous relationship with him dissolved. This was undoubtedly a great blessing for me; God's grace kept me on faithful and simple-minded Lutheran paths, while from that time on Pastor Loehe lost himself more and more in chiliasm, the general conversion of Jews, etc., and shifted all his energy to the works of inner mission, the deaconess cause, etc., instead of to the Lutheran church and doctrine. The extent to which this caused "Lutheranism to come to nothing" for so many of Loehe's followers and his movement was unfortunately proven in the following years. — Thus ended the 1850s for me; as a particularly gracious divine providence I was able to praise at their conclusion that God had not only led me to a clear and complete foundation in pure Lutheran doctrine, but that this had also happened before the great doctrinal battles of the following period broke out in Germany, so that when this time came and the winds struck the house, we in Nassau stood firm and without wavering, founded on the rock.

9.

Our Experiences with the Breslau Synod



Although we had known individual members of the synod before and lived in contact with them, we Nassau Lutherans did not actually join the Breslau Synod until 1852. In that year I visited the synod assembly in Breslau for the first time and was received there with great fraternal love. In view of the complete ecclesiastical isolation in which we found ourselves in Nassau, and with the natural desire to belong to a larger

church community wherever possible, we joined the Breslau Synod all the more readily and easily, as it was the only Lutheran Free Church in Germany at the time and no one thought of doctrinal differences. Not doctrinal differences, but another point stood between us and the Breslauers right from the start. The latter already had a thick book full of legally binding synod resolutions; on the one hand, this was very much at odds with our simple Nassau congregational conditions, where everything had hitherto been organized and structured unhindered by free Christian love and trust and without the burdensome constraint of synod resolutions; on the other hand, as has already been mentioned, we were moved by Loehe's ideas of church constitution, which we considered to be genuinely biblical. Thus we rejected the Breslau synod resolutions and were readily permitted to do so by the Breslau Synod and in 1852 an agreement was set down in writing, according to which we Nassau Lutherans undertook to submit to the Breslau High Church College as our church government, but remained exempt from the binding nature of the Breslau synod resolutions. However, our entire connection with the Breslau Synod remained almost completely dead and unfruitful for us from beginning to end. There was never any reason for the Breslau Church government to become involved with us in Nassau (apart from the fact that it formally signed the vouchers of us Nassau pastors), nor did it ever organize church visitations with us, but was content, in its well-known bureaucratic manner, to let me tell it in an annual report that everything was still going its way in good, external order. But the synod meetings in Breslau, which we, my brother Hein and I, often attended, never had any influence on us. What a truly sad picture of these Breslau assemblies, which took place every four years, remains in my heart and memory to this day! Of course, one saw

dear friends and brothers there, and that could gladden the heart, but otherwise there was hardly anything more tiring, more spirit-killing, more boring to think of than a synod assembly in Breslau, where one was forced to sit for four full weeks from early morning until late at night and listen to these discussions, which revolved almost exclusively around matters of external constitution, discipline and the like. If one then came out of the meeting at 8 o'clock in the evening, completely exhausted, to one of the restaurants where the synod members used to gather for supper, the evenings were spent in mostly inane conversations, as they could not be otherwise with completely exhausted people, until one went to bed to fortify oneself for the torture of the following day. Not counting the later doctrinal disputes that forced me to do so in exceptional cases, I hardly ever remember any truly spiritual matters or doctrinal questions that were discussed at the synods in Breslau; I never remember any spiritual uplift, strengthening or encouragement that I would have taken home with me from Breslau. One praised God when the four long synod weeks with their embarrassing business negotiations were finally over and hurried away as quickly as one could to recover at home. *)

*) I can only describe the Breslau Synod Assemblies as I personally experienced them in my time. I cannot say whether they have become different and better today, as the Breslau Synod has gained a large number of other members, especially pastors.

On the one hand, there was too much Lutheranism in Breslau to indulge in the sweet emotional pleasures that naked Pietism brings with it and in which Pietist pastoral conferences, for example, indulge (although this does not last four weeks); on the other hand, the true Lutheran spirit was too lacking and, under the leadership of Director Huschke, the learned jurist, and under the unfortunate influence of the legal Breslau synod constitution, everything was too much enslaved in external formal and constitutional matters for the spirit

and mind, the inner man, could have found nourishment in Breslau. At least that's how it was for me, although others may have better impressions to report here and there. — So we lived quietly for ourselves in Nassau, without ever worrying much about the Breslau Synod, and our annual Rhenish pastoral conferences formed a truly living bond of church fellowship for us and made us wish to see these pastoral conferences grow over time into a special Rhenish District Synod.

With the year 1860 came the sad doctrinal controversy with the Breslau High Church College. It is known that the dispute arose partly on the occasion of the church's intercession, which, according to the order of the Upper Church Collegium [*Oberkirchenkollegium*], was to take place on Sundays for the latter, namely in the place of church prayer where prayers are said for the authorities ordained by God, which some pastors refused to do, willingly offering to intercede in any other place, and partly Pastor Diedrich's writing: "Ueber Wert und Wesen des Kirchenregiments" (On the Value and Nature of Church Government), first raised the real doctrinal question of whether or not church government was an authority established by God.

For the sake of uninformed readers, allow me to describe these doctrinal issues in a little more detail here for the sake of understanding all the subsequent doctrinal battles between the Breslau Synod, the Immanuel Synod founded by Pastor Diedrich, and ourselves. One of the oldest leaders and predecessors of the separated Lutherans in Prussia was the professor of jurisprudence at the University of Breslau, [Privy Councillor Huschke](#), a man of great intellect and quite extraordinary, also theological scholarship (he therefore also became a doctor of theology), yet of a thoroughly humble character and Christian piety, which earned him the most universal love and respect. But he was a legal scholar! I therefore like to think, and to excuse the man, that his jurisprudence, combined with prevailing high human wisdom, tempted him to transfer his legal concepts to the

ecclesiastical sphere as well. He could not, it seems, imagine that a society of men, such as the Church is, could be governed and exist in external order without laws and without a government that governs society and manages order in it with God-given authority. This was therefore the first beginning and starting point of the so-called Breslau church and doctrinal controversy, the question of whether there was and should be such a God-given government in the church, like the secular authorities in the state. Huschke answered this question in the affirmative, and, seemingly misled by his juridical concepts of law, he actually made the assertion that just as the secular authorities govern the state, so the ecclesiastical government governs the church in exactly the same way, with divine authority and power. Indeed, in the idea that the church government is such an authority instituted by God, whose commandments have divine power and validity like those of the secular authorities, Huschke himself allowed himself to be carried away to the point of saying that "the regulations of the church government have the same divine authority behind them as the pastor's pulpit sermon". Huschke and his followers therefore quite logically came to the conclusion that such a divinely instituted church government belonged as essentially to the church as the authorities belonged to the state, so that therefore no true church was or could be, and likewise that congregations were not truly Lutheran where this divinely instituted church government was still lacking. (Our resignation from the Breslau Synod was therefore announced in the Breslau Church Gazette as a separation "from the body of the Lutheran Church"). But what tremendous consequences this false doctrine entails is easy to gauge; not only does it, in the last extremity, in a purely pontifical and truly frightening manner, give the same divine honor and dignity to the mere word of man, which is after all the precepts of the Church Government, as to the Word of God itself, whereby in truth a grave sin of idolatry is committed, but it also in the grossest manner in the commandments or

precepts of the church's regime, a new yoke of the law is placed on the necks of the disciples and the Gospel is denied. Therefore, in the whole struggle against this Hushkian or so-called Breslau heresy (for this doctrine passed from its originator to the entire Breslau Synod), it was later a watchword whether one must obey the church government for the sake of the fourth commandment, as one must obey the secular authorities, i.e. out of duty and for the sake of conscience, or as we, the opponents of this doctrine, claimed in opposition to it with the 28th article of the Augsburg Confession. Article of the Augsburg Confession, only out of love and for the sake of necessary order, and also in order not to give offense to our neighbor through wanton disorder. There are, of course, no direct biblical passages about a divinely instituted church government and obedience to it, such as those found in Romans 13 about the secular authorities. But Hushke and his followers used to emphasize that love and order were also explicit commandments of God; so if one said that one had to obey the church government for the sake of "love and order", that was just as much as if one said "out of duty and for the sake of divine commandment" (truly a complete confusion of terms, since the Augsburg Confession obviously wants to say just the opposite of what Hushke meant). Then they referred mainly to 1 Cor. 12:28, the only biblical verse that speaks of ecclesiastical "rulers" (actually "governments") and traces them back to a divine origin. But here it was completely overlooked that this passage expressly speaks only of God's "gifts", not of offices. This is clear from the fact that in quite the same line as of rulers, there is also talk of miracle-workers, of gifts to heal, etc.; therefore, if rulers were to be understood as an ecclesiastical office, the gifts to work miracles, to heal, etc. would also have to be ecclesiastical offices and be exercised in such offices.

As certain as the latter is an impossibility, it is equally obvious that the necessity of a church-governing office cannot be inferred from the gift to help, to govern, which is mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:28. For divine commands and regulations that bind our consciences, we should indeed be given clearer, explicit words of God, similar to those found in Romans 13 concerning the secular authorities. But "government" in general, social leadership and order, must of course exist in every human society, including the ecclesiastical one, and this also requires people with "gifts", but this is by no means an authoritative government by virtue of the fourth commandment. — Obviously, Huschke's doctrine of the divine foundation and authority of church government had a deeper foundation in his false doctrine of the church and sacraments. According to his peculiar disposition, Huschke had created his very own, purely philosophically or theosophically constructed theory. According to this theory, the visible external church, consisting of the pious and the godless, was the actual church, the body of Christ. Huschke taught that even for unbelievers, holy baptism had the power to establish and effect a real union of man with Christ, by virtue of which man was a member of the body of Christ, a real, actual one, as Huschke expressly declared, although spiritually dead and unconverted. In the same way, the unbeliever and ungodly should not only eat and drink the body and blood of Christ in Holy Communion with the mouth, as the Lutheran Church teaches according to God's Word, but Huschke concluded from this (according to the thoughts of human reason) that the unbeliever also truly receives Christ's body and blood like earthly food (i.e. only through the mouth!), so that he now has and retains these heavenly substances in himself, so that in this way the unbeliever also enters into a real, actual communion with the body of Christ, becomes a member of the body of Christ! With this thought in mind, a respected synod member (Superintendent Latzel) publicly exclaimed during our doctrinal negotiations with the

Breslau Synod in 1864, "Where do Christ's body and blood end up with the unbelievers?" namely, if on the one hand one wants to maintain that they truly eat and drink these heavenly substances, and on the other hand one does not want to acknowledge that they now also truly have them in themselves. *)

*) Christ's body and blood are divinely omnipresent by virtue of the union of the divine and human natures in Christ, so there can be no question of a "going where", i.e. a change of space, of being in a certain place according to human earthly concepts. But Huschke's theory of the effect of the holy sacraments, according to which through them even a godless person is implanted as a member of the body of Christ through them, overturns the whole Lutheran and biblical doctrine of the purpose of the holy sacraments, according to which they are first and foremost testimonies and seals of the forgiveness of sins, and only afterwards, when the heart believingly grasps this forgiveness, do the holy sacraments also become means of spiritual union with Christ. This is already clearly taught in the small Lutheran catechism.

But Huschke himself declared during our extensive doctrinal negotiations in Breslau that it was a ridiculous assertion for him that the church should primarily (i.e. according to its nature) be nothing but a "fellowship of faith". On the one hand, the Breslau theologians rightly wanted to stick to the assertion that, according to Lutheran doctrine, faith comes only from the sermon. But on the other hand, they made the serious mistake of understanding the sermon, which works faith, to mean only the orderly official sermon. When we therefore argued against them that the first formation and origin of the church was not to be traced back to this official, man-led preaching, but to the original Word of God, as it came directly from God's own mouth, in the Old Testament the original Gospel in Paradise, in the New Testament the first preaching of the Gospel, which came from Christ's mouth and through which he first gathered a church or congregation: thus the opponents rose to the quite senseless assertion that Christ himself had also stood in the orderly ministry,

inasmuch as he had been a Jewish "rabbi". From this Breslau doctrine and view, however, the conclusion follows: the orderly church ministry must first exist before faith can exist on earth, and again, before the church ministry is possible, the church itself must first exist. This, then, is the order established by God *):

*) I reproduce here the Breslau doctrine as it was presented to us by Huschke himself in 1864. Although later attempts were made to conceal its sharpness in various ways (as, for example, in the well-known Breslau doctrinal statement), it is nevertheless important to clearly define its actual basic principles, because all subsequent consequences arise from them.

God first founded this visible external institution of salvation on earth, the visible church, in which God then established the necessary offices for its preservation, the office of preaching and church government, equipped these offices with the necessary divine powers, and so it is only through the ministry of this divine institution of salvation, through its preaching and its entire church government and administration, that children of God, believing Christians, are produced and born and ecclesiastically nurtured and preserved to the end. This is the Breslau theory of the church as Huschke presented it to us and according to which he was consequently not able to grasp the church in the proper sense as a fellowship of faith, which is only maintained and governed by faith and love, but as an external organism or structure (Huschke's favorite expression), i.e. an external church divided into offices. i.e. an external institution constituted in offices, which is governed and maintained by virtue of a divine order established by God (i.e. by law) and standing above the individual members (a quite obvious regression to Old Testament legal theocracy and Roman doctrine. In truth, however, it is just the opposite, as Huschke would have it: first our Lord Christ gathered a band of believing disciples through the word from his own mouth, then he first gave these believers the office of the keys, commanded them to forgive and retain sins in his name, and to

preach the gospel to all nations. Huschke takes away all these rights and powers that Christ gave to his believing disciples and transfers them to the external ecclesiastical institution and its offices.) As biblical proof of this concept of church, the Breslau theologians referred to 1 Cor. 10:17, where St. Paul says that we are many and one body, because we are all partakers of one bread. This was then readily applied to all, even the unbelievers, who outwardly partake of Holy Communion, and did not accept what we counter, that St. Paul obviously and undoubtedly addresses all his letters only to the true believers, saints and the beloved, and speaks only to and of them (unless the context expressly demands otherwise), and therefore only of them when he says that we are all one body in Holy Communion, just as Gal. 3:26-27 faith and baptism are joined together, saying that in holy baptism we put on Christ and thereby become children of God, but "through faith," as the holy apostle adds. Thus the doctrine of Breslau also here lacks all clear and firm biblical proof, but in the manner of all false doctrine it is founded on passages which are interpreted arbitrarily, while other such clear and powerful passages of the Church, such as especially Ephesians 5:27 and others, are ignored. But our appeal to the [Lutheran] church symbols, especially to the [4th article of the Apology](#), was countered in Breslau with the assertion that there too the unbelievers and the ungodly are called "members of the church", and that a distinction is even made between "dead and living" members. But one completely misunderstands what the Apology says, that the ungodly are members of the Church only according to the outward signs, names and offices, by which it means nothing other than that they are not actual, real members of the Church or the body of Christ, but only "mixed in" with the outward society of the Church. It therefore has the same meaning

when it speaks of "dead" members, i.e. those who do not really belong to the Church, but are only externally attached to it. This sense of the Apology emerges clearly and strikingly from the fact that it always testifies that the true church, Christ's body and kingdom are only the true believers, the children of God scattered throughout the world, hence it is expressly said [[Ap 7-8 Of the Church, 6](#)], "in whom Christ works nothing through his Spirit, they are not members of Christ", and no less clearly does the Apology say, "the wicked are in the church in name, not in fact", i.e. they are called Christians, but they are not. (If only Huschke wanted to invalidate this latter statement in the Apology by saying that in divine matters the mere name is already something real, something objective! It is precisely the contrast between name and thing, the real and the merely apparent, which the Apology wants to show, that Huschke abolishes). Where one is not able to recognize such absolutely clear, compelling statements of the symbols in their simple meaning and wording, all further negotiations are truly useless and impossible.

Pastor Diedrich now has the undeniable merit of first publicly attacking Huschke's false doctrine of the church and the divine foundation of church government and rejecting it as un-Lutheran. He clearly and sharply emphasized the purely spiritual nature of the church as the community [*Gemeine*] of believers and asserted this to the people of Breslau. So far he was undoubtedly quite right. But in his struggle with the people of Breslau he was wrong in two ways; first of all in the outward form, in that he (as he later did against us) used such insulting language against the Breslau High Church Council, offending all reverence and love, that one was not wrong when one accused him that he could not be allowed to do so as long as he was a member of the Breslau Synod and the High Church Council was in any sense his church government. It was deeply to be deplored that Pastor Diedrich, by this

manner of his opposition to the false doctrine of Breslau, placed himself from the very beginning in a bad position in regard to the whole matter, and obscured in a saddening and very pernicious manner the testimony of biblical truth, as far as he had it, by bringing himself into the odor of a malicious blasphemer among many. In this way, he mixed the doctrinal cause he championed with personal sins, leading people to reject and condemn one with the other. But most damaging to the victory of the truth that Pastor Diedrich represented in the doctrine of the church against Breslau was his own one-sidedness of mind and the false doctrine of which he himself was guilty. Like Huschke, Diedrich was also a highly gifted spirit, and extremely quick and prolific in his writing, as his many writings testify. He could have something witty and lofty; "Diedrich gives us great thoughts", Pastor Crome said of him, and not without good reason, and he often liked to clothe his thoughts in dark, mystical-sounding words, which usually make their content seem more profound than they really are when translated into everyday language. On the other hand, Diedrich, like unfortunately so many in our time, had no sense for pure doctrine, for simple, clear and firm dogmatic concepts; in the strict demand for pure doctrine, as we hold it against him, he rather saw something legalistic and Pharisaical, just as he never insisted on pure doctrine in his writings or spoke much of it, emphasized its necessity enough, he preferred instead, as he thought, to immerse himself in the spirit of the Gospel, in contrast to servile literalism. Diedrich now also presented himself to the people of Breslau in this manner, which evaporated all fixed doctrinal concepts; he emphasized the purely spiritual nature of the church very decisively, but Diedrich completely neglected to teach how the invisible congregation of believers could now also become a visible church and a fixed external church order; indeed, he attached no importance to it at all, and so it remained completely hidden from him, he

did not know how to give an account of it to himself or others. *)

*) As early as 1860, during the Breslau Synod, I accused Pastor Diedrich of having nothing of the whole visible church but the man in the black robe, i.e. pastor and preacher.

His opponents in Breslau recognized and felt this large gap in Diedrich's teaching and therefore considered themselves all the more justified in their opposition to him.

We Nassau pastors (Pastor Hein completely agreed with me) were already fully prepared for all these doctrinal questions. At that time we already had a clear, firm position on the doctrines of Church and Ministry, with which we opposed both Diedrich's own errors and one-sidedness and the false Breslau doctrine of a divine foundation and sovereign authority of church government from the outbreak of Diedrich's struggle. But we Nassauers had less reason to fight because of our position; neither the synod resolutions nor the order of ecclesiastical intercession on behalf of the Upper Church College [*Oberkirchenkollegium*] applied to us. So at first we watched the whole dispute more calmly. When the Diedrich matter was discussed at the Breslau Synod Assembly in 1860, we did not yet participate publicly; only privately in the circle of friends did we often negotiate with Pastor Diedrich and his friends, although even then Pastor Diedrich was completely inaccessible to all our ideas and went his own way, following only his personal peculiar spirit. Thus, in the years 1861-1862, Pastor Diedrich and his closest followers left the Breslau Synod amid fierce conflicts, where both sides made mistakes. — But all the more, since the dispute had led to such a rupture, the sacred duty of testimony and confession, whether for or against the controversial doctrines, now fell upon all those who remained in the Breslau Synod; it was in the nature of things, once things had come to a public rupture, that everyone now had to take sides. Of course,

this does not exclude the possibility that, given the incredible confusion and ignorance that still prevailed among most theologians and pastors at that time regarding the pending doctrinal issues, it would undoubtedly have been more salutary if the doctrine had first been negotiated and fought through peacefully for a longer period of time, for example through writings and at pastoral conferences, before such serious divisions that would have shattered the church were allowed to arise. At least that is what they were striving for, as they once held a large conference of Prussian separated pastors in Berlin for this purpose and also founded their own synod journal solely for the purpose of doctrinal negotiations. But on the whole it can be said that the doctrinal dispute of 1860 attacked the Breslau Synod as if the enemy had suddenly broken into a country where no one was prepared to fight; they could not suddenly make up for what they had neglected to do for years, the thorough treatment of Lutheran doctrine, and so they were now inexorably dragged into the sad practical consequences that the doctrinal differences brought with them. — After Diedrich's departure, from 1862 onwards another opposing party formed against the doctrine of the Upper Church College [*Oberkirchenkollegium*], to which we Nassau pastors belonged, along with Pastors Lohmann, Frommel, Frischmuth, Ebert and others. We did not immediately join Diedrich's schism; at first we were less in practical conflict with the Breslau statutes, as Diedrich and others had been with him earlier, but we were more concerned with the pure doctrinal question, which was negotiated without any personal quarrels; moreover, we considered it our duty to first bring our complaint against false doctrine before the chair of the next synod assembly before we thought about leaving the synod. This happened in 1864. One week before the start of the general assembly, we, the main leaders of the opposition, were invited to Breslau to discuss the doctrine of Church and Ministry in detail with the members of the Upper Church College and a commission of others appointed for this purpose.

But the long, eight-day negotiations passed without any result; it became apparent that Huschke's influence had gained the upper hand among our opponents; the church councilors Besser and Nagel, the latter with tears of emotion, publicly confessed that through Huschke they had come to a firm position in doctrine and to a supposed knowledge of right Lutheran truth. I have retained the impression from that time that most of the members of the Breslau Synod were completely unclear and dependent in their doctrine; They only partly felt Pastor Diedrich's one-sided over-extension and volatilization of what belonged to the visible church, partly they considered the whole existence of the church to be endangered without the firm external ecclesiastical order of Breslau, and so, for lack of better knowledge, they willingly gave themselves over to the theories with which Huschke was apparently able to support and justify the whole visible church building so firmly and securely. Romanizing theological views filled the whole time anyway. In many respects, however, the picture presented by our doctrinal negotiations in Breslau was pitiful. That there was still much weakness and immaturity on our side, too, may be readily and honestly confessed; but the greatest harm was done by the long learned speeches of Huschke, with which he sought to invalidate all our reasons, not as with proofs of truth, but with the high art of subtle erudition and the dark wisdom of his theological theories, against which for the moment no one was quick-witted enough to offer a rebuttal, but which went completely over the heads of most of the listeners. Thus the clear, simple-minded exploration of what the Bible and the symbols and the tried and tested teachers of the Lutheran Church say was completely missed. When on one occasion I reminded them that I knew of no other effect of holy baptism (we spoke of so-called "dead members of the body of Christ", which according to Breslau doctrine baptism is supposed to do) than that which the small Lutheran catechism mentions, namely "it works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil and

gives eternal salvation to all who believe it": they could only laugh at such simplicity, and my speech died away without making any impression. — The general synod assembly, where the matter was discussed for another two days, also failed to produce any result. The only remaining way of peace was to withdraw our accusation of heresy and to recognize the teaching of our opponents as an equal theological view alongside our own. In this way, it was hoped, both parties would be able to coexist in peace. But of course we could not deny our conviction of conscience that the false teaching of the College of the High Church, which opposed us, was a real heresy. Thus our negotiations ended with an openly declared rupture, caused not only by the existing doctrinal difference itself, but also by the whole difference in position on doctrine, in that those who wanted to declare as a free theological view and an open question what was heresy according to our position of conscience. The great majority of the Synod, however, sided with the College of the High Church and gave it the authority to conduct its church governmental office, as it had declared, according to the rules and regulations of the doctrinal declaration it had presented to the Synod. As a result, the Breslau doctrine ceased to be and remain merely a theological view in the study room; it was transplanted directly onto practical ecclesiastical ground and elevated to the norm according to which the Breslau church government conducted its office and gave its supreme judicial decision in cases that arose. In fact, this meant expelling anyone from the Breslau Synod who from then on did not want to submit to such an ecclesiastical leadership based on false doctrine. So we left Breslau in the fall of 1864, outwardly without any personal hatred or quarrels with our opponents, but with the firm awareness on both sides that it was time to say goodbye forever and to separate ecclesiastically.

The latter was not long in coming. Pastors Lohmann and Ebert resigned and

returned to their former State Churches in Hanover and Saxony. We pastors on the upper Rhine (Pastor Crome had already joined the Immanuel Synod earlier), the two of us in Nassau, Pastor Frommel in Baden, Pastor Frischmuth in Saarbrücken, joined forces and after several joint consultations we then declared our resignation to the Upper Church College, each in our own way. It was on February 23, 1865, when we held a meeting of all our Nassau Lutheran congregations in Steeden for this purpose and decided to separate from the Breslau Synod. Until then, all our congregations had unanimously followed the testimony of truth they received from us pastors in this matter, all the easier because the Breslau Synod had always been so far removed from them and there was no bond of attachment to it. — And yet the devil managed to cause us unspeakable misery and heartache in this matter too.

There was only one person in the whole of Nassau who, when it came to the decision, declared himself in favor of Breslau, an old student of mine, K. M., who had been trained by me for the university, had then studied in Leipzig and was just now, after completing his studies, to take over the preaching ministry at our congregation in Gemünden, which wanted nothing more than to have its own pastor again. Whether it was because he had not remained untouched by the spirit of modern theology at the University of Leipzig, or because the theologians of Breslau had won him over on the occasion of his theological examination, which he took in Breslau, in short, despite his close relationship with me, which had always been a very childlike one, he not only broke away from us now (although he still assured me of his complete agreement in faith and doctrine), and declared his wish to remain with the Breslau Synod. but, to our inexpressible pain, he also absolutely refused any

attempt at further understanding and reconciliation with us and left us and his old friends in Steeden without saying goodbye. And the Gemünden community? Well, according to the level of its faith, it understood the least of all our Nassau congregations about the false Breslau doctrine; on the other hand, its desire to have its own pastor took precedence over all other considerations, but we could not give it a pastor other than K. M.: so the Gemünden congregation felt it was too great a sacrifice to renounce its most valuable asset, the possession of its own pastor, for the sake of a doctrinal dispute which it did not understand and which had not affected its entire church life until then. Of course, when the superintendent Feldner from Elberfeld appeared in my place in Gemünde to introduce K. M. to his office there, many were deeply moved. Individuals in the Gemünde congregation, even those who later remained close to us, have often told us how much pain the separation from Steeden at the time caused them, how they expressed this to Superintendent Feldner in particular, even arguing seriously and fiercely with him about the matter, but at the same time they also reported miraculous things about how, from that side, not with conviction of the truth, not with instruction from God's Word, but with the arts of speech and clever political calculation, they had managed to appease the Gemünden congregation and persuade them to separate from Steeden and remain with Breslau. The more insightful individuals in Gemünden were unable to achieve anything against the majority of the others.

But what were we in Steeden able to do in the whole matter? I saw that on the one hand our Gemünden congregation had too little understanding and judgment about our doctrinal dispute with the Breslau Synod to be able to influence them in this way, and on the other hand I knew that the congregation was not up to making the sacrifice to this doctrinal dispute

that it would have had to make if it had wanted to separate from Breslau with us. So, for my part, I remained silent and committed the whole matter to God; I did not want to involve the Gemünden congregation, out of mere personal attachment to my person, for example, in battles that it was not capable of waging spiritually with the weapons of the Spirit; but I believed I had to refrain from confusing and splintering the congregation for purely external reasons. I therefore testified to the individuals of Gemünden whom I saw, but on the whole I refrained from any further intervention in the affairs of the congregation there. — Thus the Gemünden congregation, for which I had sacrificed so much hard sweat, work and suffering, was lost to our church community in the spring of 1865. Personally, there is still no friction between them and us — the people of Gemünden declare that they know nothing of a schism between us and them, they see our separation only as the inevitable consequence of external circumstances — but ecclesiastically, the congregation there is separated from the spiritual foundation on which it once grew, from the entire community of our Nassau Lutheran Free Church, and it is undoubtedly an unspeakable loss of soul that the congregation suffers as a result. Yes, the Breslau Synod has kept a congregation in Nassau, a part of our body, which we have spiritually begotten and nourished with our lifeblood, has been torn away from us by the Breslau doctrinal dispute. But how much sighs, tears and pain this whole separation of the Gemünden congregation from us, accompanied by many a heartbreaking experience in our private lives, which are hidden from the public, has cost us in Steeden, the dear readers may well imagine. It was a cut in the innermost bowels, almost killing body and soul. But God wanted to lead us into this affliction so that we could experience for ourselves the heartache caused by the difficult ecclesiastical struggles of our time. In particular, however, God wanted to

humble us all the more deeply through the loss of the wounded church, the more its gain and origin had previously lifted us up to such high ecclesiastical hopes and expectations.

Since the events recounted here, there has never been any further contact between us and the Breslau Synod; God has now led our paths elsewhere.

10.

Our Connection with the Missouri Synod and the Steeden Proseminar ↑

In this, too, it is God's way, not man's, that we have gone. Our first contact with the Missouri Synod in America goes back to the year 1851, when some young people from our Nassau congregations went to America, two of whom later entered the preacher's seminary there. Correspondence with them first familiarized us a little with America. But for a long time we in Nassau also shared the various prejudices against the Missouri Synod that still prevail among so many in Germany today. This only changed for us in the years 1856-1858, when we Nassau pastors came to the realization of pure Lutheran doctrine, and only then did we learn to love and appreciate the Missouri Synod on the basis of this unity in pure doctrine. But until 1860 we still lacked any closer connection with it.

The latter mainly came about through the establishment of our Steeden Institute for America in 1861. I already wrote a little about this in the third volume of my journal at the time. For the sake of context, I will only briefly repeat here how far removed I was from acting on my own initiative in this matter. I have always had a desire and inclination

to teach young people, but how could it ever have occurred to anyone to establish a missionary institution in the remote little town of Steeden, given the small number and poverty of our separated Nassau Lutheran congregations and the great distance from Lutheran State Churches such as Saxony, Hanover and so on! Even when urgent requests came from America to lend a hand in order to help the great preacher shortage over there, I would not have dared to think of establishing a special institution for this purpose. It was only when Professor Walther visited Germany and Steeden in 1860 that the matter came to a decision. Professor Walther told me how he had researched everywhere on his journey through Germany, looking for places and people to establish a proseminar for the Missourian teaching institutions over there, but in vain. It was only then that I believed I had to recognize God's hint to at least make an attempt on my part to see if it would please God to carry out such a work through me. I could not hide the fact that God had prepared me for this in many ways through all the ways I had led my life so far, especially through my entire harmony with the Missouri Synod in faith and doctrine, as well as through the other ecclesiastical circumstances of our Nassau Lutheran Free Church. But of course — what great external difficulties stood in the way of the establishment of an institution in Steeden! Above all, where would the necessary funds come from? The Missouri Synod, with its other heavy ecclesiastical burdens, could not alone carry the matter forward; my closest friends in Germany, the Breslau Synod, of which I was still a member at the time, let me down completely. And the question of how and where to set up the institution in Steeden presented even greater difficulties. Nowhere else in the small village were there ways and means to do this than in the rectory itself. A few attic rooms could be furnished without much expense for the temporary accommodation of a few pupils, but all the other

burdens and work, the kitchen, the laundry, where would I get the strength for all this, especially as my wife was weak and sickly and barely able to care for her own young children?

Nevertheless, trusting in God's gracious help, we dared to do it, and behold, it worked, the Lord allowed all our endeavors to succeed through pleading and understanding and blessed them abundantly. After my request for support for the establishment of the intended institution in Steeden was completely dropped at the synod meeting in Breslau in the fall of 1860 (only one synod deputy gave me a contribution of 2 groschen as an initial gift for the new institution to be founded after the meeting in which I had made my request), my old friend, mission director Graul in Leipzig, received me all the more kindly and had a request for support inserted in the Leipzig Missionary Journal [*Missionsblatt*]. From there it also found its way into other papers, the *Pilger aus Sachsen*, the *Stader Sonntagsblatt*, and so the cause gradually took off. Financial contributions came in and at the same time the first seven pupils, at Easter 1861. But things were also hard and difficult for our institution at the beginning; external hardship and poverty, severe illness and even more all kinds of internal trials in the home and heart, with which the devil quite obviously wanted to destroy our whole institution from the outset (e.g. through disputes among the first pupils). For example, through quarrels among the first pupils, which forced me to dismiss some of them within the first few weeks, through disgraceful slander about our house, which these dismissed pupils then spread everywhere, even as far as St. Louis, etc.), tormented us and caused us to heave many a fiery sigh. But the Lord helped us through and did not let the little ship sink. And when the first difficult beginning was over and everything was settled and settled in, many things went easier and better than we had previously thought. The 7 pupils with whom we started in the first year became 8 in the second, 10 and 12 in the third and in the fourth year

we built the large, beautiful extension to our house, which gave us room for 24, all of whom we had for a number of years until the number of pupils began to decrease again in 1873 due to various circumstances. But praise be to God's infinite mercy, which also carried us through our entire institutional affair as if on wings. —

The purpose and aim of the Steeden institution was not to provide a complete theological education for the pupils, as was the aim of other similar institutions in Germany. The Missouri Synod in America had its own excellent seminaries for theological education, and at that time they only lacked a larger number of students, as the shortage of preachers in America so urgently demanded. This led our friends over there to ask me to keep my students in Steeden for only one year (which, of course, was absolutely necessary in order to first examine them more closely with regard to their Christian attitude and their ability to study theology) and then to send them immediately to the American institutions in order to make room for new students in Steeden. Thus it became the actual rule and order for the Steeden institution to send all students to the practical theological seminary in America every year (a few also to the school teachers' seminary) for further training, as long as they were found capable of doing so, and to accept new students in Steeden in their place, which was never lacking in the heyday of our institution. This made it possible to send such a large number of sendlings to America in the course of a few years. Only in the course of time was there also a two-year training course in Steeden. Younger students between the ages of 14 and 16 applied for admission, including some who had already attended grammar school. It was a pity to reject such young, talented and promising pupils completely and lose them for the service of the church, so I accepted them, especially in cases where

there were not enough older pupils. I then kept such younger pupils in Steeden for two years and during this time trained them to such an extent that they could be admitted to the tertia of the grammar school in Fort Wayne in America. Over the years, quite a number of Steeden students were admitted to the high school and from there to the learned theological seminary in St. Louis. — The main purpose of the Steeden institution was to be a proseminary for the practical theological seminary in America, and the classes were organized accordingly. Actual theological studies were not pursued at all; on the other hand, catechism was taught above all. Without exception, all of our pupils either came from State Churches, where they had previously lacked all confessional Lutheran instruction, or they themselves came from religious communities such as the United Church and even the Moravian Brethren Church. I had no hesitation in accepting pupils from the latter, for the situation was such that the members of the Lutheran State Churches were all no better or more Lutheran than the United and others; I received them all as almost completely ignorant and first had to teach and educate them to become Lutheran Christians. A sincere desire to hear and learn the truth from God's Word was therefore the only condition of admission I set in this regard. And by the grace of God I may confess that by far the majority of my pupils, even those who had come to my house as Uniteds, Pietists, etc., left it as good Lutherans and as faithful members of the Lutheran Church. On the whole, there were very few who later deceived our expectations. For me, however, it was a great joy to gather a circle of intelligent and salvation-minded students around me every year, to whom I could explain the Lutheran doctrine according to the catechism to my heart's content. Lively discussions on the opposing errors and false spiritual trends of our

time were held. (Every week there was a special so-called consultation hour for this purpose, where every pupil was allowed to express his opinion). I did the same with biblical history, which was read and explained according to the text of Holy Scripture itself. After an overview of geography and world history, the Latin language was the subject that took up most of the time. It had to be brought to the point where the symbolic books of the Lutheran Church could be read with reasonable fluency in their original language. This goal was always achieved by the more able pupils. — It was God's special grace and blessing, however, that so many excellent and faithful pupils were brought to the Steeden Institute every year, so that on the whole only a few had to be dismissed as unfit and only very rarely were there any upsets concerning the Christian conduct of the pupils. It was mostly a circle of sincerely pious, Christian-minded young people who gathered in the Steeden institution. Accordingly, the whole life at the institution was a peaceful and beautiful life together in a close domestic circle. We were all united under one roof and, in addition to the apartment, all the pupils had to look to me and my wife as their father and mother for all their physical and spiritual needs. So they were all in a purely childlike relationship with us. We all ate lunch together in the large schoolroom and spent many a pleasant family evening together there on the occasion of birthdays and holidays. In addition, the chores in which the pupils had to participate, as well as the communal walks in the woods and rocks that surrounded Steeden so closely, and especially the excursions to Schaumburg Castle with its magnificent grounds and views, provided ample opportunity for happy family get-togethers. Even on my frequent visits to out-of-town communities, I was almost always accompanied by more or less pupils, and close friendships often developed between them

and individual families in the community. To this day I can still hear from letters from old pupils in America that they still remember their stay in Steeden fondly. At the end of each apprenticeship year, a mission festival was celebrated in Steeden, at which we gathered the departing students around our altar to give them our final admonitions, blessings and prayers for their journey.

As beautiful and lovely as our life at Steeden was in general, even after overcoming the initial difficulties and hard struggles at the foundation of the institution, which are mentioned above, there were still many difficult things. It was not so much the great burden of the household and the teaching (the latter of which was entirely mine until 1872); God always helped us wonderfully and never let the work become too much or too difficult. I may well say that teaching, even in the years when I had two classes of pupils, one in preparation for the practical theological seminary, the other for the grammar school, was always only a pleasure and joy to me, never a burden. God had also provided and ordained everything beforehand in great grace and had given me the necessary gift precisely for such students as I had, namely a preferably simple and practical way of teaching, which made it much easier for me. I therefore needed no great preparation for such simple teaching as I gave; in addition (to be a fool above boasting with St. Paul), I was a schoolmaster by the grace of God, i.e. not a learned but a born schoolmaster, which above all else made teaching easy for me and learning easy for my pupils. I used very few printed books (I had written out a few myself for the pupils' memory), but not as if I had been a great scholar, as dear readers might think,

who would have known everything off the top of his head, no, it was quite the opposite, because I had a purely practical nature and manner rather than a scholarly one, so I was spared many wrong things, especially that of wanting to make my pupils into great scholars. My only aim was to present and teach my students what little I knew myself in a simple and understandable way, thinking that it would be enough for them if they learned as much in the one year in Steeden as I knew myself. This not only made teaching easy for me and my pupils, but they always learned with pleasure and joy in Steeden, and my pupils still had the advantage of learning so much through my simple, popular, practical way that they passed very well when they entered the American institutions.

What made our life in Steeden very difficult was the annual change of pupils. No sooner had the house been filled with new pupils in the middle of the summer and we had become a little more familiar with them, than the preparations for emigration to America began again in the New Year. And how much work of all kinds this preparation entailed! How much there was to organize and discuss with each of the departing pupils (especially as most of them also had to be provided with clothes, linen and books), and in some cases with their parents and friends back home! What piles of letters had to be written until everything was sorted out for so many travelers! And yet this external work was still the least of it, the most difficult thing was that a clear and certain judgment had to be made about each of the departing pupils as to whether he could be sent and recommended for admission to America! It could not fail that there was often a most embarrassing worry and uncertainty about some of the pupils, which weighed heavily on their hearts and consciences. At the same time, however, while the departing pupils were preparing to

leave, the often equally long and difficult negotiations about the exception of the new pupils had to be conducted so as not to proceed carelessly with this admission and expose oneself to great deception. So the dear readers can probably see from all this what difficult mountains there were to climb every year in Steeden.

Another mountain was the pecuniary annual livelihood with so many housemates. If I want to talk about this too, I cannot do otherwise than to begin with loud praise and thanksgiving for all the miracles of divine help that we were allowed to experience during the long years in the institution. We have never been in want, even in the greatest need there was always a way out and help at the right time, no year, as long as the institution existed, could be closed with debts (once on December 31st the money was not enough, the debts had to be paid). But lo and behold, when I sent an express to the post office early on New Year's Day to avoid having to start the new year with debts, the money letter arrived, which made everything all right), and when I finally closed the institution completely and the last pupils left the house, there was still a small surplus in the till rather than a shortage. So God has always fulfilled His precious and glorious promises to us in a mighty and glorious way. But nevertheless, the cross always remains in God's ways. Most of our students were very poor and destitute; with very rare exceptions, everything had to be paid for them, their stay in Steeden, equipment and travel expenses to America. In addition, the Steeden institution had no congregations behind it to support it, no missionary associations to care for it, as is the case with other institutions in Germany and America. We were almost always dependent on completely free and, if I may say so, random gifts of love. We could be sure that we had many faithful friends,

especially the Missouri Synod in America, which had expressly declared that it regarded our Steeden institution as its own. But with all the other heavy burdens on the Missouri Synod, it was not surprising that only the smaller part of what we needed annually came from there, for everything else we had to rely on Germany. But now Steeden was in Nassau, far away from Bavaria, Saxony, Hanover, Mecklenburg and Lauenburg, where we found the most help and participation for our Steeden institution, so that all personal contact between the latter and its friends was completely absent. These were difficult circumstances. They meant that we had to look to the Lord's hand for all our daily living and livelihood in a special way and wait to see what He gave or what, according to God's providence, the letter carrier brought each day. We literally didn't know a month in advance what we were going to live on the next. As a result, in order to keep in touch with our distant friends, I not only had to write countless letters, but was also forced to distribute news and information about the Steeden institution in print. And finally, every summer I could not shy away from using my vacation at the institution, 4-6 weeks between the departure of the old and the re-admission of the new pupils, to make large collection trips throughout Germany, mostly in the countries mentioned above. Of course, these trips were of great benefit and blessing in that I became acquainted with a great many people who were open to hearing from me not only about the Steeden institution and American church conditions, but also about my testimony to pure Lutheran doctrine, and the latter was discussed and negotiated on a daily basis during my travels. At that time, the hostility both against us separated Lutherans in Germany and against the Missouri Synod in America was far from what it is today; I may therefore say that I

was welcomed everywhere with open arms during my travels. Almost daily I had to speak in missionary meetings, sometimes to smaller, sometimes to larger circles, as well as in lectures at public missionary festivals, which I preferred to attend everywhere, to represent the cause of our Steeden institution and the Lutheran Church in America in general and its great need for preachers. On these collection trips I usually collected the travel money for my departing students, in which Pastor [Ruperti](#), then in Bremerhaven, was my faithful helper, who also took care of the entire embarkation of the students there and still held a farewell service for them in his little church. However, these missionary journeys were extremely exhausting for me, both because of the constant public and private speaking and because of the daily visits to old and new friends, who often had to be won over for the purpose of my journey. When I returned home, exhausted in body and soul, the new students were just around the corner.

I write for children and friends, as the title of my booklet expressly says, so I may speak a little more freely from the heart, as I have done in the foregoing, in order to let them look into all my hardships and burdens without fear that they will accuse me of sinful self-conceit. But I would like to show by my example everywhere how and what Christian paths are: all divine paths of miracles and grace with us poor sinners, whom he honors with his word and service, but at the same time always paths full of heavy crosses and hard hardship, through which God without ceasing gives the old man away to death, and prepares us and makes us capable for the demonstrations of his grace. — What wonder it was that even the strongest body could not endure the unceasing exertion and especially the continual excitement such as I had. I had made an attempt to obtain the help I needed and had called one of my old

students, G. Hieronymus, who had received his training at the practical theological seminary in America, back to Steeden in 1867 for this purpose. But after a very short time, God laid him on a long deathbed and then took him away through a blessed death according to his inscrutable counsel. H. Wyneken, who later became a professor in Springfield, also helped me out in Steeden for a while, but was then called back to America. When my difficult struggle with the Immanuel Synod, which took place in those years, was added to this and not only weighed heavily on my heart, but also often disturbed my sleep at night, I collapsed completely in 1872. I had still been able to finish the year of apprenticeship with my pupils and hold the mission festival, as well as the confirmation at Whitsun (as is the custom in Nassau), when at the altar at the very end of the ceremony my strength left me, so that I could hardly reach the parish chair. Complete nervous exhaustion had taken hold of me, which then developed into a nervous asthma. A long bathing cure refreshed me again for a short time, but only apparently. This was followed by almost three years of complete infirmity and from then on my physical strength (at least in comparison with earlier times) was and remained broken forever. On the first news of this which I gave to St. Louis, Professor Dr. Walther immediately sent me my faithful assistant and later son-in-law, K. Eikmeier, who above all took over the whole preaching office from me (which I then handed over to him in 1879 for completely independent administration). He also helped with the teaching of the pupils, but as I had to stop this more and more completely, Pastor von Brandt from America came to our aid, who was in Germany with his family and took up residence in Steeden for a longer period of time. In 1873 my wife was struck down for the second time by a severe nervous fever, so that one night we had all gathered around her bed

and said goodbye to her for earthly life; in 1875 a nervous fever brought me to the very edge of the grave again, just as I had begun to recover. Nevertheless, the Lord delivered us from all this and restored us to life and health. Of course, it was no longer possible to work as before, especially because I lacked the physical strength to do so, but it was a great special grace from God that I regained all my spiritual strength and my pen learned to rush across the paper as fresh and lively as in my younger years, even if my feet no longer wanted to continue to the same extent. I gradually became able to preach again, at least on a temporary basis, and I was even able to start teaching pupils again. From 1872 onwards, the number of pupils in Steeden had decreased year by year. The main reason for this was both the cessation of all my travels from then on, as well as the break with the Lutheran State Churches, which began in that year. As a result, a hostile mood arose against us among all those who clung to their State Churches under any conditions as before and for whom the word "separation" became quite incomprehensible and unbearable. Quite naturally, participation in our Steeden institution ceased in all German Lutheran State Churches, and we received neither pupils nor financial contributions from there. And in America, too, there was a completely new turn of events: the number of students from the American congregations themselves entering the seminaries there grew to such an extent that there was a lack of space for the many students and new buildings had to be erected everywhere to accommodate them all. So there was less need for the Steeden students over there. For all these reasons, we closed the Steeden institution in 1878 and released the last 8 pupils, mostly younger pupils from our separated Lutheran congregations, to America. But

lo and behold, as I became physically stronger again, I could not let go of my old desire and love for teaching; in the years 1881-1886 I again took individual pupils into the house, finally for a few years even 3-4 pupils, supported in faithful love especially by our Saxon separated Lutheran congregations. As I grew older, I finally had to give up this work as well.

Thus God has led us on a long and rich path of blessing when we look back over the many years of our Steeden Institute and our work for the Missouri Synod in America. Quite apart from the fact that well over 200 young people have been sent from here to the Missouri Synod to serve in church and school: how many blessings have also come to us at home from our work for America! How it has served to forge an intimate bond of love between us and the Missouri Synod! What lively communication has developed between us and America as a result! And how has our entire connection with the Missouri Synod served to protect us from all ecclesiastical isolation and loneliness after our separation from Breslau! How it has helped to maintain in us always the consciousness of being members and comrades of a larger ecclesiastical community than that of the Breslau Synod, which we formerly had! But how many direct blessings of edification, strengthening, fortification and encouragement in the faith have flowed to us from the Missouri Synod, both through its writings and through the countless letters, especially from the dear Professor Dr. Walther, through the annual visits and all the lively communication with America! Yes, the Last Day will make it clear to what full and rich extent we enjoyed the blessing that God has placed on church fellowship in general, and how we in Nassau were highly favored by God in this respect above many, perhaps above all other members of the Lutheran Free Church in Germany.

But our connection with the Missouri Synod and the existence of the Steeden Institute for America,

which was based on this, also extended our fellowship in Germany itself in a completely different direction. As a result, we came into widespread acquaintance and contact with many German Lutherans, especially in German State Churches. Who else, especially after our separation from Breslau, would have asked about the few small and poor Lutheran congregations and pastors in Nassau, if we had not been the comrades and, may I say, the main representatives of the Missouri Synod in Germany! But we were known as such everywhere, as far as the Missouri Synod was known. There were still many everywhere who took a lively interest in the Church of America and our work for it, and we received both pupils and the necessary support and contributions for our institution from all sides in Germany. Even more, however, my great missionary journeys, which I made regularly every summer in Germany, helped to establish a widespread acquaintance and connection between us and many Lutherans in Germany. Our extensive acquaintance with so many, combined with the interest of our Steeden institution, was the sole reason for the creation of our Steeden newspaper "[*Ev. luth. Mission und Kirche*](#)" in 1866. I am also aware that I did not set out to publish a public newspaper out of my own self-conceit and presumption, oh indeed not, but with much inner trepidation and reluctance; but circumstances led and urged me to do so.

God's grace and miraculous providence, however, not only brought manifold blessings for us in Nassau, but was also of great importance for many others. It cannot be denied that the existence of a special missionary institution for the Missouri Synod in Germany, the annual sending of so many pupils to America, as well as all the activities for the Missouri Synod that were connected with it, contributed not a little to making the

name of the Missouri Synod more and more known in Germany and to bringing its existence closer to the minds and hearts of many. At the same time as the existence of the Missouri Synod, however, the testimony of faith emanating from the Missouri Synod also came close and strong before the souls of many. How differently the name of the Missourians, their writings and their testimony of faith are now known throughout Germany than they were 30 years ago! We have also been able to contribute a little to this in our small part, and praise be to God, who has often shown us his almighty finger in this and has allowed us to hear many a grateful confession of blessing, which has been received in many places in Germany as a result of becoming acquainted with us and the Missourians. Yes, this testimony of faith and of pure Lutheran doctrine, which has gone out so loudly and powerfully from the Missouri Synod and the acquaintance with it to the whole Lutheran Church of Germany in the last 20 to 30 years, has had its infinitely high and important meaning: God has also wanted to call the apostate Lutheran Church of Germany once again to fight for pure Lutheran doctrine and to lead it back to the confession of the same through this as a powerful wake-up call.

11.

Our Dispute with the [Immanuel Synod](#). ↑

This dispute took place in the middle of the most turbulent period of our institutional life in Steeden, but we must devote a special account to it here, since the Immanuel Synod not only represents a particular ecclesiastical and theological direction, which gives the dispute with it its special importance, but this dispute also forms one of the most painful periods both in my

life and in our small Nassau church history. From the very beginning, we had to see our closest kindred spirits in the pastors of the Immanuel Synod in opposition to the Breslau error, and we were largely bound to them by the most intimate bonds of personal friendship and trust; so we confidently hoped for the gradual reconciliation of our differences with them and finally complete agreement. The Immanuel Synod, for its part, also hoped for this agreement, but, as later became clear, without ever recognizing in any way the weight of our doctrinal differences or feeling the need to clarify them; instead, it counted only on our unconditional and unreserved admission to it. Indeed, from the very beginning this prevented any fruitful success of our negotiations with the Immanuel Synod, that they did not meet us with honest research and striving for truth, even where they had to admit that there were still gaps and deficiencies in their own knowledge.

Already in 1860 at the Breslau Synod, at the first beginning of the ecclesiastical doctrinal dispute over the doctrine of church and ministry, I pointed out to Pastor Diedrich and some of his friends that in their struggle against the Romanizing Breslau direction they were only one-sidedly tearing down the false visibility of the church, as well as the legal doctrine of church government of the Breslau High Church Council, but that they lacked the positive construction of the right doctrine of the visible church, as well as the proof of how the right exercise of church authority could be achieved. Even then I emphasized in particular the symbolic truths of the symbols [i.e. Confessions] that "the Church has the keys", that the Church's authority, i.e. the law and power of the Church, is external. The right and power of the Church to establish and maintain external ecclesiastical order was only the outgrowth and consequence of its power of the keys, that therefore this right and power over the external order and government of the Church rested in principle in the community of believers, who held the keys, but that all these rights of the Church could

and must only be exercised externally by transfer from the invisible community of saints to the visible Church and to the ordinary Church office: From that time on, these were the doctrinal points for which I insisted, albeit in vain, on due recognition from Pastor Diedrich and his colleagues. The importance of these questions, it seemed, was not appreciated, and there was no room or space in my own mind in which to place the truths I asserted. In short, I did not succeed in bringing about any kind of sufficient discussion of the doctrinal issues mentioned. I may confidently take God as my witness to the fact that for years I sought with the warmest love to bring these truths up for discussion with my closest friends in the Immanuel Synod, and that I went to unspeakable lengths in letters, as well as in essays that I wrote on various occasions and in personal meetings. So the year 1867 arrived, when I traveled to Magdeburg, also on behalf of my ministerial brothers on the Rhine who were closer to me, to attend the annual meeting of the Immanuel Synod there and to discuss our doctrinal differences. The latter actually happened. Our differences came to light quite clearly and firmly, and I testified quite emphatically where I believed I had to publicly accuse the Immanuel Synod of partly deviating from the teaching of our church symbols and partly not confessing them sufficiently. I found open contradiction from some quarters, but ambiguity and complete confusion from most. Pastor Semm openly declared that he did not know the relevant doctrinal questions sufficiently to take part in the negotiations; the blessed Pastor Ehlers, when I held up to him the statement of the symbols that the church, "because it has the priesthood", also has the power to appoint church ministers (where the visible local congregation obviously stands as the executor of what belongs to the true believers alone), confessed quite honestly that he did not understand this statement of our symbols; Pastor

Zöller rejected the question as to who actually and originally had the power of the keys, pointing out that wherever Word and Sacrament are practiced purely and clearly, the right office of the keys is certainly present, and with this certainty it is enough for the consolation of souls. Even Pastor Crome, who always seemed to be the most capable for dogmatic negotiations, declared that he had not worked through the doctrine of the spiritual priesthood of all Christians enough to enter into exhaustive negotiations about it. Thus the Magdeburg Assembly of 1866 remained completely fruitless. In truth, I had achieved nothing, and yet I believed that I could, and indeed must, come to an understanding and agreement with the pastors of the Immanuel Synod, whom I held so dear. That is why I not only took part in the celebration of Holy Communion at that time in Magdeburg, but I also declared, when asked, that I still wanted to maintain church and communion fellowship with the Immanuel Synod. *) I made a serious mistake in that I

*) In order to understand my statement, I would like to point out that I did not intend to re-establish communion with the pastors of the Immanuel Synod. The latter would, of course, have required a prior thorough agreement in doctrine, as Pastor Ruhland later demanded in Dresden when he came from America and faced the Immanuel Synod as a complete stranger. I, on the other hand, had already had communion with the pastors of the Immanuel Synod as a common member of the Breslau Synod, and we did not consider this communion to be abolished by our mutual separation from the Breslau Synod, especially since we were united in our common struggle against it. So the question was: when did the time come for us to dissolve our communion with the Immanuel Synod as a synod of false believers? From this point of view, we postponed this abolition as long as we still had the hope of reaching agreement with our old friends and brothers in the truth. It was only when this hope faded, and even later when we were actually expected to enter into a union that went against our conscience, that our fellowship was dissolved. So my declaration in Magdeburg corresponded entirely to the circumstances as they were at the time.

did not explain in detail how I understood my statement. It was therefore later interpreted as if I had not considered our doctrinal differences with the Immanuel Synod in Magdeburg to be church-dividing at all, but had only later had this latter opinion imposed on me by the Missourians. On the other hand, I want to admit that our differences with the Immanuel Synod, especially in view of the often unclear and vacillating way of speaking of many, especially Pastor Diedrich, were not yet so pronounced from the beginning as to be able to clearly and definitely foresee their later development and their entire ecclesiastical implications from the outset; then, however, in Magdeburg in 1867, I at least testified quite definitely and explicitly in public that I counted our doctrinal differences in the area of right Lutheran doctrine of its symbols, so it must have been quite self-evident to my opponents that the doctrinal points in question were not ecclesiastically indifferent to me. In my heart and conscience, however, my love and trust for my friends in the Immanuel Synod so dominated me that I did not want to admit to myself the possibility of a separation from them, but persuaded myself that there could be no lack of future agreement. [Stoeckhardt nearly got caught on this with F. A. Schmidt] — And yet it was still to come to the final break. All my hopes for further thorough negotiations of the doctrinal differences between us remained unfulfilled even after 1867. Then an event intervened. Professor Fritschel from the Iowa Synod in America came to Germany and was received with joy and approval by the Immanuel Synod. In America, however, the Missouri and Iowa Synods had already separated ecclesiastically. Thus the representative of the Iowa Synod, Professor Fritschel, had to summon up the necessity for us in Germany to take a stand on the various church parties. This was the reason which moved me, after almost ten years of private fraternal negotiations with the Immanuel Synod had led to nothing, to ask them publicly in my paper

of December 1870 for a finally sufficient explanation of their ecclesiastical doctrinal position. I did this in the mildest possible form, I refrained from accusing it of false doctrine, I only recalled earlier statements which had been changed many times later, but had never been sufficiently clearly and satisfactorily discussed, so that a definite explanation must finally be given. Nevertheless, I was highly resented for this public appearance, and saw it as wanton and unbrotherly tearing and breaking, and so on. Alas, the latter was far, far away from me, it was a real matter of conscience that left me no peace about our doctrinal questions; but our opponents had complete peace and wanted it, and that alone was the reason why they disliked the disturber of the peace so much and called him a transgressor.

Unfortunately, although we were increasingly divided on this issue, these lengthy negotiations at least had the blessing that the crucial doctrinal questions were now discussed from all sides. *)

*) The following presentation of these doctrinal questions in an orderly context, as I have come to know them from personal experience, should be of all the more interest to dear readers, since so far only occasional brief reports on them have become known in church publications.

In particular, it was the so-called doctrine of transference [*Uebertragungslehre*] that now became the focus of the whole dispute and the watchword for it. And rightly so; for, as already mentioned above, the Immanuel Synod quite correctly understood the Church to be, in essence, the community of true believers; it also recognized, as it said, the proposition of the symbols as a divine truth, that this Church had the power of the keys, so everything therefore quite logically revolved around the question of how this power, to which the Church was in principle entitled, could be exercised correctly and properly. That was the point at which our paths diverged: our opponents in the Immanuel Synod resolutely and persistently denied any notion of a transfer of ecclesiastical

power from the Church, whether to external ecclesiastical assemblies or to the holders of the church office as the organs and instruments of the Church in the exercise of its key power; We, on the other hand, had to insist that only through such a transfer was it possible for the Church, as the invisible community of the faithful, to exercise its ecclesiastical power; the whole doctrine of the Church's key power therefore stands and falls with this concept of transfer, for this power itself is robbed from the Church if it is robbed of the possibility of exercising it. Herein lay the great importance of our dispute with the Immanuel Synod; it concerned the law and authority of the Church and its proper exercise, and thus in fact the whole external existence of the Church and Church order. For let it be well understood that the Church proper, the body of Christ, in which Christ dwells, and with him all the rights and powers of the Church, cannot by its very nature act in the sphere of external visible life; it is merely an invisible communion of faith and of the Holy Spirit in the hearts, hidden from human eyes, as the Apology says. Therefore, as soon as the believing Christians who have the keys come together outwardly to exercise their ecclesiastical rights and powers together, e.g., to execute the ecclesiastical ban, to appoint a pastor, etc., then pseudo-Christians and nominal Christians will immediately interfere in their visible assembly; in short, a visible church and community will form in which the good and the bad cannot be distinguished from one another. It is therefore obvious that the rights and powers of the invisible church, as the actual owner of the key authority, if it wants to act as a church, as a community, can quite naturally only be realized in a visible assembly or in the visible church. And where alone does such a visible assembly of the church have all the ecclesiastical rights and powers that it exercises? Only by virtue of the true

believers, who are more or less hidden in the external visible assembly and in the entire church community represented by it (which also includes women, baptized children, the elderly and the sick). Thus the visible church, as soon as it acts in synods, assemblies, etc., in order to exercise any ecclesiastical rights, is indisputably there only as the representative, organ and instrument of the invisible community of saints present in it, whose rights are transferred to it. Without this concept of transference, therefore, all exercise of ecclesiastical power and order in external visible life is completely impossible. — It was precisely the latter that came to light at the Immanuel Synod. It declared the whole so-called doctrine of transference to be a mere human invention, of which there is nothing in the Bible and the symbols, and hence the constant clamor that we wanted to make a doctrine which went far beyond the limits of the Lutheran doctrine of the symbols into a binding article of faith; we had to allow ourselves to be scolded by Pastor Diedrich for being Pharisees, anti-Christians, and so on. Such statements of our symbols, however, as the one quoted above, that "the church, because it has the priesthood, must also have the power to appoint ministers", were not understood or heeded, nor did they seek to learn to understand them, but they thought that the Lutheran doctrine that the church had the keys was completely satisfied with the fact that every Christian had to exercise the keys for his person in his state and profession, i.e. the householder in his family, the pastor, on the other hand, in the public congregation. The latter was the popular, prevailing idea, and it was completely overlooked that the power of the keys of the church also includes those ecclesiastical rights which Christians have to exercise as Christians and which, because they are common to all Christians, can only be exercised in community, such as the handling of church discipline and order, the ban, the appointment of a pastor and the like. This is where the great gap became apparent in the

Immanuel Synod: it did not understand how a Christian congregation as such had to exercise its ecclesiastical rights, and therefore consequently lacked the knowledge and exercise of these ecclesiastical rights. The Immanuel Synod therefore had no synod deputies at its synod assemblies, it had no ordinary congregational assemblies, until later necessity forced it to make some external concessions in this respect. Very often one heard statements to the effect that the householders, just as they had to maintain discipline and order in their families, had to take care of home worship and the education of their children, they also had to order the church, the appointment of pastors, etc. in the congregation. Pastor Crome even complained that the Lutheran Free Church did not have the secular authorities in whose hands the establishment of church order could be placed. Pastor Diedrich, on the other hand, occasionally said that if a pastor was only called and the door was opened for him to preach and exercise his ministry, it made no difference who called him, even in this case the godless world itself. In the Immanuel Synod, however, the exercise of the public ecclesiastical ban remained entirely in the hands of the pastor. There was such a lack of clarity and confusion about this that Pastor Crome himself did not know how to make sense of the words in Matthew 18: "Tell it to the congregation [*Gemeinde*]", as he once told me, other than that, of course, the pastor alone exercises the ban in his office, but that he tells the sin to the congregation when he proclaims the ban publicly in the pulpit. It is also reported by credible witnesses that Pastor Diedrich exercised the office of the keys in such a way that he proclaimed this or that person as excommunicated from the pulpit without the prior knowledge of the congregation. To all this was added the fatal error that Pastor Diedrich, and after him the Immanuel Synod, claimed that only the church, the communion of saints, in its entirety, conceived as an ideal whole, had the

keys, but that word and sacrament were not the marks of the church for each individual local congregation in such a way as to guarantee the existence of a nucleus of believing Christians, but that there could possibly be a local congregation which had only word and sacrament and yet not a single believing Christian in it. The fact that in such congregations, as Luther says, it is at least the baptized little children who, as God's children, are in possession of all spiritual and ecclesiastical goods and Christian rights, was only held up to ridicule. Obviously, however, such assertions must have completely destroyed all church rights and robbed a local church of all and any exercise of them. For if in a local congregation there is nothing left of a congregation of believers, nothing left of spiritual priesthood, then there is also no key power, there are no more priestly and Christian rights, in short, there is only a mere worldly heap, no church. Pastor Diedrich's ideas must quite logically have led to such a dissolution of all concepts of the visible church and church order.

The Immanuel Synod argued even more resolutely against any idea of transferring the power of the keys from the congregation to the pastor appointed by it. Such objections were heard: just as a Christian could, as it were, relinquish rights and works that God had given and commanded him and transfer them to others, so everyone had the inalienable duty to practice for himself what God had commanded him in his state and profession. Thus the pastor in his public office also has his special works and duties, which according to God's will and order only the pastor should do, and which are therefore only commanded to him, not to every ordinary Christian. They got caught up in the concept of the word "public", in that public teaching or preaching was understood to be a special work or, as it were, a special aspect of the power of the keys,

which was commanded only to the pastor, not to the layman, while the latter was only to teach his household at home. Thus the exercise of the power of the keys was divided, as it were, into these two different areas, one of which, the public, was held only by the pastor as a special work and business of his office, while the other, the private, was held by the layman, and the power of the keys was given to the whole church only in so far as every member of the church had the right to exercise it in his own state. With these ideas they remained completely blind and closed to the teaching of our symbols that the whole office of the keys, that is, the whole authority to act and administer the Word and Sacrament, however and wherever it may be, is given to the Church and to her alone according to God's Word, and that therefore the whole concept of the "public office" which the pastor has is only given to the Church and to her alone according to God's Word, which the pastor has, consists only in the fact that the pastor does not have to perform certain special works which the layman would not be entitled to do, but that he only does the works and business which in and of themselves are commanded to every Christian, to the whole church or congregation, instead of the congregation, in the name and on behalf of the latter, as its servant, hand or mouth. For as Luther explains so clearly and strikingly, "if the whole congregation wanted to baptize the little child, a thousand hands would go after it and drown it, therefore —one must have a servant who does it in the name and instead of the congregation". In order to prove this concept of the "transfer" of the key and ministerial authority from the congregation to the pastor, I clearly explained in many essays in my former publication "Church and Mission" how there are only two ways, only this twofold possibility in the doctrine of key authority and preaching office: either the power of the keys (or at least certain parts and pieces of it, which the opponents called the "public" ones) is placed by the Lord Christ only in the ministry and commanded to it, consequently the preacher then has the power of the keys and the right to exercise it only in himself, i.e. it is only a right

and privilege of his office, or in the other case, if the church is the owner of the power of the keys, the pastor can only receive and exercise it in his office by the church giving it to him, or by the church ordering and transferring it to him in its name. If this transference is denied, then the conclusion undoubtedly follows that the preacher does not have the power of the keys from the church at all, and that consequently the church is not the principal holder of the power of the keys. But in vain did I bring these so simple and compelling conclusions to light, however clearly and brightly; in vain, in particular, did I emphasize that the expression "transference", in which one wanted once and for all to see only a human feeling, was only chosen and used by me (according to the Missourians) to clearly express the thing it denotes, which is undoubtedly a biblical one (as is so often the case with theological expressions), therefore I would gladly drop this expression, if only the point were made that the pastor acts in the name or instead of the congregation, as its servant and instrument, so that in this sense the action and work of the pastor is the work of the church or congregation, likewise that the calling of the pastor by the visible local congregation is a real calling of the church, which has the keys. But all my arguments, however clear, were to no avail. And what was it that kept my eyes so fixed? It seems to me that the blind, almost puzzling prejudice against the Missourians played no small part in this. What good could come from America, this hotbed of wild emigration, it seemed to be thought, or how could the American Lutheran Church, still in its diapers as a newborn infant, surpass its ecclesiastical motherland, Germany, with its centuries-old church, theological education and wisdom? That is unthinkable, which is why one should not "expect" a German theologian (as one literally put it) to learn something from

America or a Professor Dr. Walther. But the other reason was probably the most important, namely the inner incapacity and the lack of a sense for a clear and definite formulation of Christian doctrine, as was particularly the case with [Pastor Diedrich](#), who was regarded as a role model and leader in the Immanuel Synod. All requests therefore remained unfulfilled that our opponents, if they rejected our concept of transference, should explain for their part how in the world the key power came from the hands of the church, which possessed it, into the hands of the pastor who exercised it publicly in office. They replied, well, the pastor is also a member of the church, a Christian, who therefore has the power of the keys for his person as well as the church itself. But if one objected to this, how it was with an unbelieving pastor, who therefore did not have the power of the keys through his own personal faith, etc., the answer was finally missing. But this did not put pressure on the heart and conscience of the Immanuel Synod, they did not care to know everything so precisely and did not consider it at all necessary to be a good Lutheran. All our negotiations with the Immanuel Synod ultimately failed because of this shameful indifferentism towards pure doctrine, and it revealed itself more and more as the true child of our time. Pastor Diedrich, as he said in 1867, saw nothing but a ridiculous absurdity in the theory of transference, whereas he, the man who was supposed to be of such a high and deep spirit and to have grasped the gospel so purely and genuinely, should have seen and recognized before all others that the church of believers has the keys only because it has Christ and is one with Him, one body, and that therefore in the same sense as the pastor in his office according to 1 Cor. 4:1, Christ's servant and steward, is likewise the servant of the church or congregation, as of the body of Christ, so that Christ works herein only in and with His body, the Church, calls the pastor and confers upon him the office with all its

powers. *)

*) We cannot therefore concede to our opponents that the concept of transference is not a biblical one; after all, Holy Scripture calls preachers "stewards", but the concept of a steward consists precisely in the fact that he is not himself the Lord, but only the Lord's goods are entrusted to him for administration. However, one misses and errs in wanting to distinguish between Christ and the church. (See page 126.)

To misjudge this is truly to misjudge the depths of the gospel and justification by faith. But to consider the doctrine of transference to be an absurdity can itself only appear to be quite inconsistent, since no human society, no nation on earth, and no king can exercise his power without delegating it to officials and servants. Pastor Diedrich and his followers closed themselves off just as completely from the voice of the despised Missourians as they did from all the clear statements of Luther and the old fathers that were held up to them. Pastor Crome used to contemptuously call this "citation theology" (by which he particularly referred to the writings of Professor Dr. Walther, as if this highly gifted man and theologian had preferred to speak so often and so much with the words of Luther and the old fathers than with his own, only out of weakness of spirit).

But the indifferentism against pure doctrine and a more precise formulation of it, which prevailed in the Immanuel Synod, was bound to bear fruit, and the downward slope they had entered was bound to continue. This became apparent in the later great ecclesiastical doctrinal battles. First of all, in the election of grace controversy, the Immanuel Synod sometimes completely lacked a sufficiently clear and decisive doctrinal position, sometimes it openly took the side of the opponents of the pure doctrine (in its paper "Immanuel" Pastor Zöller even spoke of two factors of conversion, divine grace and man's own free will!) Even more, however, the slippery slope of the Immanuel Synod came to light in the so important and decisive controversy over inspiration in recent years, where Pastor

Diedrich not only described it as the vain opinion of some to consider every "syllable" of Holy Scripture to be divinely inspired, but also, in sharp contrast to all real belief in inspiration and to the teaching of the entire orthodox Lutheran Church, denied that the Holy Spirit was the "author" of Holy Scripture. *)

*) If the Holy Spirit is not the author of Holy Scripture, then it is not the actual word or work of the Holy Spirit, not the word that came out of God's mouth, but Holy Scripture is then the spiritual product of human authors, in which the Holy Spirit has only assisted, as in all other writings of enlightened church teachers.

It is equally serious, however, that a number of pastors of the Immanuel Synod (Ehlers, Wagner, Scholze) publicly denied the inerrancy of Holy Scripture without public objection from the others, thus treading the paths of the modern unbelieving theology, an instructive example of where it must lead if there is a lack of clear, firm doctrinal determinations. Indifferentism to pure doctrine ultimately leads to its loss. —

So, of course, the outward break between us and the Immanuel Synod was inevitable. The opportunity for this soon arose: our old friend, Pastor Crome, invited us Nassau pastors to come to the meeting of the Immanuel Synod in Rade and to take part in their communion celebration there, on the express condition, which was to be given on our part, that all our doctrinal differences were not church-dividing, but did not touch the basis of the symbolic Lutheran church doctrine at all. For us this meant coming face to face with the truth! We would have gladly come to further theological negotiations in the hope of agreement, we would have continued the old friendship and connection even longer, but — to confess that the doctrinal questions, for which we had been so earnestly urged to testify in conscience for years, were not divine truth and symbolic doctrine, but only human theological views or even so-called

open questions: we could not do that, on such a condition we could not accept Pastor Crome's invitation to Rade. Thus our communion with the Immanuel Synod was dissolved, an inevitable consequence of the fact that the [Immanuel] Synod constantly declared our doctrinal differences to be indifferent. The imposition of recognizing the controversial doctrines among us as ecclesiastically indifferent, as not belonging to the Lutheran symbolic doctrine, that and that alone was ultimately what caused our break with the Immanuel Synod, a great consolation for us that we were given such a clear, definite decision, in which we were not able to give way a finger's breadth for the sake of truth and conscience, but had to resist with a firm heart. — Occasionally it should be mentioned that in Saxony, where Pastor Ruhland had been called from America, a decision had also been reached with the Immanuel Synod. At the request of Pastor Semm, whom Pastor Ruhland had received with warm affection in Dresden, the latter declared that in order to enter into church and communion fellowship with the Immanuel Synod, he must first wish to be united in doctrine with it. This was immediately declared to be an offense and a breach; so here, too, the very demand of the Immanuel Synod came glaringly to light: church and communion fellowship with circumvention and disregard of all existing doctrinal differences among us. But we must not concede or allow anyone in the world to declare even the smallest piece of divine truth indifferent or to make it the plaything of merely human opinions as long as there is still a spark of Christian and Lutheran ecclesiastical conscience in us. It is therefore with indignation that we Nassau Lutheran pastors must reject the blasphemous slander against us, as if it were not our own honest conscience, but only human authority, that has guided us in our entire struggle and behavior against the Immanuel Synod. — But

I must not begin to tell you how profound all these painful experiences and separations from such close friends and brothers as the pastors of the Immanuel Synod must have been for us. Yes, we experienced and felt here all the unspeakable woe and deep misery of the ecclesiastical division of our time. Oh that all those who judge and condemn the Lutheran Free Church so harshly for the sake of its existing divisions would first experience what we have experienced, that they would first have to fight through these battles in their own person with a torn and bleeding heart, and then they would judge.

However, as was once the case with our separation from Breslau, so also this time with the separation from the Immanuel Synod God made sure that we had to empty the cup of pain to the last dregs. This time, too, the split reached into our innermost life, into our congregations, and it was Pastor Hein's congregation that was affected. First of all, his Frankfurt congregation, which was already so small, split and Pastor Diedrich himself moved to Frankfurt to set up a counter-altar against us there, all the more sad and lamentable the more generally the conviction prevailed among friends and even among enemies that it was only personal hatred and strife that had led to this whole split in Frankfurt. — And our separation from the Immanuel Synod entailed one more thing, namely the dissolution of the last remnant of our former Rhenish Pastoral Conference. Pastor Frommel in Baden had already separated from us earlier, not for the sake of doctrinal issues, but because our circle was too narrow for him. In one of his most recent writings, he said that he had received the impression from the separated Lutherans of Germany that "it was getting too narrow for me here in the castle". He was looking for space and found it in the fellowship of State Church circles and friends. But the fact that we were increasingly fighting against the corrupt German State churchism

separated him and us completely. So our old Rhenish pastoral conference melted away more and more, and when Pastor Frischmuth of Saarbrücken no longer held the same ecclesiastical position with us, it finally dissolved completely. Thus all the beautiful hopes sank into the grave that we had once built on our Rhenish Pastoral Conference, which had blossomed so sweetly in its time, the hope of a larger, closely connected Rhenish synod system that was to develop from it and encompass all the separated Lutherans in the Rhineland. Alas, what has become of these beautiful youthful dreams that we once worked so diligently to fulfill? They have vanished as with the weather and in the heavy storms of these last sad and evil times. Breslauers, Immanuelites, Hessian Renitents, Vilmarians and Union Lutherans have now all taken up residence and gained a following in the area where I once stood 40 years ago as the only witness for the Lutheran Church and truth.

12.

Our Break with the German State Churches *) ↑

*) Initially, this break only affected the Lutheran State Churches; for us, however, the separation from the latter was nothing other than a break with the entire German State Church system, which is why we are talking about it here.

We could not be spared this break either, if we did not want to deny our Lutheran confession, but we were drawn into it by our circumstances. Through the annual admission of State Church students to my institution, through my annual collection trips to Lutheran State Churches and through my close personal contact with so many members

of these churches, the question of the extent to which there was still real church fellowship between me and these State Churches had to be put quite necessarily and directly on my heart and conscience. I had to tell myself that in reality and in church life there was little difference between a United State church and the so-called Lutheran State Churches of Germany: there, as here, the unhindered public domination of false non-Lutheran doctrine up to the grossest rationalism, and not only that, but also among the believers themselves, especially the pastors, a mixture of the most diverse personal views and theological directions. That things would not remain like this for long, but that there would have to be a decision, a real reassertion of the Lutheran confession and true Lutheran doctrine, if the Lutheran Church was to be rebuilt, this conviction had to force itself upon every honest Lutheran Christian heart, including ours in Nassau.

But in the great battle with the German State Churches, undoubtedly one of the greatest ecclesiastical questions and decisions of our time, we did not want to do anything hastily and arbitrarily. After all, we ourselves were children of the German State Churches, and the more than thousand-year-old structure of the German national and State Churches loomed large and mighty before our eyes; we knew how deeply not only the whole of German Christianity, but also all German national life had grown together with it: We could therefore not hide from ourselves what a profoundly drastic ecclesiastical change and decision, what a completely new epoch in the history of the Christian church, was given with the cessation of the State Church, with the separation of the German people as such and in its entirety from its old church inherited from the fathers. On the other hand, however, the unconscionable conditions of the entire German State Churches, the public apostasy from faith and church confession, the large unbelieving masses of the people were too powerful

and clear for anyone to be reassured. As early as 1852, I was therefore driven to write an essay in the Breslau Church Journal, in which I sharply castigated the willful and indifferent toleration of unbelieving preachers in the German State Churches and demanded, as the least of all, that at least no more unbelieving preachers should be newly appointed if the old ones were no longer able to be removed. However, my attack on the German State Church at that time remained without support from the Breslau Synod, and I alone did not dare to oppose the then generally prevailing view that Lutheran State Churches should not be judged according to the existing sins of individuals, but according to the legal status of the church as a whole. (The latter assertion, however, completely overlooked the main question on which everything depends, namely the extent to which this legal status of a Lutheran regional church is still really practiced and can be practiced). So my testimony at that time against damage to the State Church remained without any effect or consequences. However, when we later came into personal contact with Lutheran Christians and pastors from German State Churches through the establishment of the Steeden Institute, we maintained fraternal and ecclesiastical fellowship with them, as far as I found real fellow believers in them, but we were nevertheless happy to be separated from State Church chastisement at our Nassau Lutheran altars and therefore never enjoyed Holy Communion at State Church altars.

The year 1852 did indeed seem to herald a time of new hope for a real and serious reformation of our German State Churches. The great revolutionary movements of 1848 were over and reaction had set in everywhere in the political and ecclesiastical spheres. Princes and state governments had seen and experienced where the unbelief and the fraudulent freedom of those years had led;

they therefore seriously wanted a return to the better, to the tried and tested positive Christian foundations in church and state. The party of the believers was strongly favored in the ecclesiastical sphere, the most important positions in the church government were filled by men of firm faith, and good church books, catechisms, hymnals and agendas were reintroduced. But it was precisely these attempts and beginnings towards a reformation of the German State Church that brought about a reversal. The large party of unbelievers and freethinkers in the German nation saw with disgust the destruction of all their aspirations and hopes for freedom that the year 1848 had brought them. In the political sphere it was impossible for them to oppose it, as they were too firmly resisted. Therefore, the whole unbelieving spirit of the time threw itself all the more resolutely into the ecclesiastical sphere in those years and tried to assert its supposed right at least in this area and to stop the ecclesiastical reaction that had begun. Unfortunately, it succeeded in doing so only too well. In the course of the 1850s to the beginning of the 1860s, a great general storm of liberalism arose against the cause of positive biblical and ecclesiastical faith; it became apparent that this liberal zeitgeist had by far the largest majority of the German people on its side, and based on this, it demanded recognition, rights and a voice in the field of the church, in the appointment of parish offices, in church councils and synods. Then our German regional churches, their church regimes and the German state governments were faced with the great decisive ecclesiastical question, which had been dormant to a certain extent until then, but now asserted itself with force, the question: Should unbelief and liberalism (which, of course, had long been present among the German people), should this unbelief now be tolerated permanently within the church and receive legitimacy therein, so that faith and the church confession would in future be the concern of only one party among others, or should there be an

ecclesiastical divorce between faith and unbelief, and should faith have public dominion as the only valid church confession and law, as it had of old? It had come to a public battle between the two existing parties of faith and unbelief, so now a decision had to follow. And a decision was made; not as if laws had now appeared that would have abolished the old church confessions and set up new ones instead (the prince of this world does not do his work so roughly when he wants to destroy the church), but nevertheless the ecclesiastical decision, the whole turn and organization of church relations at that time, was clear and distinct enough for anyone who wanted to understand it: nowhere were the demands of unbelief resolutely rejected; on the contrary, they were everywhere recognized and approved, unbelief was willingly given a seat and a voice where it demanded it, and in sum, our German church governments and state governments showed quite clearly and decisively that they were far from believing in the expulsion of unbelievers from the church, They did not think of an ecclesiastical schism and separation, but that they wanted at all costs to keep the party of unbelievers and liberals as a large fraction of the German people within the church, in short, that they wanted to maintain a German national and state church that still included the entire people with all its parties, both ecclesiastically and politically, with the state at its head. That is the great result of the ecclesiastical struggles of our time.

A series of ecclesiastical events in the 1860s proved what has been said here quite irrefutably and showed how none of our German church governments, not even one man in them, had the firmness of faith and the necessary courage to somehow vigorously oppose unbelief and show it the door where it confronted them with its claims. I have described this in more detail in my treatise, which appeared

in 1877: "Are our German State Churches still really Evangelical or Lutheran churches?" In this treatise I first showed that our present time is certainly better in many respects than the old one at the beginning of this century [1800s], when rationalism had gained general dominance in all German lands and when there was hardly a believing preacher to be found on German soil for long stretches of time. In the course of this century a new life of faith has unmistakably reawakened everywhere, in many places the Word of God is again being taught and preached in churches and schools, indeed, we may even say that our time is rich in many manifestations of the reawakened new life of faith and Christian love, rich in works of inner and outer mission, diaconia, etc. But apart from the fact that this newly awakened life of faith of our time still only encompasses by far the smaller part of our people, while the majority continues to live in alienation from God, liberalism and unbelief, the present state of the church in the German Evangelical State Churches has become decisively worse than it was at the beginning of this century in the time of generally prevailing rationalism. For first of all, while in those older times it was initially only the educated who gave themselves over to the rationalist Enlightenment that was then breaking in, rationalism has quite logically penetrated deeper into the people with each new generation and a generation has now largely grown up which in fact no longer knows anything about the most essential doctrines of the Christian faith. In the lowest classes of the people, among factory workers and craftsmen, Social Democracy has its thousands of followers; the great mobs, especially in cities, delight in mocking everything sacred; all the people willingly lend their ears to a completely unbelieving daily literature. The capital of old faith, old ecclesiastical tradition, discipline and order inherited from the fathers

has been more and more consumed by the German people and makes room for a sad desolation and emptiness that fills itself with the current ideas of the spirit of the age. In this respect, our time has become worse with every decade. — But not only that, but the now prevailing unbelief and apostasy from the Word of God has also become more conscious and malicious. The old rationalism by no means wanted an apostasy, it at least imagined itself to be faithful to the Bible and Christianity, it only wanted, as it said, to purify the "pure doctrine of Jesus" from false additions, to explain the Bible correctly, i.e. according to reason. But the great mass of our unbelievers and liberals today have decisively and consciously broken with all Christianity, they deny and reject the God of the Christians with knowledge and will and declare, as a well-known keyword of today's unbelief says, that they want to "live and die outside the shadow of the Church and Christianity". Nevertheless, today's liberalism is far from thinking of separating itself from the ruling national church or starting to build a new church according to its principles; no, as the main representative of the people, it rather demands that the ruling national church should follow its lead and claims the first voice in it, which is willingly granted to it in many places. — To all this we must finally add what we must consider to be the worst and saddest result of the present age in ecclesiastical terms: what has become of the whole newly awakened life of faith of the 19th century, of the whole Christian and ecclesiastical development of the last 50 to 60 years, what is the fruit that it has brought? Alas, the cherished expectations have not been fulfilled; faith, the return to biblical Christianity has not yet become general among the German people, faith has only remained a matter for a small party, we do not see any German State Church somehow rebuilt from its decline, nowhere has the

normal validity of the church confession been restored, we do not see any German church government that has made the slightest real effort to eradicate false teaching, to restore Christian observance of the Lord's Supper and so on. etc. But the whole Christian ecclesiastical development of our time has now obviously come to a standstill, indeed it has entered a decided decline. This is clearly evident in all areas of Christian life. In our German universities, in the field of today's learned theology and science, not only is a new complete rationalism emerging, which only with difficulty still cloaks itself in a semblance of Christianity, but also the denial of the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture, the assertion that the divine and the human, truth and error are to be found side by side in Holy Scripture, has achieved general dominance and thereby robbed the faith of all solid, secure foundation. In recent times we have seen how these errors of learned theological science are penetrating more and more into the conferences and circles of believing pastors; With very few insignificant exceptions, there is no longer any talk of resistance to the encroaching heresy, of serious questions about pure doctrine, but ambiguity, endless confusion and fragmentation into hundreds of different, purely personal, subjective theological views and opinions still reign supreme today. Finally, in the practical ecclesiastical field, it is believed almost everywhere that the lack of true faith and true preaching can be healed by insisting on Christian life, on the works of inner mission, on the organization of church work, as they say, and on a freer church constitution, and that the damage to the church can be healed and the de-Christianized masses of people can be led back to church and Christianity. This only reveals how little one understands of what is the only right reason for the Church, the only

weapon that overcomes the world. That is the state of our time in ecclesiastical terms.

This whole sad turn of events in the ecclesiastical situation obviously occurred and became fixed with the above-mentioned events of the 1860s. The latter, however, were all the more decisive because they did not merely originate with or affect individual persons and authorities, but involved entire large church areas and their supreme church governments. At the top of the list in this respect is the catechism controversy in Hanover in 1862, where the king publicly and solemnly proclaimed the reintroduction of the Lutheran catechism in the Hanoverian Lutheran State Church, whereupon the liberal spirit of the times, which knew how to stir up the masses for itself, rose up against the royal edict throughout the country and almost brought about a formal revolution in the city of Hanover. If anywhere, here the Hanoverian State Church stood in *statu confessionis*, it had to become clear and conclusive about the entire future validity of its confessional status. And it became aware of this and made a decision, namely to the extent that it no longer dared to assert and implement the church confession in the face of the unbelieving masses, but withdrew the royal decree concerning the introduction of the Lutheran catechism. Quite similar events took place in the Kingdom of Bavaria, when the Chief Consistorial [President von Harless](#) attempted to gradually restore the ordinances of the old Lutheran Church in liturgy, confession and so on. There, too, a great storm of petitions to the king arose throughout the country against the relevant senior consistorial decrees and they were simply repealed! Thus the church governments everywhere showed in decisive cases that they had neither the power nor the courage to stand up to the liberal spirit of the times and uphold the church's confession in the face of it. Most disgraceful, however, was the denial of the latter, when in Hanover, as in Saxony, the gross unbelief protested against the

early church form of holy baptism and especially against the devil's disavowal contained therein, with the decisive declaration that the biblical and ecclesiastical doctrine of the devil was rejected. Not only did they give in to the demands of unbelief everywhere, but they even tolerated unbelievable scandals, and instead of the godless who caused them, faithful confessional Lutheran pastors who refused to submit to the impositions of the unbelievers had to put up with being reprimanded in every way and fined or even transferred away from their congregations (often for the sake of some of the screamers in them). The church rulers were obviously not concerned with protecting faith and confession and preserving its rights, but their aim was merely to avoid a rift with any party and to maintain external peace at all costs. The same striving, however, is evident in all public statements of today's church governments, e.g. when in Saxony, for the sake of liberalism, the old strict religious oath at ordination was abolished and a lax ambiguous commitment formula was introduced instead, likewise when the rejection of Uniteds from the altars of Lutheran State Churches, whose admission has become quite general since the foundation of the German Empire, is declared "not in keeping with the times" and many other things. Without doubt, however, the whole character of the German State Churches has changed most decisively through the introduction of church councils and church synods, in the sense and manner desired by today's liberal zeitgeist. And the establishment of such church councils and synods is all the more important because they are legally valid institutions, not merely individual decrees issued by church authorities. The really characteristic feature of these present-day State Church synods and church councils, which deny the church confession, is that their members are not only elected by the mostly unbelieving majorities of the congregations,

but that even for these members themselves no loyalty to the church confession is required, at most only a certain churchliness in the most general sense. Therefore, one cannot help but notice that in all State Church synods, in addition to the party of more or less believers, there is also a liberal party, both of which fight for precedence, and State Church councils also show the most colorful mixture of all kinds of people, often, if not mostly, the lack of all true ecclesiastical sense and faith.

In addition to these completely rotten and lost conditions of today's German State Churches, there is now, in the last decisive instance, the rule of the state over the church. The state will in no way relinquish this rule; it knows too well that a nation cannot exist without religion and church, that its own existence is therefore tied to the preservation of the church, and our statesmen of today know just as well that the State Churches can only be preserved against the subversive parties of our time by the state power that supports them. Therefore, there would be no doubt that a general chaos of ecclesiastical confusion and a war of all against all in the ecclesiastical field would occur as soon as the state, as so many wish and demand at present, released the State Church and withdrew its hand from it; Nor is it to be thought that the state will ever consent to a return of the church to its confession and to its old ecclesiastical discipline and order, in which case it would have to dismiss from its state and national church the great mass of its subjects who have fallen into liberalism. — Or should we wait and count on a voluntary conversion of today's liberals and unbelievers to positive Bible faith? This could no longer happen now as it once did at the time of the Reformation, when the people were still in a completely different state of dependence on a their sovereign, and when the people and princes in general still stood on the historical ground of

Christianity and waited for a reformation of the church in the biblical sense; in today's time, on the other hand, when conscious unbelief has gained the upper hand, a return to the faith would have to take place by way of personal conversion. But such a return is only ever found in individuals and in a few, as the Scriptures so expressly teach everywhere; the great masses of the people always remain aloof from conversion. If therefore, as so many people think today, Consistorial Councilor Niemann said in the first Hanoverian State synod that we must bear today's church conditions, which are contrary to God, "until God improves them", then this is completely vain human talk, which lacks all foundation in God's Word. God will not improve these present conditions, just as he will not convert the world; rather, He prophesies in His Word of the apostasy that will come in the last days. Just as little is it possible today to soothe the conscience within a Lutheran State Church by saying "that the church confession still rightly exists and has not yet been legally established". Such a position only has inner truth and justification as long as it is possible to truly abstain from participation in the sins and false teachings of the State Church, and as long as there is still a faithful struggle and a well-founded hope of victory. But if this struggle, as it was partly waged in the middle of this century, has now long since ceased as completely hopeless and futile, then a mere legal status on paper can truly make it impossible for the church to be the church if real life does not correspond to the right, and the right does not protect us from communion and participation in public sin and false doctrine.

I have taken the liberty of sharing with my dear readers the above discussion of the German State Churches in a little more detail, partly in the thought that it would be instructive and of interest for them to hear this account of them from the pen of someone who has lived through the entire development of our

state churches in this century, and partly to show that we, for our part, did not break with the German State Churches lightly, but for good, well-considered reasons. For a long time we had held back on this break and still hoped and waited for an improvement in the church's plight, full of fear and shyness about all unauthorized action and breaking in church matters. But as all hope of improvement disappeared more and more completely, faithfulness to God's Word must finally lead us to the conclusion that no human consideration or mere attachment to earthly-human and historical things may ever authorize us to transgress God's revealed commandments and to maintain actual church and communion fellowship with notorious unbelievers and false believers who reject God's Word (1 Cor. 5:11, 2 Cor. 6:14-18, 2 Thess. 3:6 and others) forbids us to approve of and participate in.

Outwardly, our separation from the Lutheran State Church came into being first through events that came our way by God's providence. The next natural cause for this was my Steeden Institute. Not only did my annual missionary journeys give me ample opportunity to bear witness to pure Lutheran teaching everywhere, but my pupils also brought information about the doctrine and church principles they had heard in Steeden to their home circles, thus awakening them to ask for further instruction. This was initially the case in Bavaria in the district of Memmingen, from where I had pupils in Steeden for several years. Some of them had already been in close contact with Pastor Loehe in Neudettelsau, and deaconesses from Neudettelsau also lived in Memmingen. Now, as is well known, there had been a time when Loehe had begun to speak out strongly against the corruption of the State Church and mixed communion, but after that Loehe had stopped this whole struggle and began to

instruct those associated with him, including his deaconesses, to testify against mixed communion where they found it at Lutheran altars in Bavaria, but then to partake of Holy Communion themselves, partly out of necessity because there were no other altars, partly in the false opinion that such a testimony was sufficient to preserve the conscience of the individual communicant. But this contradiction between word and deed, the mixed communion at the Memmingen altars, which nevertheless continued unhindered and in peace, and the participation in it, had not put some hearts at rest and drove them to seek further advice and correction from me. In contradiction to Loehe, I could not help but admonish against any participation in mixed communion and firmly asserted the principle that Lutheran Christians must separate and keep away from all altars, congregations and pastors where the Lutheran confession has actually ceased to be the real guiding principle of doctrine and administration of the sacraments. So I advised them to renounce the altars and local congregations in Memmingen and the surrounding area and to join an outside orthodox Lutheran pastor. I offered myself to them for this purpose, as I considered it my duty to provide them with the ecclesiastical help they needed. So in the summer of 1869, during a visit to Berg near Memmingen, I served them Holy Communion. I only had in mind to satisfy the next need of the souls, so at first I only insisted on separation from non-Lutheran local altars, postponing the question of separation from the entire Bavarian state church. I was, of course, well aware that the separation of individual local congregations would inevitably lead to the separation from the entire State Church, but I wanted to postpone the latter, on the one hand in the awareness of the great and highly important decision that was involved here, namely that of the separation of the local congregations from the State Church.

decision, namely the break with the entire old German State Church, which is why I did not want to stand and act alone in this matter, but rather wanted to take joint steps with other like-minded faithful fellow believers; on the other hand, in those earlier days we were all not yet sufficiently clear and decisive on the question of separation from Lutheran State Churches, believing it possible to persevere in these regional churches while continuing to fight faithfully for the church confession and abstaining from manifest sins, toleration of false doctrine, mixed communion and so on. etc. Incidentally, my appearance in Memmingen drew me many reproaches and insults about my first intervention in the territory of a German Lutheran State Church; but it was even more painful for me that I bore all this shame in vain, as the little group of my communicants in Memmingen was soon miserably torn apart and shattered and my entire activity there was brought to an end, partly through internal dissension, partly and especially through the interference of Pastor Hörger, who insisted on complete disassociation from the entire Bavarian State Church and thereupon formed his own separate congregation, which still exists today. From the very beginning, I saw in the whole nature of Pastor Hörger's personal involvement and demeanor an excess of tension and a tendency towards a sinfully brusque, extreme nature that repelled me from him, and although we later became convinced of the necessity of separation even from Lutheran State Churches and therefore had to recognize Pastor Hörger's conduct in this respect as ecclesiastically right and correct, unfortunately the future confirmed what I feared, in that Pastor Hörger's extreme, high-handed nature revealed itself more and more and finally carried him away to serious doctrinal errors. From then on, the separation in Bavaria went its own way, separate from us. — I proceeded according to the same principles and in the same way as in Memmingen in Hesse, where in the district of Giessen

(apart from Kleinlinden, where a family had already joined us earlier) in Allendorf and the surrounding area a number of believing Christians, prompted by pupils from Steeden, requested Holy Communion from me. In Hesse, too, we initially limited ourselves to renouncing the non-Lutheran local congregations and altars, and from the small group of believing communicants that gathered around me, a free and independent Lutheran congregation was formed, which was able (in 1875) to appoint its own pastor. Of course, all of this did not happen without passing objection from the secular authorities, but God's hand always visibly saw to it that our church services in Hesse were never allowed to be disturbed. — Just as in Bavaria and Hesse, a small group of faithful Lutheran Christians had also been found in Saxony, with whom I soon came into personal contact during my annual missionary journeys. These were the Lutheran associations in Dresden and Planitz, which had set themselves the task of cultivating pure Lutheran doctrine and churchmanship. They had not found any pastors in Saxony who would have made common cause with them; they welcomed me all the more gladly and joyfully when I approached them, and I, for my part, also gladly entered into contact with them, as I found dear brothers and fellow believers in them. Like me, they had already approached the Missouri Synod in America and recognized in it the main representative of pure Lutheran doctrine in our time, as well as diligently reading its writings and papers. But things in Saxony took a somewhat different course than in Hesse and Bavaria, where people simply joined me and took Holy Communion from my hand. In Saxony it was not just individuals, but closed associations that took up the ecclesiastical struggle right from the start; their spiritual and ecclesiastical needs therefore demanded more independent ecclesiastical care and provision without long delay and hesitation. In accordance with church order, the aforementioned

associations first began their ecclesiastical struggle with repeated petitions, complaints and requests to their church government to remedy the "serious sins against the confession of the Lutheran Church, as they had been brought about by church practice up to that point". The most notable points emphasized were the complete lack of the necessary doctrinal discipline and the abolition of the old religious oath at ordination, as well as the mixed communion, the admission of United and Reformed to the Lutheran altars of the Saxon State Church. As had already been the case in similar instances in the past, the Saxon Ministry of Culture, as the highest ecclesiastical authority, declared definitively in a decision dated August 10, 1871, "that it was not in a position to listen to the requests and petitions expressed in those presentations". In November of the same year, the Lutheran associations in Dresden, Planitz and Zwickau declared their withdrawal from the Saxon state church and constituted themselves as "Evangelical Lutheran Congregations in Saxony Independent of the State". At the same time, they appealed to the Missouri Synod in America for a faithful Lutheran preacher, and upon receiving a reply, they called Pastor Ruhland from there as their pastor, who soon responded to this call and came over to Saxony, where he first took up residence in Dresden.

Personally, I fully approved of all these steps taken by my dear brothers and fellow believers in Saxony, but I openly confess that I initially had reservations about the appointment of an American pastor. I would have liked, humanly speaking, if things had gone on in Saxony for some time as they did at first in Bavaria and later in Hesse, which I was especially moved to do by the widespread testimony for pure Lutheran doctrine and church, which was given in those years by my Steeden institution and its students, by my church bulletin and by my annual missionary journeys. When this testimony was received by so many in

Bavaria, Saxony, Hanover, etc. with willing open hearts, I could not help hoping that in this way I could bring many a heart in German Lutheran State Churches to a clear realization of Lutheran doctrine and win a larger number of faithful Lutheran church confessors and fighters before the final ecclesiastical decision and an open break and struggle with the Lutheran State Churches. I would have liked to have had another, albeit short, period of time for this ecclesiastical missionary work. On the other hand, I could not hide the fact that this period ended immediately and that the break with the Lutheran Church of Saxony was publicly decided as soon as not only a separate pastor, but also an American one, was appointed by the newly separated Lutheran congregations in Saxony. This could not go off without a great stir everywhere, and in addition there was the fear that the new American pastor would be regarded as a completely foreign and peculiar "foreign plant", that he would be viewed with suspicion everywhere, and that the Missouri Synod would be greatly resented for its interference in German church affairs to a high degree. But still — the facts were clear and firm, on the one hand that the separated Lutheran congregations in Saxony were in great need of a pastor and that there was none in Germany itself whom they could have appointed, and on the other hand that it was a sacred duty of love for the Missourians in America to render the requested help to their fellow believers in Saxony. Therefore, when in the year 1872, as I mentioned above, my own strength broke down completely and all my work, as well as all my travels and thus all my previous work in the German State Churches was destroyed (in which I had to see in many respects as a grave divine fate), I gladly and willingly bowed to God's providence and will and let things go in Saxony as God sent them. It happened, of course, as I had correctly foreseen: Pastor

Ruhland's arrival and appearance in Saxony was the signal of our public break with the Saxon Lutheran State Church, and not only that, but nowhere could we and the Missouri Synod be forgiven for this establishment of an ecclesiastical separation in Lutheran Saxony, so from now on the decisive opposition and enmity against us and the Missouri Synod and against our whole ecclesiastical position became more and more evident in Germany. It was now believed they had a reason to regard the entire position of the Missouri Synod in Lutheran doctrine as exaggerated and extreme, and accordingly the Saxon ecclesiastical separation was considered to be only the fruit of this extreme Missourian nature.

This hostile opposition to us and the Missouri Synod, as it had been provoked by the Saxon Separation, became a full-blown, decisive fact through another event, which apparently originated with only a few persons, but which nevertheless had the most far-reaching significance for the entire Lutheran Church in Germany. — Towards the end of 1875 I received a letter from some East Indian missionaries who were in the service of the Leipzig Lutheran Mission: Schäffer, Zorn, Willkomm, Zucker and Gruber. Enclosed with this letter was a statement by the aforementioned, which they asked me to publish. In any case, they assumed that I would agree to this declaration and would therefore also be willing to offer my hand for its publication. For those missionaries had come to the realization of pure and clear Lutheran doctrine, and to the same extent that this had happened, their hearts and consciences were also weighed down by the false doctrine that prevailed in all areas of the State Church and was tolerated there without restriction, not only in Germany and in the Leipzig Mission, which, as is well known, rests entirely on State Church foundations, but also in the mission field in the East Indies, where the missionaries educated in Leipzig brought with them more or less the doctrinal position they had absorbed

at home. The missionaries mentioned had not concealed their misgivings about their superiors in Leipzig, but in their conscience they considered themselves bound to a public testimony and confession both for the conviction and position they had gained in pure Lutheran doctrine and against the denial of the Lutheran confession as it generally prevails in our Lutheran State Churches. Their declaration refrained from any attack on the Leipzig Mission and its board of directors. — The dear readers can well imagine the joy with which the content and arrival of this testimony and confession of the East Indian missionaries filled me and how hastily I sent it to the printers to publish it in my newspaper of the time. Every honest Lutheran heart was troubled by the whole corrupt and wretched state of the German State Churches, and I wished at all costs for a decisive stand and fight against it. This struggle was an unconditional demand of conscience, which is why I could only welcome it with joy among the missionaries from India. That the Leipzig Mission should somehow be harmed or even torn apart by it, such a thought was far from my mind; according to my whole conviction of the value and necessity of pure and correct doctrine, I could only expect a blessing and a gain for the Leipzig Mission if it had been induced by the testimony of the East Indian missionaries to purify itself more and more from the leaven of confusion in the doctrine of the State Church and to penetrate through to true loyalty to the Lutheran confession on which it wanted to stand. And why should one not have hoped for this? After all, the Leipzig Mission, like all other German missions to the heathen, was not under the rule of the state church, but rested entirely in the hands of free private individuals and, as one might assume, faithful Lutheran Christians, so how could one not have expected a willing response on their part when it came to

asserting the pure Word of God and his teachings, as well as the removal of obvious sins contrary to God and ecclesiastical damage? — But how very different it turned out. Hardly had the above-mentioned declaration of the East Indian missionaries and its dispatch to me been heard of in Leipzig when Mr. Hardeband, the mission director, immediately wrote to me from there and asked me to refrain from any publication of this declaration. He was even able to persuade the head consistory president von Harless in Munich to send me a similar letter and make the same request. However, I could only reply to both gentlemen that the declaration in question was already at the printers and that their request was therefore too late, but I tried to reassure them that it did not contain any direct attacks on the mission. But this consolation was of little satisfaction in Leipzig. The leaders of the Leipzig Mission were well aware of the situation among their missionary friends at home, among all the State Church Lutheran missionary associations and their members, what a colorful mixture of Lutheran and non-Lutheran doctrine, of heresies of all kinds prevailed among them. Therefore, one was filled with the greatest fear and concern if such a bright and powerful testimony for pure Lutheran doctrine were to resound from the bosom of the Leipzig Mission, as from those East Indian missionaries, or if one were even to make an effort to give room to this testimony in the Leipzig Mission and to tighten the reins of the Lutheran confession more tightly than before, then there would be unrest and contradiction in the wide circles of friends and participants of the Leipzig Mission, and then — yes, then in the end the consequence would even be that there could be separations from the Leipzig Lutheran Mission and thus a reduction in its participants and its financial income. Therefore, the first and most necessary requirement of the board of the mission in Leipzig was to suppress the testimony for pure Lutheran doctrine, which those East Indian missionaries had given, to avoid and circumvent any discussion and

suggestion of the doctrinal and confessional question in the field of the mission, to leave everything at the previous peaceful course and state of affairs, so that the missionary wagon could continue on the quiet, old familiar track without any disturbance. Indeed, the preservation of this previous course and state of affairs, the avoidance of all conflict and struggle over doctrinal questions, seemed so important and absolutely necessary to the gentlemen in Leipzig that they did not spare the expense and effort to have Mr. Hardeland, Director of the Mission, make the long journey to the East Indies on special assignment in order to negotiate personally with the missionaries there and to give them the choice between revoking and withdrawing their published declaration or immediate dismissal from the service of the Leipzig Mission. A crude procedure indeed, for it would have easily exposed the four missionaries, who remained true to their confession (one of them, Schäffer, unfortunately resigned), to the most terrible hardship, since they were not offered any travel money back home, so they would have been sitting in the distant East Indies completely destitute, possibly left to languish, if the love of their brothers in America, the Missourians, had not taken care of them, offered them immediate help by telegraph and then sent them the necessary travel money. Thus, by God's gracious providence, they were miraculously rescued from all distress and preserved for the service of the Church in other places.

But the extraordinary ecclesiastical significance of this whole event lay in the fact that it was such a naked, complete and decisive rejection of all testimony and struggle for pure Lutheran doctrine, as well as of every step and attempt to return to it, to re-establish the Lutheran confession, and not on the basis of state governments and state consistories, from which, unfortunately, one had not been accustomed to anything else, but here it was only missionary associations, i.e. completely free associations, without any state paternalism, which acted only as the representatives of all the

Lutheran Christians and church circles in Germany who took part in the Leipzig Mission, these Lutheran believing circles stood up unanimously against the testimony of the East India missionaries for pure Lutheran doctrine! And this happened to such an extent that a cry of indignation resounded throughout Germany about those four missionaries and their actions; Wherever one listened, one heard only the unanimous condemnation of their step, nowhere was there a spark of appreciation of their conscientious objections and their public confession caused by it, no, one only saw the damage they had done to the mission, one only demanded unconditional submission from them, everything in the Leipzig mission was to remain unimproved and continue as it had been until then. On this occasion it came to light quite glaringly and decisively how things stood in general in all Lutheran confessional circles of our German State Churches, how nowhere was there an understanding of true Lutheran doctrine and its ecclesiastical validity, but how everything was confused and blurred in false doctrine and un-Lutheran nature. But even in the best Lutheran ecclesiastical circles in Germany, where was a reformation of the German regional churches to come from? Such a reformation had not even been possible in the area of the Leipzig Mission, but was indignantly rejected when it was demanded.

It was no wonder that from this time onwards things went completely downhill in German State Church circles with all things Lutheran. I personally felt this most in my Steeden institution. If many of my old friends, especially in Saxony itself, had already withdrawn from me as a result of the Saxon separation, this was even less the case in other places, e.g. in Hanover. But my stand for the East Indian missionaries now brought about a decision everywhere, all and every connection with me and my institution was severed, and from now on I lost all participation and support from the State Church for the latter.

Praise be to God's grace, which easily lifted me above this loss; I saw God's ways too clearly in the coincidence of all the circumstances for me not to have willingly submitted and sent myself into everything. After all, these were such big and important decisions that affected the whole Lutheran Church in Germany, how could I have considered the fate of my little Steeden institution? It was not the downfall of this institution, oh truly not, but something far, far greater that had to be mourned, the fall and downfall of the venerable Lutheran State Churches of Germany.

Thus we can no longer regard the latter as truly Lutheran churches, and we must therefore consider the Lutheran church and communion with them as dissolved. In head and members, the German State Churches have shown themselves to be incapable of a renewed reformation, of a re-establishment and implementation of the Lutheran confession in them, of a separation of all things contrary to God in doctrine and life. As a result, they have in truth become a "Babel", i.e. communities in which world and church, Christ and Belial are inseparably and inextricably intertwined and united. — This apostasy from the Word of God has already taken place for the first time in the Roman Papal Church according to the prophecies of Holy Scripture about the end of the world; however, God's grace has once again given a part of Christianity a return from this first apostasy, a reformation of the Church. In this renewed church, the prophesied apostasy of the last times has now been completed through the rule of rationalism, liberalism and unbelief. It is therefore very instructive to draw a comparison in this respect between the Roman Church in the 16th century and our state churches today. The former, imprisoned and enslaved under the rule of the pope, and where the papacy retained its rule, prevented from any reformation and improvement of its conditions, the latter

is just as bound by the rule of the secular state, which makes any reformation impossible; just as the Roman papal church at the time of Luther, so our present-day State Churches have rejected any reformation, and just as there the main obstacle to reformation lay in the unconditional preservation of papal rule, so here in the preservation of the interests of the State Church, behind which all considerations of God's Word, faith and church confession must take a back seat. And just as the Roman papal church at the time of Luther did not even think of abolishing the old ecclesiastical symbols, the Nicene, Athanasian, etc., but to this day likes to clothe itself in their appearance and name and to boast of the title of the old apostolic church, so our Evangelical State Churches today do not think of questioning the existence of the old ecclesiastical symbols, but like to clothe themselves in the appearance and name of the same. Finally, just as in our Evangelical State Churches today there is still a party of those who more or less adhere to the biblical faith, so in the 16th to 18th centuries, apart from the thousands of Evangelical martyrs, there were still better ecclesiastical and Christian trends here and there in the Roman Church (e.g. the Jansenists in Holland, Bishop Sailer and his followers in Germany), which the ruling church tolerated as long as their rotten conditions were not attacked by them, but in the entanglement with the general corruption such better tendencies perish where they do not separate themselves openly and honestly. —

According to the prophecies of Holy Scripture, Luther already foresaw the coming apostasy of the public national and state churches and accordingly pronounced that in the last times before the end of the world the orthodox church would only be found "in the household", i.e. the right preaching and true worship would be lost in the public churches and only be practiced here and there in small circles in private life.

This has already happened in many ways in our time through the emergence of such separate Lutheran congregations, in which the preaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the holy sacraments is in vogue, while it has largely been lost in those public churches, both the Roman Pontifical Church and the apostate Evangelical and Lutheran State Churches under the de-Christianized state regime. Yes, this is the great fact of church history in the 19th century. God has given the generation of our time, the State Churches shattered by the reign of rationalism, a time of grace once again in this century, a visitation of grace, whether they would like to turn back from the path of corruption and find their way back to the old Christian God and His Word, but even if here and there, especially among rural populations, remnants of old faith and ecclesiasticism have still survived or even if many individuals have converted and become believers: the German people as a whole and on a large scale (and no less all other Christian peoples today) have misjudged and rejected the time of the divine visitation and persist partly in religious indifference and worldliness, partly in open unbelief and contempt for the Word of God. May God then preserve and keep the good provision He has given to the few who have recognized the Word and grasped it in faith, so that they may be found faithful to the end.

13.

Our Synod. ↑

The most important ecclesiastical event that took place after Pastor Ruhland's appointment to Saxony and the separation from the German Lutheran State Churches

was the formation of our synod. It was the natural consequence of the emergence of a Lutheran Free Church in Saxony that was completely united with us in faith and confession and with which we were most intimately connected. And by God's grace, Pastor Ruhland did not remain the only separated Lutheran pastor in Saxony for long, but the Lutheran Free Church flourished under his leadership, even though, as everywhere else, no large congregations joined it. Pastor Ruhland was so completely the man for the work for which God had so clearly called him; he was an excellent preacher, simple, clear and very instructive, with a good presentation that attracted many listeners. But he had a very special gift for church organization, leadership and government of the congregation, to which he added a very practical nature, combined with great activity and energy of character. He even had an excellent talent for church building, as evidenced by the magnificent church in Planitz, which was built under his direction. Thus the Saxon Free Church multiplied in many places. Pastor Ruhland soon moved from Dresden, where he first lived, to Niederplanitz, while Pastor Lenk, who transferred from the Saxon state church, later took over the Dresden congregation from Pastor Stallmann. But the number of parishioners also increased in other places, so that pastors were called to Chemnitz, Frankenberg and Crimmitschau. So we were happy to think about forming our own small synod and set to work. We had already established the closest personal connection and friendship with Pastor Ruhland, so our closest ecclesiastical association was a matter of course. But lo and behold, the formation of our synod, like all works of God, was not to proceed without many a struggle and friction. Especially at the urgent request of our dear brothers in America, namely Professor Dr. Walther, we tried to bring Pastor Hörger in Bavaria into our church fellowship. Through his resolute

testimony against the corruptions of the Bavarian State Church, as well as through his excellent sermons, which he had published in print, he had won many hearts, and since his whole faith was initially in agreement with ours, people in America, where he was not personally known, very urgently desired his ecclesiastical union with us. I myself was convinced from the outset of the impossibility of the latter, which I openly expressed, but in the end I had no objection to making an attempt to approach Pastor Hörger. We invited him first to a conference in Wiesbaden, and later again to Steeden; Pastor Hörger also came, but unfortunately we had to make the painful experience that his personal, invincible gruffness and self-will not only caused all attempts at understanding to fail, but ended in even greater distance from each other.

However, the formation of our synod in Hesse gave rise to even more serious battles and extremely sad experiences. Pastor Wagner, formerly a member of the Breslau Synod in Ratibor in Silesia, had publicly opposed the latter's false doctrine of church and ministry, and since he was unwilling to accept the condition imposed on him for remaining longer in the Breslau Synod, namely that he should keep his religious convictions to himself privately as a purely personal opinion and not make them public, he resigned from the Synod and joined us as a fellow believer. As a native of Dresden, he moved there, and since our separate Dresden Lutheran congregation was orphaned at the time by Pastor Ruhland's move to Planitz, he would have liked to take over the pastorate there. But his wish was not fulfilled, and so Pastor Wagner accepted the call to our small Hessian congregation (which had joined us there and had already been served by the church from Steeden for several years) and settled in

Kleinlinden near Giessen, especially since he was not without his own means to be able to live there. It is now possible that Pastor Wagner saw in Pastor Ruhland an opponent who did not harmonize with him and therefore, as he perhaps thought, had already prevented his appointment to Dresden. When we therefore took the first steps to unite with the Saxon congregations in Nassau and Hesse to form a synod, Pastor Wagner's opposition to Pastor Ruhland soon came to light. This led to long and very painful negotiations and friction, which delayed the formation of our synod for a long time and finally even called it into question. This prompted our Saxon brethren, in order to no longer postpone the matter in this way, to first establish the long-awaited synod union among themselves. For our part, we Nassau pastors could not allow ourselves to be hindered from entering into the synod communion we so ardently desired with our beloved brothers and fellow believers in Saxony and were therefore happy to join the Saxon synod formed by them under Pastor Ruhland's leadership. Pastor Wagner, however, refused to join. I, as the person closest to him, explained to him in a letter and repeatedly and quite explicitly "that his synod union with us was entirely a matter of his personal freedom, that we were completely far from pressuring him in this regard, that our fraternal and ecclesiastical fellowship in and of itself would not be affected in the slightest by any synod union". On the basis of my statement, Pastor Wagner could have waited in silence in his office with his congregation, and our fraternal relationship, which was very intimate and close at the time, could continue unhindered.

But Pastor Wagner seemed to carry a thorn in his heart that would not let him rest. And all too soon he had the opportunity to show it. At a pastoral conference in Saxony, there had been talk of the apostolic composition and authenticity of the canonical

books of the second rank, namely the Revelation of St. John, and the young Pastor Gr., who at that time was still a member of the Saxon Synod and who was in charge of the then still very small separated congregation in Chemnitz, declared with excessive zeal that any doubt about the authenticity of the Revelation of St. John was "blasphemy" (equating such a doubt about the authenticity of a second-rate biblical book to an unbelieving doubt about the divine authority of Holy Scripture and about God's Word in general). Pastor Ruhland warned him against this exaggeration by reminding him of Luther and other respected church teachers of the 16th century, who are known to have doubted the apostolic composition of the Revelation of St. John. But Pastor Gr. persisted in his statement and intensified it by accusing our Saxon pastors of committing the sin of blasphemy because they dared to defend those who committed it. As a result, Pastor Gr. separated himself from our Saxon synod and after several attempts to assert himself with some members of the Chemnitz congregation, he later resigned his office. That was how things stood in Saxony, without us in Nassau knowing anything more about the whole affair. Then we suddenly heard by letter that Pastor Gr. was visiting Pastor Wagner in Kleinlinden and that both of them had declared the Saxon pastors connected to us to be heretics and blasphemers on the previous Sunday after the end of the service, but in front of the congregation, both men and women, and had made it compulsory for the congregation to separate from them. Our dear readers can imagine how incredible and puzzling this news was to us. I therefore wrote to an old, close friend in Kleinlinden, asking him for more information in just a few words. He immediately came to Steeden himself, as he had already been about to turn to me for advice and instruction about what had happened.

Then I heard with astonishment how Pastor Gr. from Saxony had already spent a whole week in Kleinlinden with Pastor Wagner and had completely won him over to his view regarding the doubt about the authenticity of the Revelation of St. John, as well as for his sinful separation from our synod, whereupon both made the public statement to the Kleinlinden congregation that I had been informed of. I really could not be in any doubt as to what I had to do, especially as I was expressly asked for advice and instruction. I shared the latter with my friend from Kleinlinden openly and honestly, and since he agreed with me wholeheartedly on everything, I asked him to hurry back home without delay and take the necessary steps to protect our Hessian community from any hasty separation from us. I had especially pointed out to him what a grave injustice it was for Pastor Wagner to speak of ecclesiastical separation before he had neither sufficiently negotiated the doctrinal question in question with our pastors in Saxony, nor had he communicated even the slightest syllable of the whole matter to me, his closest friend and brother minister, let alone discussed it theologically among us pastors before he brought it before the congregation. That is why I advised our Hessian congregation to take a position on the matter by declaring to their pastor Wagner that there could be no question of an ecclesiastical schism between them and their old Nassau fellow believers, but that if Pastor Wagner had any reservations or complaints about the doctrine against the Saxon pastors, this should be raised against them in the proper way and first discussed in more detail at conferences among us pastors. While my friend from Kleinlinden, churchwarden A., was now with me in Steeden, Pastor Wagner had meanwhile gone to the capital of his parish, to Allendorf; the aforementioned hurried after him there and found him there in the evening in the midst of the assembled congregation, to whom he gave the same lecture as on the

previous Sunday in Kleinlinden. Churchwarden A. entered the meeting straight from his journey and, immediately understanding the situation, he exclaimed: "Dear brothers, I come from Steeden". These words were enough to change everything in one fell swoop. Pastor Wagner immediately realized that it was now impossible to do anything with his congregation, which still had full confidence in me, before he had convinced me and won me over for himself and his cause. He therefore gave up all further attempts to speak for the moment, but left the meeting and retired to his bedroom. The next morning the latter was found empty; Pastor Wagner had quietly left during the night and gone to Kleinlinden. The churchwardens of Allendorf and Kleinlinden hurried after him without delay and sought him out in his apartment, where he then explained to them that his entire position in the matter in question and the accusation against the Saxon pastors, and as a result in the withdrawal of church fellowship with our synod, was a matter of conscience for him, and that he was therefore resigning his office with the congregation, as they did not want to follow him in this. So in 5-6 days this whole incident and the separation of Pastor Wagner from our church fellowship unfolded, apart from everything else, an unprecedented abruptness in such important church matters. Pastor Wagner himself only reaped what he had sown, he wanted to dig a pit for others by separating our Hessian congregation from us and now only fell into it himself. He was only able to win over a few people from the vicinity of Allendorf and a few families living far away in the Hessian mountains, but the rest of his congregation remained loyal and firm to us and was completely strengthened and reassured in this by a visit from Pastor Eikmeier.

At the request of the congregation, who were extremely surprised and dismayed by the sudden and unexpected separation from their pastor, another meeting of the

entire congregation was held in Kleinlinden 14 days after his resignation and an attempt was made to reach an understanding with Pastor Wagner. But in vain. He did not enter into a closer and more detailed discussion of the controversial Bible question. So he moved to Giessen soon afterwards and later took up an office in the Immanuel Synod. I had also been invited to that last meeting in Kleinlinden, but my health prevented me from traveling. As a result, I wrote a detailed report on the whole matter and sent three copies of it to the Hessian congregation so that everyone could read it.

Pastor Wagner's next task was to prepare and publish a fairly detailed pamphlet in which he explained his entire separation from us and tried to justify himself. In this writing, he distorted the simplest facts in an almost unbelievable way, in part inventing many things completely out of thin air. As a result of a previous serious illness, he was very nervous and passionately agitated. Only this can explain, if not justify, much of his behavior as well as his above-mentioned writing. In particular, when he portrays his entire distance from our Hessian congregation as if it were a work designed by us to oust him, simply because he did not join our Saxon-Nassau synod (despite my statement to him above, which contains the exact opposite). In his imagination he came to see in everything an intrigue spun against him, the threads of which ran as far as America to the hated Missourians, as he had printed in his writing: "A hint from St. Louis, a signal from Planitz and (in Steeden) everything is under arms", i.e. against him. Who on earth told the man such a thing and informed him of our secret cabinet orders from St. Louis and Planitz? As I have already told my dear readers above, in truth I had not been informed of a single letter concerning Wagner's appearance in

Saxony or elsewhere, nor was this really necessary, the matter was sufficiently clear and crying out for me to know what to do about it. But the accusations that Pastor Wagner made against me personally in his letter are just as serious. He is not afraid to say publicly that I had broken into his congregation "like a thief and murderer" and had turned them away from him, that I had written "four pastoral letters and at least ten other letters" for this purpose (by which he probably means my letter to my friend in Kleinlinden, which only contained a simple inquiry as to what had happened, and my above-mentioned expert opinion, which I had communicated in several copies). To this day, with the most serious examination of conscience, I do not know how I could have acted differently in the whole Wagner matter than I did; in truth, I would have been guilty of the gravest sin if I had not given our Hessian congregation the advice they asked for and allowed them to run into such wrong and unauthorized ways with Pastor Wagner. With renewed love and gratitude, the hearts of our dear faithful Hessians turned to us, not in the least misled by Wagner's writing, but only strengthened in their complete trust in their old Nassau brethren and fellow believers. For a full 1½ years from that time on (from spring 1877 to fall 1878) I visited our Hessian congregation every 14 days, holding services alternately in Kleinlinden and Allendorf, also supported in this by my faithful assistant in the spiritual office, Eikmeier, in the most heartfelt love. But praise and thanks be to God, who strengthened my health, which was so weakened at the time, for this work.

"We have not flesh and blood to contend with, but with principalities and powers, with the evil spirits of heaven!" These apostolic words also remind us of the experiences in Hesse recounted here. There is no doubt that they were plots and plans of the fierce enemy of souls, who wanted to tear apart our newly formed church

community and our Saxon-Nassau Synod and cover them with shame and disgrace in order to destroy God's work among us. The latter intention is particularly evident in the booklet by Wagner mentioned above, with its unbelievable distortions of the truth and slander against us and the Missouri Synod. *)

*) In my publication "[Evangelical Lutheran Church and Mission](#)" of 1877, the latter are reported and refuted in detail. I refrain from repeating all these blasphemies to my dear readers.

Thus we had to learn anew that the devil does not celebrate where the Lord builds and wants to build his church. That is why such experiences as we had in Hesse cannot make us lose sight of God's work and cause, but only what the holy apostle says in 1 Peter 4:12 applies to them: "Beloved, do not let the heat that comes upon you (which happens to you because you are tempted) be strange to you. To this end, God undoubtedly sends such temptations as our Hessian congregation experienced with Pastor Wagner in order to test and purify us, hence St. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 11:19: "There must be rivals, so that those who are righteous may be made manifest". In and of itself, however, it is a divine grace and a blessing for every Christian community when dishonest elements, which unfortunately can be found everywhere among people, are revealed and eliminated. So it was also a great grace from God for our Hessian congregation, as for our whole synod, that after such a short association with us a man separated from us again who was not of one spirit with us, but of whom the words were true 1 John 2:19: "They were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us". After the separation from Pastor Wagner, however, our Hessian congregation was built up with great blessing. I still think with joy and in grateful memory of the beautiful church services and the lovely, refreshing hours of Christian fellowship that I was able to experience during my many visits to Kleinlinden

and Allendorf and through which an indissoluble bond of love has been forged between me and our Hessian congregation to this day. God also blessed and prospered the outward growth of the congregation; a beautiful prayer hall was soon built (as an extension to a residential building in the congregation), and in the fall of 1878 the congregation was once again able to appoint its own pastor, Pastor Stallmann, who continues to work in undisturbed blessing to this day. It was a very happy event, however, when the Hessian Renitent party, which had many members in Allendorf, united with our congregation, doubling the number of members (which might hardly have happened if Pastor Wagner had stayed), so that we could now think about building our own little church with a parsonage. It was a great and festive day of joy when our synod assembly was held in Allendorf in 1882 and the new church was consecrated on this occasion. God made us forget all our earlier struggles and trials and turned all our laments into a joyful round dance. But since Pastor Stallmann became my son-in-law, I remained all the more closely connected with him and his congregation to this day. So God also allowed us to experience much grace and joy in Hesse. —

Soon afterwards, in the summer of 1877, we were able to experience a sweet refreshment after the difficult days of tribulation caused by our experiences with Pastor Wagner. We celebrated our first synod meeting in Planitz! The Prince of Hell had not succeeded in preventing or destroying our synod reorganization; we were able to gather in Planitz with joy and spend a whole week of richly blessed togetherness together. The synod plans that we had been working on in Nassau for decades had now been fulfilled! But how completely different everything had turned out, through how many difficult struggles

God had led us to this goal, how he had made all mere human thoughts come to nothing! We had thought of a Rhenish synod, which we had wanted to establish in our former connection with Breslau. But God's ways with us were different: through difficult struggles he first cleansed us of the false doctrine and ecclesiastical ambiguity that still clung to us, he first placed us on a sound and solid ground of faith and ecclesiastical knowledge, then he also helped us to build the synod we longed for, not with the Breslau pastors in the Rhineland, who had now separated from us, but with our beloved brothers in Saxony, with whom, by God's grace, we were so completely one heart and one soul in the right united faith. Yes, God has rewarded us twice over for all the struggles and tribulations we have experienced, and crowned us with double the blessing in comparison with all that we had previously sought and expected. What are our present synod assemblies, as we hold them every year, compared to the earlier Breslau meetings of which I spoke above! Just as spiritually deadening as the latter were to me due to their weeks of exhausting negotiations about merely external matters, discipline and the constitution of the church, our present synods are just as spiritually invigorating and refreshing, which focus on the real main thing for which a synod is there, i.e. the preservation and strengthening of church fellowship and unity in faith and doctrine, which is why we devote the main time and energy of our synod meetings to discussions about Christian doctrine.

It was only a few years after the beginning of our synod meetings, however, when the devil once again stirred up a serious storm in our small circle, with no less intention than that of openly breaking up our entire barely founded synod association again, wherever possible. This time, too, the storm hit me closest, because it came from my old

brother and dear friend, Pastor Hein in Wiesbaden, who had been so close to me. There are probably few friends on earth who are as close as Hein and I were for many years. This bond was strengthened by the fact that his wife was the sister of mine, and both he and his wife had come to Christian knowledge and faith through their association with us in Steeden, and later also to Lutheranism and to leaving the State Church. After this resignation, Hein and his family lived with us in the Steeden vicarage for almost a year, after which he took over our Nassau congregation in Wiesbaden and in the Usingen district and moved there, supported and maintained by our friends in Bavaria. But when, on the one hand, my institution in Steeden later came into being, which took up so much of my time and energy that I had little time left for visits to Wiesbaden, and, on the other hand, Hein found himself in surroundings there that also took up all of his time and occupied him, it happened, as Hein himself very aptly put it, that "we gradually grew more and more apart". In addition, there were other serious misunderstandings, over which I like to draw a veil of oblivion (especially now after Hein's death), but which were greatly exacerbated by the hardness and brusqueness of Hein's natural nature. I bore all this with patience for a long time, and it was not until 1874 that we had a hard clash about it, when I summoned up all the power of the warmest love to convince him of what he was lacking and to revive the old community of hearts between us. But in vain, he could not break his mind, but continued to have right and truth on his side in all matters and to be completely blameless in all relationships. *) So for another six years

*) It is only because of this self-deception on Hein's part that he accused me of disloyalty, because I did not defend him enough in accordance with my duty as a friend against the accusations made against him from many sides. I can confidently take God as my witness that I defended Hein everywhere as much as I could, but I could not deny obvious things of whose truth I was convinced myself. But yes, I lacked the right faithfulness towards Hein, but not in what he himself meant, but I was not faithful enough towards him in fraternal admonition and punishment, and especially I was not faithful enough in intercession for my poor, lost and blinded brother. So here too, as our catechism says, I must of course "admit myself guilty of all sins".

(especially at Pastor Ruhland's request), but with deep pain and a heavy heart, I carried on the old friendship between Hein and myself, which had already been half dissolved. Then his brusqueness and unbending nature, which closed itself off from all brotherly admonition and instruction, dragged him deeper and deeper into wrong, self-chosen paths and finally into false doctrine and ecclesiastical separation from us.

May the dear readers take it as a favor to me that I have spoken in a little more detail about my relationship with Pastor Hein; the separation from him and the experiences I had with him are in any case among the most painful of my entire life. I lost three of my children through death, but in faith I overcame this pain easily in comparison with the loss of my brother Hein, who was once so dear to me. After all, that loss came from God's faithful fatherly hands, but this one from the one who is a liar and murderer from the beginning. However, my experience with Pastor Hein can serve as an instructive example to the dear readers of how the devil's cunning and art can turn the most intimate friend into the bitterest enemy for us. Therefore it is good to trust in the Lord, and woe to him who relies on men.

Already at the synod meeting we held in Steeden in 1880, Hein came into conflict with us through his false teaching on the humiliation of Christ. He identified it with the incarnation of Christ. It did not help that we all reproached him with the simple truth that the assumption of human nature by the Godhead in Christ was, of course, a deep condescension of the latter,

but that the actual humiliation of Christ did not consist in this, inasmuch as human nature had been taken up to divine majesty and honor through personal union with the Godhead in Christ; The state of Christ's humiliation, therefore, according to correct biblical and ecclesiastical-Lutheran teaching, is rather that Christ, until his resurrection, did not use the divine majesty imparted to his human nature, but rather emptied himself of it or abstained from it by taking our place completely, fulfilling the law for us, taking sin and the curse upon himself, and rendering perfect obedience to God in our place until death. But even the reference to the appearance of Christ on the Last Day, when he will appear in his assumed humanity, yet not in a state of humiliation, but in divine glory, even this clear proof that the actual humiliation of Christ is something else than the mere union of divine and human nature in and of itself, everything was in vain with Hein, he remained on his hard, unbending mind, as was shown later, even if he gave in for the moment to the extent that he declared that he wanted to consider the matter more closely. This was the only thing that prevented and postponed a public break with him at the time. My personal parting from him at the end of our synod at that time was painful. We both felt deeply what stood between us (personally and theologically), and the old love overwhelmed us so much that tears came to both our eyes, and Hein said goodbye with the words: "No, the devil shall not tear us apart". And yet it happened, Hein's fleeting emotion was soon forgotten: I have never spoken to him again since that day, he deliberately avoided me on various occasions.

Then, at the end of 1880, came the controversy over the doctrine of election by grace. It first broke out in America, but with our close connection

with the Missouri Synod, we were immediately drawn into it. Hein unexpectedly told us that he was on the side of our opponents, Professor Schmidt and the Ohio Synod in America. To settle the conflict with him, a meeting was held in Gotha in January 1881, as our Saxon brethren also wanted to come to it and so the journey was divided between them and us. Of course, I myself was unable to make the long journey in winter because of my health (which I was quite happy to do, as I liked to avoid arguments with my old friend Hein). But the meeting in Gotha was completely fruitless, Hein had already made up his mind and was finished with his separation from us. It was only with many pleas that we succeeded in forcing him to delay long enough for us to present our position in the doctrinal dispute to his congregation. Hein himself suggested a meeting in Frankfurt; but he obviously did not mean it honestly, as he stubbornly refused the participation of the Saxon pastors, without whom we, for our part, would not agree to such a meeting. So the whole thing fell through. Hein, however, insisted on his separation from us, but he probably feared that his congregation, which he had worked on entirely in his favor and to which he had described us as the very worst Calvinists, might go astray in this opinion and their already decided separation from us if they delayed any longer, so he hurried, and in March 1881, just a few weeks after the meeting in Gotha, his and his congregation's public declaration appeared, in which they renounced us and our synod as Calvinists and false teachers.

Thus Hein departed from us, much like Pastor Wagner before him, in a rushed and hasty manner, with which he pursued and carried out the separation from us, without a more detailed and thorough discussion of the relevant doctrinal question and without the attempt to reach an understanding with us and a possible reconciliation of our doctrinal differences. After all, the whole election of grace controversy was in its initial stages and

it would have been appropriate to wait for its further development and conclusion before proceeding to break and tear it apart, as actually happened in America itself. But Hein showed his whole sinful, unbrotherly and unloving attitude towards me personally most harshly. If his heart had been in the right place, he would have wanted to discuss this with me, his closest old friend, when the first doubts and misgivings about our doctrine of election of grace arose. But he remained completely silent towards me, and when, after that Gotha conference, I wrote him a long letter asking him most earnestly not to part from us and me without granting me the opportunity to talk to him again, when I even offered him that I wanted to come to Wiesbaden myself for this purpose and that we wanted to see each other face to face in old love, as we had so often done in the past, and that we would then certainly succeed in trampling the devil under our feet: Hein replied to this cordial letter with only a few lines, saying that "he did not know what good a conversation with me could do him". So it remained with Hein's separation from us, and I had to experience in him what Ps. 41:10 says: "Even my friend, in whom I trusted and who ate my bread, treads me underfoot".

The sad way in which Hein's soul hardened itself against the truth is shown in particular by the two counter-pamphlets he published against us. In the first, like his fellow believers in America, he tried to refute us mainly with testimonies from the old church teachers of the 17th century and to convict us of apostasy from the right Lutheran doctrine, covering up his own false teaching as much as possible, but at least he clearly showed how he too places the final cause and decision as to why a person converts and accepts God's grace, while another (through his own fault) despises and rejects divine grace, in man's own behavior, thus falling into synergism and the great mystery, which is unknowable to human

reason. But the most serious accusation he made against us in his writing was the assertion that the doctrine of the election of grace which we held was an innovation only now introduced by Professor Dr. Walther in St. Louis, which we accepted from him on mere human authority, and so he publicly branded us as mere "imitators" of Professor Dr. Walther. Hein's accusation against us was all the more reprehensible because, quite by chance, a year before the outbreak of the election of grace controversy in Steeden, we had discussed the doctrine of election by grace at two pastoral conferences on the basis of theses that I had put forward. In these theses I had expressed and presented exactly the same doctrine of the election of grace that we also discussed and defended in the subsequent dispute. These theses of mine had been unanimously adopted by our conference, and the minutes of all this, as they are always kept at our pastoral conferences, were available; they had been read out to all those present and approved as correct. Hein had attended both of these conferences, he had heard the minutes as well as all of us and approved them as correct. He must have known that we were not Professor Walther's disciples, but that we had already had our doctrine of the election of grace before there was any talk of a dispute about it and before any of us knew anything about Professor Walther's doctrinal position in this dispute. I emphasized all this in my little rebuttal, which I wrote to refute Hein's paper, and even had a part of the theses we discussed at our conference in Steeden printed. But what did Hein say in reply? He was far from admitting the injustice that had been so clearly and strikingly proven to him, no, in his second subsequent paper he asserted against us without shame or embarrassment that what

I had said was untrue, that the theses I had put forward and discussed at our conference in Steeden had not been accepted by this conference, but rather rejected, but that Pastor Stallmann, who kept the minutes, had not included this in the latter (but had written the opposite, thus shamefully falsifying the minutes!). But how could the minutes not have been read out in front of Hein and approved by him? Of course it was, but how he is said to have told his parishioners that he kept quiet about it all out of good-naturedness, so as not to contradict us or cause a dispute with us. For our part, we did not consider it worthwhile or advisable to continue a dispute conducted with such weapons, but from then on kept completely silent about Hein.

It should also be mentioned that many in Hein's congregation recognized the injustice of their pastor, but forced by external circumstances, many remained silent; only a few, who were less dependent on such circumstances, renounced him and remained faithful to our church community. From then on, they formed their own small congregation in Wiesbaden and Frankfurt, where I took over the preaching ministry. The little congregation gradually grew, as over the years Hein's gruffness drove more and more people out of his congregation, who sought refuge with us, so that our Wiesbaden congregation, separated from Hein, now has over 30 communicants and we now hold our services in a public church hall. Unfortunately, however, both Hein's personal character and his disgraceful and willful separation from us have brought the name of the Lutheran Free Church in Wiesbaden into such disrepute that its growth is difficult. Time will tell whether God will once again grant grace for the Lutheran Church in Wiesbaden and Frankfurt to rebuild and increase, when the serious upheavals that have occurred are perhaps more forgotten and new times

come, as is already partly the case. But we hope for the latter more and more, especially since Hein's death in September 1892.

Even this heavy affliction, which Hein's separation caused us and me in particular, God sweetened us with many drops of His grace. So it was a very sweet consolation for me that I was able to save my two brothers and sisters in Wiesbaden, and in particular my only brother (who was therefore very close to me) from Hein's split and keep him in our fellowship. At first he was also very opposed to us and our teaching, but a visit he made to Steeden soon brought him to his senses. So I found that everyone who came to us from Hein sooner or later was completely ignorant of the doctrinal issue at the center of our dispute; Hein had only ever presented them with the very rough Calvinist doctrine of predestination and then firmly assured them that this was our doctrine! My brother's living room then became our church hall for many years, whenever I came to Wiesbaden, and even if our circle that gathered there was only very small, especially at the beginning, it was all the more intimate and bound together in the deepest love. But my brother was doubly blessed personally, as I was now able to speak and preach the Word of God to him in close proximity, as he needed it for his hearing impairment. So God had visibly and wonderfully arranged that I was able to prepare my two old brothers and sisters in Wiesbaden for a blessed death for a few more years, which then took place very gently and quietly for both of them. I have often praised God for such mercy, as have my siblings themselves. Pastor Hein, however, very unjustly slandered my blessed brother in the Ohio church newspaper in America by printing some quite senseless, confused statements about the doctrine of election of grace, which my brother was supposed to have made to Hein when he informed him of his separation from him. It may well be that my brother, a very simple plain man, answered awkwardly

when Hein deliberately involved him in more theological discussions; otherwise, however, I can confidently assure you that my brother, like all our Wiesbaden church members, was very firm and clear on the actual practical main question concerning the doctrine of election of grace, namely in the realization that there is not something in us, as the 11th article of the Formula of Concord says, i.e. not in any way the human being's own will or action that causes one person to convert while another remains unconverted, but that all men are by nature equally evil and equally hostile to God, and that it is therefore a mystery and enigma that is inscrutable to reason if God offers equal grace to all men, where it comes from that some accept this grace while others do not. Even the simplest peasant is able to understand this simple truth, as we have experienced many times in the past election of grace controversy; indeed, every honest, truly humble Christian, as we have always heard, immediately accepts without contradiction the confession that he is no better for his person than anyone else, that he therefore cannot and must not somehow attribute it to himself if he has been converted before others, but that he may only see in it a work of free grace. Thus the conclusion follows naturally to every honest Christian heart that the conversion of man is a mystery which no human reason is able to explain, but in which we must remain quite simply and absolutely with what the holy apostle Phil. 2:13 says, God works both the willing and the accomplishing, according to his good pleasure. My blessed brother also stood firm and clear in this simple realization and as a result fell asleep blessed in the grace of God. I am therefore also far removed from what Pastor Hein once reproached me for, namely whether I did not make a conscience of having erected a counter-altar against him in Wiesbaden (namely with people who, as he thought, understood nothing of the whole election of grace issue). Not only do I think

I will one day be able to justify this before Christ's judgment seat happily and confidently, but I also consider it a great grace with which God has honored me, and it is a great comfort to me as often as I am able to bring Christian souls back from the pernicious ways of Pastor Hein.

But God granted us another great grace in those years when he allowed Hein's affliction to come upon us, and I must not conclude this section of my reports without mentioning this as well: God did not allow the number of our synod congregations to be reduced by Hein's apostasy, but before his apostasy took place, he had already given us a replacement in the emergence of another new congregation that joined us, in Allendorf an der Ulm, in the old Prussian district of Wetzlar, which is very close to us. There, a number of 100 families had already been separating from the State Church and their pastor for a year, who of course had not preached God's Word to them correctly and had not proved himself to be a faithful shepherd of their souls. So the poor people sat for years without any church provision until they happened to hear that there was also a congregation in Steeden that was separating from the State Church. This prompted them to send someone to us and invite us to Allendorf. Of course, we didn't know what was behind this invitation and whether there were any improper motives behind the whole thing. However, we believed that we could and should send an intelligent Christian man from the Steeden community to take a closer look at the whole matter. He brought back favorable news; some families in Allendorf had made the best impression on him. Pastor Eikmeier went there and found the same. So we decided to make an attempt to preach the Word of God to the

people who had been so completely neglected by the church, stripped of all Christian knowledge and already publicly separated from their former church and congregation. At first we wanted nothing more than the latter, just as one preaches the gospel to the poor pagans. For this purpose I went there myself and from the spring of 1880 until the fall I preached the word of God for six months on many Sundays and feast days in a farmhouse parlor in Allendorf an der Ulm, always to crowds of listeners, as simply and plainly as possible, in order to lay the first foundation of Christian faith in their hearts. I may say that my sermon was received by many with great joy and willingness; in truth, the foundation of a righteous Christian community was laid in Allendorf, even if it was later subject to many trials. Even at the beginning only half of those who had left the State Church joined us, the others obviously showed that they were only interested in the world and not in God's Word. But even of the 51 families who stuck with us at the beginning, the majority were later lost again when it became necessary to take Christianity and God's Word seriously. Many were literally weighed and found too light. But it was a wonderful grace from God that the Word of God found such a place in that lonely mountain valley formed by the Ulm stream that a whole number of faithful Christian families gathered there and to this day firmly adhere to our church community, and not only that, but also that with the help of support from our faithful brothers and fellow believers in America, a pastor (Pr. Hempfing) could be appointed, whose heart God wonderfully filled with joy to accept the inwardly and outwardly so difficult vocation there, and to persevere there until today under great sacrifices, struggles and privations. And even more, after Pastor Hempfing took up his post at Ulm in the late fall of 1880, it was even possible to build a lovely little church and a parsonage a year later with the help of American support,

so that the congregation has now also received a firm foundation in this respect and can rejoice with the holy Psalmist (Ps. 84): "The bird has found a house and the swallow her nest". Yes, these are miracles of divine grace that God has performed in the Ulm valley, which used to be so completely desolate in church terms. Of course, in contrast to these miracles of divine grace, which stand out so prominently before everyone's eyes, it is also a mystery of satanic wickedness that our small congregation on the Ulm has so little growth and that there is almost no one in the whole area (two or three people included) who rejoices in the light of the Word of God, which shines and glows so brightly there in the great darkness that prevails all around, and who hastens to enjoy it. So it proves once again that our time is not one in which we can still hope and wait for a great building of the church. Only the scanty gleanings of a few ears of corn in the great, already harvested field of the world is, it seems, granted to us by God. But every sinner who repents is an angel's joy, so how could such joy not be enough for us?

Thus joy and sorrow alternate in Christian life, and until the end of the world Christ remains set for the fall and resurrection of many in Israel: in the Ulm valley the joyful building up of a new Lutheran congregation (even if under many a difficult struggle and pain of purification and sifting) and in Wiesbaden the so sad decline of our Lutheran church and the apostasy from it. However, I have not wanted to conceal the latter in my reports, so that our dear readers can see how both good and evil emerge unhindered where faith and God's Word are free and unbound, as in our Lutheran Free Church.

14.

Age Experiences, Lessons Learned and Confessions. ↑

The battles and storms described in the previous section were the last that deeply moved and shook my life. They were followed by the time of a quiet, peaceful old age, which was given to me by God's grace, and in which I still stand today, with much praise and glory for the divine grace that has brought me this far. Above many others, however, God has also blessed me richly in my old age, not only that I can look back on all the great divine experiences of grace of my whole former life, but also that my old days overflow with all the demonstrations of divine grace. Without worries of food (from which the annual support of the Missouri Synod, which is assured to me, keeps me free), without pain and even almost without any particular discomfort of the body, in an activity appropriate to my remaining strength, without which old age would be a heavy burden for me, God lets me live out my time until today. I have already told the dear readers how I resigned my pastorate in Steeden in 1879, as I was no longer able to conduct the ministry in the scattered outlying places of the Steeden parish, especially in the winter time, but this did not exclude the fact that I always found ample opportunity to preach in Steeden, where reading services were held in the absence of the pastor, I always found ample opportunity to preach as much as my strength allowed (in winter, of course, I was often unable to leave the room and the warm stove for long periods of time), and I had also taken over the sacred preaching ministry in the small Wiesbaden congregation (where, however, I now have to be deputized even in winter) and so I am still active in the ministry to this day. Moreover, in my old age I still had the pleasure of

teaching individual pupils, in whose circle I could move and feel comfortable in the usual old way. And finally, God granted me the great grace that I was able to be active with my pen into old age, especially that I found the time and strength to publish my catechism explanation, a fruit of all my life's work, in print. Yes, it is speaking from the bottom of my heart when I say that I cannot find words to praise the divine grace that has honored me with the publication of this book even in my old age; I also feel that everything that is good in the book is only a gift of divine grace, in the very special sense that it is not a fruit of human scholarship, but only a fruit of all the experiences of grace that God has honored me with throughout my life. And when I fully realize the blessing that God has placed on my book up to this point according to the testimony of many, then I may and must only break out into the words: "Lord, I am too little for all the mercy and faithfulness that you have done for me".

In the heading of this penultimate section of my notes, I have also spoken of "experiences and confessions", because I feel as if I cannot conclude the description of my long life with its many experiences and struggles without telling my dear readers something of the results which I can now, in my old age, describe as the fruit of all the rich life experiences I have had. And since most of my life has been spent in the field of separation and the Lutheran Free Church, I would particularly like to say something about the experiences I have had in this field and, above all, about the great divine blessing I have received in it. In the great basic ecclesiastical question of our time, the State Church or separation and the Free Church, I would like not only to show, as I did earlier, the biblical duty and necessity of the latter, but I would also like to make my

dear readers, especially any State Church members among them, want to join the Free Church by pointing out the abundant blessing that I have experienced in it. — I want to start with the least and lowest, with what concerns the external and earthly life. After all, there are so few in German State Churches who decide to separate from the church! Many may still lack the necessary clarity of faith and biblical knowledge on which the separation is based, but there is no doubt that for quite a few the inevitable worries of human weakness also weigh heavily in the balance. If a preacher has to leave his office and bread when he separates, and rarely does a congregation go with him that could feed him, where can he find a place to live with his wife and child? This is the serious problem that certainly prevents many people from leaving the State Church. One could, of course, go to America, where there are enough congregations that would gladly accept a preacher (there is still the greatest shortage of preachers over there, especially in the Lutheran Church!) Unfortunately, however, it seems too difficult for many to leave their homeland and friendships for the sake of their faith and seek a new home on the other side of the world. But be that as it may, even the weakest faith should be strengthened by all the wonderful and glorious guidance of God that so many have already experienced during the separation! We can confidently say that to this day no one who has separated from the State Church has ever been abandoned, but that God has helped all of them through in various ways. I can also present myself and my whole life to everyone as such a witness of wonderful divine help. Yes, I am now old and gray and how the words of the holy psalmist have been fulfilled in me throughout my life:

"I have never seen the righteous forsaken or his seed go after bread!" When we left the State Church in Nassau, I also lacked a congregation that would have been large and strong enough to support a parish family; in addition, in the early years there were the persecutions by the authorities that came upon us and hindered all orderly church life, and even after that, the small Steeden rural congregation lacked the necessary funds for many years to protect its pastor from all food worries. It was often necessary to search in the pockets, even if the postman only came and asked for a few pennies. But when I look back now in my old age on all the wonderful ways that God has led me throughout my life in this respect too, then my heart can only burst out in praise and thanksgiving for all the evidence and experiences of divine help that I have also been able to experience in earthly relationships. The Lord has carried me as if in hands throughout my whole life, has always fulfilled all his promises to me, also in regard to the daily bread, I have never been allowed to suffer lack, but help has always come at the right time. And even if there was sometimes hardship and poverty and the oil in the jug wanted to run out, now that everything is over I can confess loudly and publicly: just as everything has come and gone, so it has been right, good and salutary, so everything has only served for the best; in short, if I had known 46 years ago, when we left the State Church, what I know now, how I would then have so cheerfully laughed at and mocked all food worries, when they sometimes came, and been ashamed of my unbelief, how easily and carefree I would then have gone all my ways in life. But then, of course, no faith would have been necessary, I would have already lived in the sight of all the divine proofs of grace that I had to hope for and wait for in faith. But now only two things remain for me at the end of my life

when I remember the wonderful preservation and provision of it in an earthly respect, namely, on the one hand, that I thank God for it from the bottom of my heart, but on the other hand, that I beat my breast in repentance with the poor tax collector for the sake of all the poor unbelieving worries and doubts that have so often tormented my heart.

But what a blessing rests on a life that is not lived by the full fleshpots of Egypt, but in which everything must be drawn and taken daily in faith from the hand of the Lord! Only then does the whole external earthly life become a real and genuine life of faith. As the son of a court preacher, I grew up in prosperity and abundance, and it was only when I joined the Separation and the Free Church that I learned what poverty is. So I can speak from my own experience of both prosperity and poverty, but I may and must confess: the days of poverty have been more blessed for me than the earlier days of prosperity, and God, who knows the heart, knows how often I have thanked Him for having torn me out of a life of earthly abundance (as was promised to me personally in the State Church) and placed me in circumstances where everything is built only on faith, on God's Word and promise! Oh, how differently one learns to pray for daily bread than when one already knows beforehand that one has it and where it comes from! And what powerful drivers for prayer and crying out to God are precisely the worries about food! Only those who have experienced it know this. Likewise, how much more and more easily the heart becomes free and unbound from all the bonds and cords of worldly love when it actually has to do without the goods of the world than in the other case, when one sits in prosperity and knows nothing of lack and deprivation, is also something one only learns through experience. It is only when earthly goods are taken from us that we realize with how many secret chains

our hearts are still bound to them. And then come the actual, often so wonderful and visible experiences of divine help in times of need, one year after the other goes by and one has experienced for oneself how the Lord has never failed, how hope has not been put to shame, but all God's promises have become yes and amen with us, God has always satisfied us with good pleasure: O truly, then one feels richer than all the treasures of the world can ever make us, one does not give up such a life of faith with its irreplaceable glorious experiences of faith for all earthly riches. Yes, the separation has been a great, unspeakable blessing for me and for which I cannot praise and thank God enough; in this respect, too, my life has become a school of faith in which I have learned to be a Christian, my whole life has become a bright mirror of constant divine guidance and leadership, which would hardly have been the case, at least not to the same extent, if I had spent my days in quiet tranquility in a regional church pastorate with its comfortable income. Oh, how foolish it is to shy away from separation and the free church out of carnal considerations and worries, when it is really only God's ways that lead us there!

And I would like to counter these carnal worries with one more thing: has God not promised that whoever leaves houses or brothers, sisters, father, mother, wife, child or field for his sake shall receive it again a hundredfold, and that already in this time? That this divine promise is fulfilled to us not only in a spiritual, but also literally in an earthly respect, I can testify from my own deepest experience of life: not as if I had received or possessed earthly riches a hundredfold in the Free Church, but I boldly assert that God has given me a hundredfold true happiness in life in comparison with so many who

sit in the greatest wealth. Just as man does not live by having many possessions, so also the real happiness of life does not depend on money and wealth, but flows mainly from many other sources and causes in the home and family and above all in man's own heart. God can easily replace a hundredfold what we deny ourselves in earthly goods for his sake. And not only that, but it may also be said, and anyone who knows earthly life will confirm it, that wealth and abundance are usually only an obstacle not only to eternal but also to temporal happiness; for apart from all the other hundredfold evils, worries, etc., which they bring with them, how they stimulate man to ever higher demands on life and thus to constant dissatisfaction, how they spoil us, how they often blunt us for true earthly enjoyment! On the other hand, it is an old truth, confirmed by experience, that one only learns to know the true value of earthly goods through deprivation. How delicious food tastes to us once we have become hungry, and how can a simple piece of bread or a drink of water become a delicious refreshment! How sweet and delightful the days of physical well-being taste when we have first had to go through times of cross and tribulation, how grateful we are for every good deed that God gives us on earth, how we appreciate its value when we first go without it and then receive it as a gift of God's grace! This is no small blessing that poverty and deprivation bring us, and I cannot refrain from saying this here because I have experienced it so vividly in myself. I can therefore say with all my heart that I have also felt more content and happier in earthly terms in the small and poor circumstances of the Free Church than elsewhere in perhaps greater prosperity. Indeed, if I summarize the whole sum of my life experiences in this respect,

I can say that God has also given me my full measure of earthly happiness, pressed down, shaken and superfluous, the separation and free church has not shortened me in any way, I have received what only a man on earth can ask for, I may exclaim with the holy apostle in truth, I have everything, I have superfluous. — Oh truly, God's hand is not shortened so that it cannot help and satisfy all that lives there with good pleasure, if only we always had faith!

However, I have experienced the blessing of free church relationships to an even greater extent in spiritual and ecclesiastical terms. I am far removed from the sectarian bias that imagines that the salvation of souls, true Christianity and the truly apostolic church can only be found in their small, close community. I am well aware of the benefits and blessings that the State Churches brought to the German people in the 16th and 17th centuries, and I am also firmly convinced that, despite the shortcomings that the old State Churches of its time also had, it nevertheless came into being through God's providence and will and was the vessel in which God preserved his Word and Sacrament pure and clear for centuries. I am only speaking of the present, where the German State Churches have lost their crown, pure Word and Sacrament, where they have fallen into hopeless states of ecclesiastical corruption and have become miserable state institutions; of these present State Church conditions I say: it is a great, unspeakable blessing when a congregation separates itself from this corrupt State Church, is saved and preserved from all entanglement in the ecclesiastical rottenness of the same and is placed on pure, healthy ecclesiastical ground. I believe I can say the latter not merely from theory, but from experience, from many years of personal experience.

Many hundreds of times in my life I have heard and considered the arguments against church separation: One wants to preserve the preaching of the Gospel for the great mass of the people and not merely hide it in the small hidden corners of the separated congregations; one also does not want to remove the believing Christians as the salt from all the rest of the dough, the popular congregations, but rather, according to the well-known parable, believes that the salt must be mixed into the whole dough so that it is leavened; one is also concerned and fears that sectarian arrogance, partiality and narrow-mindedness will be created and promoted through separation, etc.. These are facts, these are the experiences of a long, richly eventful life, which I can set against these objections. First of all, as far as the accusation of sectarian narrow-mindedness and spiritual arrogance is concerned, to which separated congregations should preferably be exposed, I can testify that I have not found the temptation and danger regarding these sins to be greater in separated congregations than in national church Christians; On the contrary, the pietistic, non-Lutheran spirituality that often prevails in faithful circles of the State Church, the conventicle system, to which the ecclesiastical emergencies so often urge State Church Christians, undoubtedly promotes narrow-mindedness and spiritual arrogance far more than the healthy Lutheranism of righteous, separated Lutheran congregations. It may of course be different where such separated congregations have already taken the leaven of pietism from their State Church into the separation, or where they lack healthy and pure Lutheran doctrine and therefore also a healthy Lutheran life of faith. I would particularly like to point out the dangers of the Romanizing doctrinal errors of church and ministry, which they so easily bring to Christian life; if one looks at these Roman papal ideas, as they were, for example those prevailing in the Breslau Synod, this Synod is regarded as the only Lutheran church

in Prussia, because it alone has the church government established by God, or if the separated Lutheran church is regarded as the only church of Christ on earth, then it is no wonder that such false un-Lutheran ideas also give rise to a false un-Lutheran mind and spirit, narrow-mindedness and finally also a proud nature. But where true Lutheran doctrine prevails in separated congregations and is cultivated in the right way, where such congregations know and live in the living awareness that their whole advantage consists only in the pure teaching and preaching of the Gospel, which is not their merit but only God's free grace, but only God's free grace has given them, and that the true Christian church, the "whole Christendom on earth", of which our Lutheran catechism speaks, is everywhere, and everywhere where the gospel is preached purely and clearly and the holy sacraments are administered accordingly: I have never found separatism or separatist arrogance and the like, but righteous and simple-minded Lutheran Christians who, of course, recognized and appreciated the great grace of God, which was given to them before many others in the pure Word of God and the holy sacraments, but who did not lack the humble recognition of their own sin, weakness and frailty. Yes, I can assure my dear readers that I have always felt extremely comfortable and at home in the circle of separated congregations, as far as my life's journey has brought me together with such congregations; nowhere have I encountered anything of the false sectarian spirit and such arrogant conceits mentioned above, and where traces of them have appeared, healthy Lutheran congregational life has immediately expelled them, and I have often experienced that people who were infected by that false spirit soon left voluntarily and went their own way. But, thank God, there were only a few that I know of personally.

And what about those other sayings that one hears so often nowadays, that one wants to preserve the preaching of the Gospel to the whole people,

that believing Christians must remain as the salt in the whole mass of the people and the State Church and therefore must not leave the latter, etc.? Well, I also know something from experience about these things, but unfortunately it is just the opposite of what one imagines; one wants to preserve the preaching of the Word of God to the whole people by persisting in the corrupt national and State Church, but the opposite is in fact mostly the case today: the rottenness of the State Church conditions has in most places also more or less seized the believing circles and even the preachers in the State Churches, poisoned them and drawn them into the ecclesiastical ruin; congregations which had the pure teaching and preaching of the Gospel have in many cases lost it again; but how often do we find in State Churches only small circles and communities or associations which gather around believing preachers, yet without the advantage and blessing of a real ecclesiastical separation. This is why such regional church circles of believers usually lack the necessary stability, the individual members of these circles go to and fro at will, they lack the necessary clarity and stability in Christian teaching, in short, such believing Christians lack the church and therefore also the right church consciousness, they are only a free association and not a church and so they lack everything that Christian church life brings with it in terms of blessing, discipline and separation from the world. And if this is compounded by the fact, which happens so often in State Churches, that a believing preacher is transferred away from a place where he has perhaps been a blessing and spiritual life has developed in the congregation, then all light and life in the congregation is often extinguished again in a short time. — In what I have said here, I am only stating facts that are partly generally known and partly based on the nature and constitution of State Church conditions. Let us see, therefore, even in the case of men on whom God had bestowed a great efficacy

(such as the elderly Pastor Harms in Hermannsburg, Pastor Loehe in Bavaria, Professor Vilmar in Hesse, the elderly Pastor Horning in Strasbourg, etc.), what incalculable damage to their whole activity and to all the believing circles that followed them has arisen from the fact that they have remained in the entanglements and corruptions of the national church and have not penetrated through to pure, firmly and rightly founded ecclesiastical conditions, such as only the Free Church offers at the present time.

Of course, in the free church too, as everywhere else on earth, there are only poor and weak sinful people, full of a hundred and one defects and infirmities. It is therefore not a question of praising people when I speak below of the blessing of separation and the Free Church, but only of the blessing and the advantage of pure and right church conditions, and I would like to say that this blessing is so infinitely great precisely because of the existing human weakness, sin and frailty, as it is also found in the Free Church. Yes, I have experienced this blessing so deeply and richly in my life that my whole heart is filled with it, so I cannot refrain from praising a little of it here to my dear readers.

This blessing could be summarized in the fact that in a word the church has been restored to the separated congregations, and as surely as our Lord Christ has not left his sheep isolated and scattered in the wilderness, but has gathered them together in one church and congregation, as in the safe sheepfold, where they are to be kept from the wolves and preserved, nourished and fed for eternal life, so surely it is also an incalculable blessing for the salvation of souls to have and obtain again all that the Lord wants to give to His own through the foundation and possession of the Church. But this blessing of the Church is above all the guarantee and warranty for the preservation of the pure teaching and preaching of the Gospel. That is why it is a great pity in our time that our German

State Churches no longer give this guarantee for the pure preaching of the Gospel; for no matter how much one may say that the ecclesiastical confessions still rightly exist in our State Churches: in fact, any false teacher, rationalist and fanatical spirit has free access to the preaching office in them. It is therefore a public fact that no State Church can any longer give a congregation the guarantee of being preserved in pure doctrine, of possessing the preaching of the Gospel for itself and its children. Today, this guarantee is only possible in the case of separation from the State Church, in the case of separation and the Free Church! I do not want to entertain my dear readers with dead theories here, I just want to let my long life experience speak for itself, as I have said. I left the State Church in 1846, where I held the preaching office in the parish of Runkel; how did things go in the Runkel congregation during this long period? It had the most colorful mixture of preachers! My first successor in office was such a crude rationalist that he rarely even used to mention the name of the Lord Jesus in the pulpit, so that any Jewish rabbi could have preached his sermons just as well as he did; then, in order to possibly win back the separated Lutherans, they wanted to bring believing preachers to Runkel, so they first brought an empty talker there (the man has been dead for many years), then a decidedly Reformed believer, and so it went on in a colorful mixture. Participating in this mixture would have been the fate of the separated ones if they had remained in the State Church, and no doubt faith and Christianity would have been lost among them as a result. But what kept them in the faith, what saved their souls? Obviously only the separation, the separation from the Babel of the State Church, the formation of an independent free congregation on the basis of the true faith! That alone preserved the faithful preaching of the gospel and protected them from false teaching. But this is the blessing of the church, for which the Lord has founded a church

and wants to keep it right to this day. Oh, what a grace, what a blessing has befallen the separated congregation in Steeden, that it has now had the pure preaching of the Gospel every Sunday for half a century, unwavering and unperturbed by the various denominations of our time, indeed, that this preaching, together with the right faith, has now been passed on and propagated in it down to the third generation, down to the children's children! It has therefore often been quite incomprehensible to me how believing pastors in the State Church could justify it to their conscience to hand over their pastorate into the hands of a false teacher, a wolf and a murderer of souls when they were transferred from their pastorate. Such facts cry out to God, and they alone show the indispensable necessity of ecclesiastical separation. After all, the latter is nothing other than the separation from the poison of souls, the false doctrine, and where the false doctrine actually approaches a church, it stands at the crossroads, and one should not choose for long whether Christ or Belial. But I myself have experienced the strange case where a believing pastor personally remained in the State Church, but advised his believing parishioners to join the nearest separate Lutheran congregation (in Steeden). And lo and behold, all those who did the latter were preserved in faith with Christ, whereas otherwise everything that had been awakened of Christian life in the congregation had long since died out again.

Next to the preaching of the Gospel, however, the second powerful lever of Christian faith and life in separated Free Church congregations is the ecclesial consciousness reawakened by separation, i.e. the awareness of being a community that stands on the foundation of faith and the Word of God and is formed and held together by this bond of faith alone. The lack of this ecclesial consciousness, which I have already pointed out above, is one of the great fundamental defects of today's national church. This

was very different in the 16th and 17th centuries. The Reformation was only formed in opposition to the Roman papacy, its abuses and heresies; all those who therefore professed the newly risen Evangelical Church, including the great masses of the people in the Evangelical countries, were filled and sustained by the living consciousness that they had separated themselves from the papacy and its errors, that the pure Gospel, the right biblical-apostolic teaching, the true faith was once again being preached among them. In this awareness, the Reformation churches formed real communities of confession and faith, resting on the great act of confession that had been accomplished at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. However, this real ecclesiastical consciousness remained alive in the Evangelical people as long as the opposition to the papacy and the separation from it, as well as the memory of the Reformation, remained fresh and alive, and the bloody religious persecutions that emanated from the papacy in the 16th and 17th centuries contributed to keeping this memory alive and did not allow the fight against the papacy to cease until this fight finally ended in the great Thirty Years' War. It has often been said, and not without justification, that in this war the opposition and enmity between Catholicism and Protestantism was quenched in blood, as it were. Afterwards, quite different times came: the old firm awareness of faith in the Evangelical Church became more and more extinct, first came the times of Pietism, then those of Rationalism, and at the same time the bureaucratic police state developed more and more in the political field and thus also the actual state church, i.e. the purely secular bureaucratic state and official rule in the ecclesiastical field. Thus, in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries, the old Evangelical and Lutheran confessional churches were gradually laid to rest in a long process of development, and with the churches themselves also all ecclesiastical consciousness

in the German Evangelical people, all consciousness of standing on the ground of a firm and definite faith and a Evangelical and Lutheran doctrine expressed in clearly conscious dogmas. In the Roman Church it is still different today: it has its pope together with all the specifically Roman doctrines, over which the papacy holds and watches with zeal, because it knows that the living awareness of these doctrines in the heart of the Roman people is the only means of preserving the entire papal rule. In contrast, the preservation of the Protestant regional or state churches is no longer linked in the slightest to the existence of such a consciousness of faith, but is based solely on such external things as the external church system inherited from the fathers with its time-honored church buildings, parishes and church properties and, above all, the ecclesiastical state rule. In addition, the Evangelical people have a certain abhorrence of Roman superstition and ceremonialism, while the same is exposed without resistance to the tearing down of foreign sects, Methodists, Baptists, etc., and quite rightly so, because there is no longer any awareness of Evangelical faith and pure doctrine among the people.

These are the conditions of our church today. In sharp contrast to them, my whole life experience testifies to me what a great powerful lever of true Christianity, indeed what an absolutely indispensable condition for the preservation of the Church and Christianity, is precisely the ecclesiastical consciousness, as it is again generated and kept alive by separation and Free Churches. After all, it is only an act of faith, a free personal confession of it, which brings about separation; it is exclusively a free act of confession which gives rise to Free Church congregations; every apostasy from this confession dissolves the whole community, separates each individual from it. In the Free Church,

the obligation and oath of the preachers to the church confession at the time of their ordination is not merely a customary outward practice, but a confession of faith that is really practiced and valid in church life and stands in full truth. But what an unspeakably great blessing it is for a congregation to be supported by such a lively and vibrant ecclesial consciousness! This not only holds the congregation together faithfully and firmly, but it is also for each individual member of the congregation a powerful fortification in the right faith, a protective defense against all merely personal subjective arbitrariness in matters of faith and doctrine, a constant spur to faithful perseverance and standing firm on the secure ecclesiastical foundation once laid. The congregation is vividly aware that its entire existence rests solely on the foundation of God's Word, and that therefore only this word has to rule and reign within it, which is why all its members willingly bow to the authority of the divine Word as soon as it is presented to them. I can testify to this from almost 50 years of experience: I am only aware of very isolated cases where someone in our separated Steeden congregation has dared to contradict the Word of God or rebel against it in any way, and where it has ever happened, it has soon led to complete apostasy from the congregation. This is certainly not to say that we want to take all members of our separated churches for converted Christians in the manner of enthusiasts, no, I only want to say from my personal experience that the Word of God, as it must be in every true visible church, is the power before which the church bows. Of course, everywhere, and thus also in separated congregations, a person has the freedom to fall away from God's Word, this is not to be denied; but it is precisely in this case that the blessing of the free church comes to light most in contrast to the national churches bound by the chains of state rule: the free church can exercise discipline, it can "exclude public and impenitent sinners from the congregation" according to God's order and the teaching of our Lutheran catechism. In addition to the pure teaching and

preaching of the Gospel, the practice of discipline in a congregation is just as important for the preservation of the church as it is for strengthening the entire Christian moral consciousness. How must moral judgment and feeling be destroyed and violated if in a congregation, as is the case everywhere in the State Churches, all church discipline is so utterly abysmal, if there is no longer any talk of an ecclesiastical ban, of excluding the ungodly and unbelievers from the church, but without any distinction the ungodly, if they only want to, go to the altar with the pious! As a result, all distinctions and boundaries between the church and the world have been completely abolished and blurred in State Churches, opening the door to the invading sects and giving the latter a well-founded reason to decry the public State Church as pure worldliness. Oh, it is impossible to say what a deep damage to the soul is caused by this, especially among the youth, that by omitting all church discipline, and thus all ecclesiastical separation of good and evil, of Christians and public non-Christians, the church is placed in the same line with a godless worldly heap, and no consciousness at all is maintained in the hearts of being separated from the world as members of Christ's church. Indeed, Christ's kingdom and the devil's kingdom are rightly mixed together in one heap, thereby shaking the deepest foundations of all Christian meaning and life. One must have lived in a righteous, separated Christian congregation, where church discipline is faithfully practiced (and that is precisely the blessing of the Free Church, that discipline can and may be practiced in it and it is only one's own fault if it is not done) for a long time in order to experience for oneself how this Christian exercise in discipline awakens and maintains awareness, right down to the children: we are a Christian congregation, ungodliness is not tolerated among us, for us friendship and fellowship are not befitting the world, we are

divorced from the world and its race. But this is precisely the curse that weighs on today's state church, that we live in a time when there are the great heaps of people who have fallen away from all Christianity, the masses of notoriously unbelieving children of the world and despisers of God everywhere, but the state church does not want any divorce from these masses of unbelievers and apostates. In doing so, it actually dissolves the separation between the Church and the world, Christ and Belial, and overturns the religious and moral foundation of all Christianity. Thus the latter can ultimately only be preserved through separation. — One must first have tasted for oneself the blessing of faithful discipline, then it will indeed become a moral impossibility for us to re-enter and live in a church where all discipline is denied, where unbelief and godlessness are publicly tolerated, even close beside us at the altar. And how could a preacher who has lived in the Free Church again decide to give his heart and hands to practicing such abominations even at the altar! This is truly only conceivable with the complete moral bankruptcy of such a man. Only on the same path of moral bankruptcy do members of the Free Church, as I have always experienced throughout my life, tend to return to the State Church. These are hard words that I am speaking here, but they are not empty dreams and fantasies, but sober facts that I have experienced many times.

How much more could I say about the great damage to the souls of Christians and congregations in the State Church that they are robbed and deprived of such large and essential parts of their Christian rights and freedoms, purchased with the precious blood of Christ. After all, the church is the heavenly queen, the bride of the Lord, the free one to whom the keys of the kingdom of heaven have been given, and with them also freedom from all human rule, the right and duty to redeem and bind according to God's Word and command, to judge doctrine and to cast out all false teaching, to establish

ecclesiastical order, to appoint preachers, and so on. Only today's Free Church has restored all these rights and freedoms to Christians, and in this it actually exercises the spiritual priesthood of Christians again and thereby raises them to full awareness and possession of their Christian status and dignity. But just as spiritual arrogance is sinful and punishable, it is an equally great gain and blessing to be fully aware of the fact that "I am a Christian". I can only repeat again and again: one must first taste this sweet, heavenly air of Christian and ecclesiastical freedom, one must have lived in it, experienced its faith-strengthening power, only then can one fully appreciate what miserable, wretched human bondage today's State Church is.

Finally, I would like to mention as an unspeakable blessing of the Free Church that the position of the pastor in relation to the congregation is significantly different than in the State Church, which cannot remain without the deepest influence on his entire ministry. What completely different conditions there are in the Free Church, where the pastor does not stand above the congregation, as is usually the case in State Churches, and often does not even know the majority of his parishioners personally, but the Free Church preacher stands and lives in the congregation in accordance with the whole nature of church relations. The very nature of his calling contributes to this; in State Churches the pastor is either appointed from above to the congregation, so that from the outset he faces it as a complete stranger, or even where in modern times a State Church congregation is free to choose its own preacher, this choice usually depends on majorities, which are also often based on mere human arbitrariness. How completely different it is in Free Church congregations, also because they tend to be far smaller in number, much closer and more closely bound together by the bond of faith and love.

There the choice and calling of a preacher emerges in a completely different way, as it were, from the heart of a congregation, and quite often one may say that in the congregation the man of their choice is also the man of their heart. From the outset, an intimate bond of love and trust is forged between pastor and congregation. And so this bond continues to grow: just as in the Free Church congregation itself there is an awareness of being bound together only by the bond of faith, as believing Christians and brothers, so this awareness also binds the congregation to the pastor; the congregation does not regard its pastor as a stranger, but as an intimately connected fellow believer, it knows that its whole ecclesiastical and spiritual life and existence rests on his preaching, that it is bound to him with its whole ecclesiastical existence as the bearer of the Word of God. Thus the office and the high and important ecclesiastical position of the pastor becomes very clear to a Free Church congregation in a very different way from a State Church congregation. And what a close and lively relationship develops between pastor and congregation, how the pastor usually enters into a lively and friendly relationship with most of the members and families of his congregation, and how his entire ministry as a true spiritual father, counselor and pastor of his congregation is facilitated, enlivened and kept in constant exercise. After all, in the state church the pastor is only a public official among other officials; in the Free Church, however, he is only the minister of the Word and his personal relationship to the congregation is thus cast in a completely different light and given a completely different weight. This is further enhanced by all the external conditions and circumstances of today's Free Church. By its very nature, the latter usually branches out into widely scattered, sometimes smaller, sometimes larger congregations, which are united to form a parish. Thus the pastor is often required to visit

and travel to out-of-town parishioners in the course of his ministry, whereby he must constantly avail himself of the hospitality of his parishioners. As a result, he became a frequently returning and welcome loyal friend to many of them. In addition, the pastor of a free church is dependent on the voluntary contributions and gifts of his congregation for his salary and his entire earthly livelihood; what a lively personal relationship this brings with it, how it stimulates and attracts the members of the congregation to love and be grateful to their pastor and in turn to faithfully and diligently serve the congregation! Thus, in a word, nowhere in the Free Church is there the dead mechanism of a machine of church taxes and church assets, etc., externally and ultimately managed and controlled by the state government, but everywhere it is only free life, faith and love that maintains, moves and drives the entire church order, in the midst of which the pastor stands as the center and the main driving force of the whole. The wide field of blessed ministerial effectiveness, indeed, the high and important position of the Free Church pastor for the whole life of the church, is obvious.

May it not annoy the dear readers that I speak so much about the blessing of separation and the Free Church in the above. After all, these are all things that fill me deeply and vividly at the end of my entire life, and which I would not want to take with me to the grave without having given clear testimony of them. May this testimony be a blessing to many! I am at least aware before God that I was far from any kind of whitewashing when I wrote the above, nor have I painted mere fantasy pictures on the paper, but I have only reproduced here the overall impression of my personal experience drawn from real life. Yes, I do not regret the path that separation from the State Church has led me down.

The greatest damage to Free Church conditions today is seen everywhere in the many church splits that have torn the Free Church into so many separate and often hostile parties. This is seen as the inevitable evil fruit and consequence of full ecclesiastical freedom, that the Free Church dissolves into such endless fragmentation, as is thought, but in this ecclesiastical fragmentation one sees nothing but ruin, harm and annoyance, yes, the final complete downfall of the church, so that many want to find in the disunity of today's Free Church a main cause that compels them to remain in the State Church. — Well, I can also speak from experience about these doctrinal struggles of the Free Church and the resulting church divisions. After all, a large part of my life has been consumed by these battles. But that is precisely why I can and may speak confidently, not of the harm, but of the great blessing of precisely these doctrinal battles. There is certainly no question of controversy, division and offense being a happiness and a blessing in and of themselves. If all Christians in the world were united in faith and doctrine, if there were no factions among them, no different confessions and the like, in short, if there were no more sin, no more error, no more false doctrine on earth, oh how wonderful that would be! But until the Last Day all these are only fantasies and dreams to hope for; sin and error are here and will remain, indeed, they will continue to grow and increase until the end of the world, so that the Lord, when he comes in His glory on the Last Day, will hardly find true faith on earth. Therefore, the only question is this: once sin and error are there, is it better that they come out openly and are fought against, or that they are covered up and kept hidden so that there is no outward strife and discord? But that is how it is today; in today's State Churches, too, there is internal disunity and fragmentation through and through into

a thousand different doctrines and ecclesiastical factions, even more so than in the Free Church; but the State Church only covers up all internal disunity, the lack of all true faith, in short, all its internal decay and spiritual rot with the cloak of state authority, which binds and holds it together outwardly. But this is truly no happiness and blessing, the inner rot, the poison of false doctrine only eats away at the State Church all the more, because the latter prevents the separation of false doctrine and thus also the healthy ecclesiastical struggle against it, the state church forces right-believers and false believers to pull together on one yoke, to remain side by side in one and the same ecclesiastical office, to go to one altar. This infallibly dulls the heart and conscience against false teaching, it nourishes ecclesiastical indifferentism, as the present time so obviously proves, it undermines faithfulness to the Word of God and is thus a cancer that gnaws at the innermost marrow of the Church. Therefore no, and again no; once error and false doctrine are present through the devil's envy and cunning and through the terrible deception of today's theological science, then they must also be fought openly and honestly. This fight against false doctrine with all the resulting divisions is therefore truly not the death and destruction of the Church, but only its life and preservation. Where there is no struggle, there is no life, that is an old truth. That which preserves the Church is only the pure and clear Word of God with its divine, all-conquering power, but the Word of God can only be preserved by constant faithful struggle, because the devil has no rest, but fights against it day and night to falsify and destroy it; therefore, where one becomes weak and lukewarm in this struggle, the devil has won the victory. One of the main signs of this victory of darkness and the downfall of the Church is therefore that in our churches today all honest controversy against false doctrine

has almost completely ceased. — Thus, for our part, we do not deplore the fact that there has been so much controversy over doctrine in the Free Church of our time. Of course, we deeply lament the fact that false doctrine is so widespread and so generally dominant in our time; we lament most painfully that there are so few truly orthodox theologians, especially in Germany; we lament no less that in all the doctrinal battles that have taken place, the truth has not won greater victories, has not won a greater number of friends; yes, this is a deep pain for us, it is a sign of the last evil age in which we stand. But it is good and salutary in and of itself that the doctrine has been fought over, both in the past and now; only this fight for the right faith has kept the Church in the same, both in the old times and in the new. Only through this struggle, however, is the heart and conscience of the individual awakened to the pure doctrine and led to the right investigation and knowledge of it. Church history of all times proves this, but the experience of every individual who has personally lived through such doctrinal battles will confirm it. How deeply and vividly I have experienced the blessing of the ecclesiastical battles I have lived through! How much I have gained from them! Without them I would never have become a real theologian; they were really the high school into which God led me and where, by God's grace, I would like to say, I first really studied theology. Of course, carnally secure, frivolous souls or even quarrelsome people who are only interested in quarrelling will not receive any blessing that quarrelling could bring them; such people only sow to the flesh, which is why they always reap only destruction from the flesh. But by God's grace I have experienced it differently in my soul. I have already told you before how unclear I was about the doctrine in my younger years; it was only when I came into inner conflict, in distress of conscience about questions

of doctrine, that I woke up and learned to ask and investigate the deeper reason for true Lutheran doctrine. Oh, that is something quite different from when a scholar sits at his study table and devotes himself in the deepest peace of mind to his purely scientific studies or indulges in scholarly speculations with which he seeks to explain or systematically construct this or that in the theological field only for human thinking. Especially in the doctrinal battles that have been waged in today's Free Church, it has not been a matter of such purely scientific problems, but only of practical questions that deeply affect the area of faith and the church. At the same time, these questions were not merely to be discussed on paper, but had to be put into practice in the Free Church itself, with all their consequences, such as the questions of church, preaching and church government. The dispute immediately went to the heart and life, it was directly about the position of faith and conscience of everyone in the battle, it was about church and altar fellowship. How all these doctrinal questions, which have been fought over in the Free Church today, have awakened and shaken the inner man, how they have been a deep thorn in the conscience that has left no rest day or night! How one has learned to wrestle, sigh and pray for the knowledge of the truth! How one has learned to search the Holy Scriptures and carefully examine every little passage in them in order to become sure and certain of one's faith, and how many difficult hours it has taken until finally, by God's grace, the heart has become firm and has come to the old, good Lutheran confession, "Here I stand, I can do no other!" I am aware that my long physical infirmity, which I suffered from in the seventies, was not so much the result of purely physical work, but rather to a large extent of the heavy ecclesiastical doctrinal battles that gnawed at the innermost marrow of my life. That is why

people who have not lived through such struggles themselves, who have not tasted and experienced their hardship themselves, should not want to judge them. But whoever has lived through them, as was the case with the writer of this, will realize like him that the apostolic word also applies to these doctrinal struggles: "Blessed is the man who endures temptation", and also the other: "All chastening, when it comes, does not seem to us joy but sorrow, but afterwards it will give a peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised by it". —

Indifferentism towards doctrine is undoubtedly one of the main defects in the entire church life of our time, not only in the theological-scientific field, but also in practical church life. I therefore do not expect too much from the Lutheran Free Church of our time. In Germany at least, it has little prospect of growth; the whole spirit of our time is too repugnant to it, not only the spiritually dead, purely earthly-oriented mind of the great masses of the people, but also the more pietistic and subjectively oriented, ecclesiastically indifferent nature of most of today's believers. It is therefore not uncommon for foreign sects, such as Methodists and Baptists, to gain more followers on German soil today than the genuine old German Lutheranism and the Lutheran Free Church! Nowhere, however, is there any prospect that the German people will ever turn back to the old orthodox church of their fathers on a larger scale, and where it was believed that a small hope of this kind could be cherished (as in Hanover in particular through the Hermannsburg Separation), all hopes were soon deceived and thwarted. And how in Nassau, Hesse and other places, where once 40 years ago the Lutheran Free Church seemed to want to flourish so powerfully, how all prospect of its further growth has disappeared! — But it is even more saddening

that the whole spirit of our time and above all the indifferentism towards pure doctrine, in short, the whole character of subjectivity that our time bears, has also penetrated the area of our German Lutheran Free Church in so many ways. So many of our German Free Church members prove to be the true children of our time. Thus the Breslau Synod followed the theories of Huschke instead of coming to terms with the teachings of Luther and the old Lutheran Church. In what indifferentism to questions of doctrine does the Immanuel Synod persist to this day! How miserably torn and divided in doctrinal disputes is the Hanoverian Hermannsburg Separation! Whence all this splintering of the German Lutheran Free Church, whence the heresy prevailing in such wide circles even in the Free Church? Certainly the cause and guilt of all this does not lie in the separation and ecclesiastical freedom as such, but rather it is this spirit of false subjectivity in the religious and ecclesiastical field, which asserts itself as everywhere, so also in the field of the Lutheran Free Church, it is the lack of true Lutheran ecclesiastical sense and spirit, of true seriousness and zeal to firmly establish oneself in pure Lutheran doctrine above all things. Only through this indifference and neglect of all questions of doctrine, as can be proven historically, has false doctrine penetrated into such wide circles of the Lutheran Free Church of Germany, so that we must regard it as a special great mercy of God if here or there individual areas of the Free Church have been led to pure Lutheran doctrine and thereby preserved despite the most difficult struggles they have had to endure. But where the Free Church is not faithfully and firmly founded on pure doctrine and preserves it as its safe haven, but where it allows false doctrine to rule, it is irredeemably lost, all the more so because it lacks the external supports that the State Church has and which at least outwardly sustain its existence in certain respects. If the Free Church loses the right faith and the pure doctrine, it has lost its shield

and sword and is defenseless against the attacks of the enemy. Then the sects, Methodists, Baptists, etc., are even better off than the Lutheran Free Church, because such sects by their very nature do not seek and have their support in the Word of God and in preaching alone, but also in all kinds of human running and walking and in self-chosen human means and institutions. — But also in the area of life the Free Church has to fight a difficult battle in our time. Its members are often scattered far and wide in small groups and as a result they miss out on a great deal of preaching and proper church care. They are often relegated to individual visits from their pastors in long intervals. In addition, there is also the whole dangerous spirit of our time, the increasing worldliness, the pursuit of earthly goods, all the overgrown business and hustle and bustle that currently fills the world. It is truly difficult for Christians everywhere, even the best ones, to stand firm like rocks in the middle of the stream and not be swept away. Not only does this require a constant struggle and great faithfulness in the Christian walk, but with us poor, weak people, the external circumstances, the whole environment in which we find ourselves, never remain without great influence. In how many places do we therefore experience, even in the Free Church, that the life of faith of the fathers dies out again in the youth who are growing up, or at least shrinks to a mere outward adherence to the inherited church system. But by God's grace there are also many congregations in the Free Church — this may be testified here to the glory and praise of divine mercy — where the youth grow up happily and in blessing in the discipline and admonition to the Lord, in the instruction from God's Word, which they have in abundance, and in the whole Christian life that prevails in the congregation, and the life of faith of the fathers is propagated to the children. Everywhere,

however, at least in the Free Church, one experiences the blessing that faithful and properly practiced church order, teaching, discipline and care brings, especially for children and youth. Of course, only the grace of God can truly convert and save people everywhere. But it is always a great benefit if the seed of God's Word is sown in the hearts of children and young people in early childhood and youth and they are established in true faith and pure teaching; the seed then sprouts in its own time and bears fruit for eternal life when God's hour for man comes. Praise be to God, who has allowed me to experience this so richly in my 46 years in the Free Church, indeed, who has allowed me to experience the victorious overcoming of death on so many deathbeds! There are now three generations that I have experienced in the local Steeden Lutheran congregation, but I can confidently say that, as far as I know, there have rarely, indeed almost never been dying people who have not passed away with a confident, often joyful confession of faith, both old and young. It is certainly God's grace alone that can give this, but it gives it where the means of grace ordained by God are in proper use and swing.

15.

My Fiftieth Anniversary in Office. [↑](#)

It was a beautiful, uplifting celebration that God gave us on the fourth Sunday of Advent (December 18, 1892), the celebration of my 50th anniversary in office. So many things were united that made everyone's hearts happy and grateful: Not only was it all the evidence and the memory of divine grace that had been given to me in the long time of my ministry, and of which the Steeden Lutheran

congregation could be all the more so because I had spent the entire 50 years that I had been in the ministry with them and their fathers, first 3½ years in the State Church, later in the separation, but in this way the past 50 years were also a reminder of so many blessings that the Steeden Lutheran congregation had experienced and received at the same time as me. So we were able to celebrate my jubilee as a great feast of thanksgiving and joy, which testified and preached to us of all the great divine gifts and blessings, we were able to rejoice and praise God that on the one hand I myself was still there, fresh, healthy and cheerful, still standing in the midst of the congregation, and that, on the other hand, our Steeden Lutheran congregation had not only been preserved through all the storms of time, but that it had also been built up and grown to this day, and that it was still in full ecclesiastical strength and bloom today, as it was in the first time after we left the State Church. Oh, that was a great, exuberant grace from God and the reason why we were all able to go to the house of God with joy on my anniversary day, to praise and glorify God.

What made our celebration even more special was the fact that for the first time we were able to gather in our church in Steeden to the sound of the bells. A few years ago, the church had already been considerably enlarged by the construction of a gallery stage, which was urgently needed, and the interior of the church had been beautifully painted and decorated. Now the congregation had also decided to purchase bells for our tower and made the necessary contributions to all these ecclesiastical purchases with great joy. Quite unexpectedly, however, it received a mighty help, because when the news spread that bells were to be purchased in Steeden, all our dear synod congregations did not miss the opportunity to donate one of the bells, the

largest one, as a jubilee bell in lasting memory of my 50 years in office (which my name also says with the attached inscription on the bell). So our anniversary celebration was also the celebration of the consecration of the bell. It is easy to imagine how densely packed all the rooms of our church were with people attending the celebration. Our beloved president, Pastor Willkomm, even came from faraway Saxony on behalf of our synod to witness the participation of our entire synod in my anniversary and to convey their congratulations. He also preached the sermon and thereby contributed not a little to the increase of our festive joy and edification. (Pastor Stallmann preached the bell dedication sermon in the afternoon.) In memory of the persecutions experienced by the authorities when the Lutheran congregation was founded in Steeden, I had to regard it as a special divine providence that the highest official of our Upper Lahn district, the District Administrator, had come to my current anniversary, attended our celebration with obvious joy and heartfelt participation and remained in our circle until the evening. Even the local citizen Steeden assembly, from which once in 1848 came that desolate mob that wanted to drive me out of Steeden or even kill me, honored me with a precious gift for the anniversary (a beautiful large picture in a splendid frame, depicting Christ and the Samaritan woman at the well, just as the District Administrator delighted me with an equally beautiful gift). This is how God is able to guide hearts and sometimes even today to give us Christians grace among all the people (Acts 2:47). The faithful and firm insistence of our Steeden Lutheran congregation for so many years now on the foundation of faith laid in it has undoubtedly earned it trust and respect from outside. — But what can I say about all the proofs of love in word and deed, from Germany and America, with which I was showered on the occasion of my anniversary?

I can only repeat here what I already said on the anniversary day and afterwards, it was too much, it was too much for me, poor little person, I can neither consider myself worthy of so much love, nor would I ever have expected it. But it was a comfort and a joy for me, and the love shown to me could therefore be completely without sting for my heart and conscience, because everywhere, both in the festive sermon and in the congratulatory letters received, God alone was given all the glory in a thoroughly beautiful and worthy manner. So my jubilee celebration passed in unclouded festive joy with much praise and thanksgiving before the face of God, and formed a heart-warming and uplifting conclusion to my 50 years of so richly blessed ministry.

On that day my own heart must have felt most deeply all the proofs of divine grace I had received in my long and eventful life, but at the same time I must also have been deeply conscious of my own great sin, nothingness and unworthiness. Fifty years in the office of a preacher and pastor — how many sins do they not heap upon the conscience, so that one would truly have to perish if the blood of Jesus Christ did not cleanse us from all sin! Apart from everything else — oh, what has it been with all the running and walking, preaching and teaching, working and laboring through the many long years? Where is there a single work among them all of which I could say that I did it purely and clearly for God's glory? Has not sin mingled with everything? Has it not so often been a mere human zeal, a mere sense of duty, but not the love of God, not compassion for the poor lost souls, that has ruled the heart and driven it to work? And instead of the glory before God that we should have, must we not rather reproach ourselves that we have so often only hindered, spoiled and stopped God's work with our sins? Could we not have accomplished far more in our lives, done God's work to a far greater

extent, won souls for eternal life and built the Church if we had not been such weak and ineffectual instruments in God's hand and service through lack of true faith, diligence and faithfulness, prayer and fervor of spirit? Yes, this thought in particular has often depressed me deeply when I have looked at the poor little figure of our Lutheran Free Church, its lack of growth and expansion, its great fragmentation and other infirmities, oh how often I have said to myself that perhaps it would all be different, that we would achieve much greater victories over the world and the devil if only we understood better how to overcome the world through faith and prayer, in short, if we were not such poor, frail and miserable people through our own sin and guilt. And the greater the tasks God has set us in our lives, the more this awareness must weigh us down. So in this respect too, according to St. Paul's words, all mouths must have been completely stopped up and all the world must be indebted to God. I confess this with all my heart, but especially on my jubilee day and in the whole time before and after, it stood before my soul great and mighty, and when I did the math over my 50 years of ministry and added up the whole sum, nothing else came out than what Luther says and confesses in the name of all Christians, including mine:

"With God there is nothing but grace and favor,

Forgiving sin,

After all, our efforts are in vain

Even with the best life."

Nevertheless, all such thoughts of the 50 years full of sin and infirmity could not disturb my jubilee joy, because I was also able to spend these 50 years in the bright light of divine grace, and as a Lutheran Christian I also knew how to boast with Luther:

"Whether there is much sin with us,
With God there is much more grace",

and with St. Paul: "Where sin is powerful, grace is even more powerful". The awareness of the great grace I had received therefore remained all the more the keynote of the celebration of my jubilee, which completely overwhelmed my heart, so that I felt as if I had to let my mouth overflow with praise and thanksgiving before our entire festive assembly and I had to confess aloud before everyone what God had done for me. How many great proofs of divine grace I could have spoken of if I had been able to! That God brought me to faith at such an early age, so that from the first day I stood in a Christian pulpit I was allowed to preach the blessed name of the Lord Jesus, and later, that despite the weakness of my preaching, God blessed it so richly from the very beginning, then led me to Lutheran knowledge and through this to the Lutheran Free Church, in which God has kept me and my congregation, as far as it has followed me, in the right faith to this day, — that God has furthermore graciously led me out of the bonds of the Union, as well as out of all the errors of modern theology, and brought me to the knowledge of pure Lutheran doctrine, as a result of which I have come into such richly blessed ecclesiastical fellowship with our Saxon Synod in Germany and with the Missouri Synod in America, — that God in such great grace has made our little village of Steeden a city on the mountain, from where the testimony of the divine truth has been allowed to spread far and wide to other places and congregations, and through our Steeden institution and its students even in America so many congregations have been supplied with orthodox Lutheran preachers and teachers, — finally, that God has preserved both our synod and especially our Steeden congregation in great blessing and visible ecclesiastical prosperity to this day, so that in the evening of my life

I may not look back on a church life in my surroundings that is declining, wasting away in weakness and fragmentation, but on one that is flourishing strongly and happily and is firmly founded: All this (not to mention so many other blessings of God in home and family and in the whole preservation and guidance of my earthly life) had to come before my soul on my jubilee day and fill it with praise, glory and thanksgiving for God's inexhaustible mercy. Oh, that I also had to experience how the human heart, as long as we still live in the flesh, is not at all skillful and capable of praising and thanking God in the proper way, but always remains with the old truth: "I want to, but I cannot find the good to do". Only in heaven will we be able to properly recognize the greatness of the divine grace that is bestowed upon us in this life, as well as to praise it worthily in heavenly hymns of praise. Sometimes it is only a small "droplet from the vine of sweet eternity" that comes into our hearts here on earth. I was also able to taste such a droplet on my anniversary day.

It is now over, my jubilee celebration, and as far as human eyes can see, there is only one more important earthly event ahead of me, that is the last farewell from this vale of tears and the journey home to blissful eternity. I prepare myself for this without ceasing; peace and tranquility return more and more to my soul and my thoughts often and gladly dwell on the prospect of the soon coming blessed communion with the Lord Christ and all the blessed above in heaven. But in this, too, as in all things, I must experience the depth of human sinfulness; the heart should be full of fervent longing without ceasing to be at home with the Lord, especially at the age in which I stand, where one has closed one's account with the world,

it should always be with us: "As the deer cries for fresh water, so cries my soul, God, to thee: when shall I come to see the face of God?" But behold, how cold, sluggish, carnally dead and unfeeling is the heart even of an old Christian in this longing to see God, in the desire for redemption from the body of sin and death and for the blessed heavenly life in eternity! It is certainly one of the strongest characteristics of the complete immaturity of human nature to all good and the carnal nature that we carry with us to the grave, that we believe in heaven and yet have so little desire for it. Thus we have no other consolation until our deathbed than that of the poor publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner". Only then will I die blessed when my hour comes. The free grace of God in the blood of Jesus Christ: as in early youth, so also into old age, this is the sole foundation on which I stand and which I prefer to hold up to my soul daily, in Luther's words in the second article of our catechism, my shield and sword, with which I victoriously overcome all fears of death and hell and tread them under my feet, and in which I am able to find the sole certainty of my blessedness. The older I grow, the more deeply I must recognize and experience in myself the fundamental depravity of all human nature, its utter unfitness and impotence for anything and everything good, but — all our sins are paid for: this is certainly true, therefore no one can accuse us before God, whatever name they may be called, but whoever believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith will be counted for righteousness. Therefore I am sure in faith of what the Lord promises: "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death". [John 8:51] This, then, is the last confession and testimony of my faith and my hope, with which I close my little book and which I leave as my last legacy to my children and

friends, for whom I have written these messages from my life. Yes, in this faith and confession I am daily aware of my last hour, in my heart and mouth the words of one of my old favorite hymns:

"Lord God, now open the heavens,
My time is drawing to a close.
I have completed my run,
My soul rejoices greatly,
I've suffered enough, I have tired myself out,
Send me to my eternal rest,
Let go what is on earth,
Would rather be saved.

As you have commanded me, Lord,
Have I with true faith
My dear Savior grasped
In my arm, looking at you.
Hope to endure, will enter fresh
From the valley of tears into the hall of joy,
Let go what is on earth,
Would rather be saved.

Only let me, Lord, like Simeon
Travel to you in peace.
Commit me to Christ, Your Son,
He will keep me well,
Will guide me right, adorn me in heaven
With honor and crown, drive me away,
Let go what is on earth,
Would rather be saved."