

George Stoeckhardt
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George Stoeckhardt

A Biography of a
GermanAmerican Theologian

Written by:
Otto Willkomm

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Translator's Preface

Why translate into English a biography of George Stoeckhardt? What can we twentyfirst century, Englishspeaking Lutherans learn from such a biography? Professor Pieper answers that question for his Germanspeaking generation of the last century in a Quarterly article entitled, "*Zur Bedeutung Stoeckhardts in der lutherischen Kirche Amerikas.*" This article by Professor Pieper has now become well-known in our circles by virtue of its inclusion in *Wauwatosa Theology*. In fact, Pieper's article is a review of Willkomm's biography of Stoeckhardt. It seems only natural therefore that the biography in question should also be accessible in English; otherwise we are appreciating this gem of a review without the book being reviewed.

Secondly, Professor Pieper's review, a classic example of Wauwatosa Theology, focuses primarily on a comparison between Walther and Stoeckhardt in the biography. A good sample and summary of this WaltherStoeckhardt focus is the following statement by Pieper: "Walther produced chiefly the Lutheran doctrine, and then proved it from the Scriptures; Stoeckhardt produced scriptural doctrine and then showed that it was also the doctrine of Luther and the Confessions." When we twentyfirst century, Englishspeaking, WELS Lutherans consider this comparison, we realize that we indeed owe a debt of gratitude to Professor Stoeckhardt. As heirs of the Wauwatosa theology, we see Stoeckhardt's influence on our approach to the Scriptures, to theology in general, to the Lutheran Confessions, to the Lutheran fathers, and to Luther himself. Certainly, our Wauwatosa forefathers imitated Stoeckhardt; Koehler actually sat at Stoeckhardt's feet during his days at Concordia Seminary. Through their faithful imitation and transmission of Stoeckhardt's approach, we enjoy the blessings of Stoeckhardt's work today. Willkomm considered it his obligation to write a memorial tribute to his friend; Pieper felt compelled by this biography to write on the significance of Stoeckhardt for his times. So I feel it is our historical obligation to know as much as we can about this man, to whom we still owe so much. His work has had a significant impact on our Seminary and thus, on our pastors as well to this very day. Third, Pieper's review in 1914 sounds the warning about the danger of *only* following Walther's method without Stoeckhardt's emphasis on exegesis. Seeing the history of the Synodical Conference from hindsight, the following statement by Professor Dau included in the biography certainly makes us uncomfortable. Speaking about Stoeckhardt's work in the synodical publications, Dau writes, "He [Stoeckhardt] always repeated and impressed on the readers *the old position of the Missouri Synod*...But it must already be said in this context that even what he [Stoeckhardt] wrote in his polemical writings always had as its goal to maintain, reaffirm, and strengthen *the position which the Missouri Synod held*" [Emphasis mine]. The reader of chapters nine through eleven contained in this biography will perceive this heavy emphasis on the *Synod*. Professor Dau's words do not breathe the *ad fontes* spirit of Stoeckhardt. Stoeckhardt himself is quoted by Professor Dau, "God's Word still has the place of authority in our church. Whatever then has been proclaimed and written on the basis of the Word must still have power to make an impression and take an effect." Stoeckhardt's emphasis is not on Missouri, not even on Walther, but on the Word. This emphasis on the Word, and the everincreasing influence of the Word on Stoeckhardt, are what characterize the rest of the biography. So from a purely historical perspective on the Missouri Synod, this biography of Stoeckhardt has great value.

Indeed, that very point – the influence of the Word on Stoeckhardt – brings us to the fourth value of having this biography available in English. In his review, Pieper makes the following criticism: "But we hear nothing that quite explains the decisive factor in his life: his theological soundness and Lutheran faithfulness which shone forth so early in him and pushed with iron necessity toward the wellknown crisis in his life. We hear nothing about how he found the correct position among all the unLutheran circumstances that surrounded

him, especially how he emancipated himself theologically from von Hoffmann, his chief teacher in Erlangen, who had such a great influence on his exegetical methods.” [The wellknown crisis is the resignation from the State Church over the church discipline practices, discussed at length in chapter six.] I must admit that I am somewhat surprised that a *Wauwatosa theologian*, would make a statement like this. Stoeckhardt was a *Schriftausleger*, a Scriptural exegete long before the crisis. Stoeckhardt loved the Word, the Catechism, the Lutheran Confessions, and the orthodox fathers, and he diligently studied them during his earliest years in the teaching ministry. Luther was emancipated from the papacy by the Holy Spirit working through the Word, pure and simple. He had no orthodox Lutheran teachers. Why should it be any different for Stoeckhardt, who was emancipated by the Holy Spirit working through that same Word? The Word is the answer to how Stoeckhardt found the correct position. Let that be the fourth benefit we derive from this biography, namely, following the inspiring example of Stoeckhardt in his love for the Word first and foremost, and then also in his love for the Catechism, the Confessions, and the fathers. This love for the Word, and for the pure doctrine of the Lutheran Church which confesses that Word, was the central focus of Stoeckhardt as teacher, tutor, pastor, preacher, confessor of the truth, professor, and most importantly, as a Lutheran Christian.

The sixth benefit we can derive from this Stoeckhardt biography is the repeated references to how Stoeckhardt’s real specialty was *Seelsorge*. It is true that Stoeckhardt’s life makes for a fascinating story. But what makes his life so fascinating, what drove him in everything he did, was his goal of saving souls. From his teaching days at the Luisen Academy, to his ministry to the sick and dying on the battlefield, all the way through to St. Louis, the goal of his work was the salvation of souls. And then, that decisive factor and crisis – the split from the State Church over the matter of church discipline – was driven not by intellectual differences, theological disagreements, or strong personality problems. The decisive factor was *Seelsorge*. With this judgment I find myself in disagreement with Professor Dau. He maintains that the preservation of pure doctrine was the characteristic which “explains the way he handled every circumstance.” It seems to me that Willkomm emphasizes more the *Seelsorge* of Stoeckhardt as the deciding factor. In fact, this *Seelsorge*, carried out not only for the souls of others but also for his own soul, would be the explaining factor behind his work of preserving pure doctrine. So, just as the Holy Spirit grips our hearts as we follow the example of Stoeckhardt in digging into the Word, may he also give us the same *Seelsorger’s* heart, so that the goal of our exegesis, teaching, and preaching is never merely the imparting of intellectual information. Instead, may we follow Stoeckhardt in keeping as our primary goal the salvation of souls.

Finally, this biography is translated with the prayerful hope that more of Stoeckhardt’s work may come to English readers in the future – and not merely in the pitifully abridged, paperback versions we currently have. This biography can give only so much insight into Stoeckhardt. But if someone wants to really get to know Stoeckhardt as preacher, then he needs to be able to read *Gnade um Gnade*, his Gospel postil. If someone wants to know Stoeckhardt as the devout, pious Christian, then he needs to be able to read the *Passionspredigten*, his devotional sermons written for meditation on Christ’s Passion. And if someone wants to know Stoeckhardt as exegete, he needs to be able to read *Römerbrief*. It seems to me that enjoying Stoeckhardt’s biography and enjoying Stoeckhardt’s works go hand in hand. Because the goal of Stoeckhardt’s writing was *Seelsorge*, we twentyfirst century, Englishspeaking heirs of Stoeckhardt certainly would benefit from having his writings available both for the nourishing of our souls, as well as for gaining insights which would benefit the souls of our people. In the end, that’s how we could best honor the life and work of Stoeckhardt – by clinging to the truth to which he clung, and then imparting that truth to the souls which we are privileged to serve.

Thomas R. Ehnert
April 22, 2002

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Please note:

1. Chapters nine, ten, and eleven of Willkomm's biography are based on German translations of English articles which appeared in the *Theological Quarterly* of the Missouri Synod. There is more information in the English articles than was included in the German biography. The references are as follows:

Dau, W.H.T. *Dr. George Stoeckhardt. Theological Quarterly*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, April, 1913, page 6575; July, 1913, page 136153; January, 1914, page 1623.

2. It would be beneficial for the reader of this translation to read in addition the following review of Willkomm's biography:

Pieper, August. *Stoeckhardt's Significance in the Lutheran Church of America. The Wauwatosa Theology, Volume III*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997, p. 419426.

3. For the reminiscing of a professor at Concordia, St. Louis, during the years when Stoeckhardt was active at St. Louis, please refer to the following book, written by Prof. Fuerbringer. He was personally and professionally acquainted with Stoeckhardt, and he writes from firsthand knowledge of Stoeckhardt's years in America. The reference is as follows:

Fuerbringer, Ludwig. *Eighty Eventful Years*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944, p. 101114.

4. The pictures included are taken from the biography, with the exception of the picture of the faculty of Concordia Seminary. This picture is taken from Fuerbringer's book, p. 102.

Foreword

With the following pages, I in part fulfill an obligation to the church, and in part I fulfill a personal obligation. The Holy Scriptures command us, “Remember your teachers, who have spoken the Word of God to you. Contemplate their end, and follow their faith” (Hebrews 13:7). George Stoeckhardt was a teacher of the church who spoke the Word of God to many people. He still speaks through his writings, although he has died. Thus we have an obligation to remember him. Through this memorial tribute, I want to help people to remember him, so that many may follow his faith. But as I do just this, I also realize what a great debt of gratitude I especially owe to this man, with whom I have been united in heartfelt friendship since my first year of studies in Leipzig in May of 1865, although for the most part great distances, and indeed oceans separated us. Nevertheless I remained inconstant spiritual fellowship with him. Because of this, I am in possession of many letters from him, now fallen asleep. These later circumstances have made me more able than others to comment especially on the rather eventful years of the first half of Stoeckhardt’s life. Thus this memorial tribute should chiefly have as its aim, to show how Stoeckhardt achieved that which the American Lutheran Church knew, honored, and now mourns: that Stoeckhardt was a skilled and practical exegete of the Scripture and an uncompromising witness to the thoroughly Scriptural doctrine of the Lutheran Church! I will often touch on our personal relationship with one another, and I must sometimes also speak about myself. This the dear readers will not interpret as something evil on my part. I only do this, so that I might bring God’s grace to light more clearly, and praise it more majestically – which grace was given to him and, in part, through him to me.

So I will first give an overview of the external circumstances of my friend’s life [in chapter two]. This will be followed by a thorough exposition of individual incidents in his life, which will have already have been mentioned [in chapter two]. Then in conclusion I will include several chapters which point out the significance of Stoeckhardt for the Missouri Synod and the Lutheran Church in general. These are taken from the English Quarterly of the Missouri Synod with the permission of their author, Professor Dau, of St. Louis, Missouri. They have been translated for easy reading. I will then conclude with a report of the funeral.

Chapter One Ancestry

The Stoeckhardt family is an old Saxon family of pastors. The family tree printed by Professor Ernst Theodore Stoeckhardt in Weimar points out that a Gerhardt Stoeckhardt became the Pastor at Miltitz by Meissen on 12 October 1656, and that two of his sons likewise became pastors. These two sons are the ancestral fathers of two different branches of the Stoeckhardt family. One branch is from Putzkauer, and the other is from Lauterbach. The ancestral father of the Lauterbach branch, from which George Stoeckhardt is descended, was Gottlieb Stoeckhardt. Gottlieb was a doctor of philosophy, born on 5 April 1664. He was the Pastor at Lauterbach and Boehlau (more correctly, Buehlau) by Stolpen. His son, Johann Gottfried Stoeckhardt, born on 14 August 1696, became his successor in the pastorate at Lauterbach. He held this position from 1735 until 1748. His son, Friederich Gottlieb Stoeckhardt, born on 19 August 1736, became the pastor at Grossthiemig, which at that time belonged to the Elector of Saxony, but now is a parish belonging to Prussia, in the Liebenwerda circuit. There he died on 25 June 1804. Among the sons of this pastor, Christian Gottlieb likewise studied theology. He was born on 18 March 1773, and became the pastor in Roehrsdorf by Meissen, where he died in 1831. This is the fifth Stoeckhardt in descending order, all of which occupied the pastoral office in the Lutheran Church of Saxony. This Christian Gottlieb Stoeckhardt is the grandfather of our George Stoeckhardt.

Although the line was broken through his father, who was not a pastor, nevertheless the influence of his grandfather upon our George Stoeckhardt is so clearly recognizable to those who compare the two, that it is worthwhile for us to elaborate on him [George’s grandfather] a little. He must have been a very original man. His wife was the daughter of his predecessor in the ministry. Her name was Karoline Rudolphi, and he married her in 1805. She bore him six children, of whom two died at an early age. He saw two sons, Karl and Adolf, and two daughters grow up, but the younger daughter died at the age of sixteen years. Karl, like his father, became a theologian; Adolf, the father our Stoeckhardt, became a chemist.

Concerning the raising of the children, Linke writes, “The father educated the children himself. How much he was entirely original in everything he did, even when it comes to the most insignificant and everyday things, can be seen also in the way he instructed the children. Without any actual, strict plan, he occupied the children with history, geography, and science, as soon as their abilities to some degree allowed it. Principally he busied them with the learning of ancient and modern languages. Entirely peculiar to him was his method in educating the children in the realm of the languages. Latin, Greek, Hebrew, English, and Italian were taught without a plan through each other and along side each other. This all happened without rules – no preparations, no looking up words; only reading. The father would translate; the students would have to repeat after him from memory. Every objection raised by neighbors and friends against this method was made in vain. The father was of such strong character, that he would not let himself stray from his way. Thus the children read *Orbis Pictus*, then poetic anthologies of various languages. Then they read Eutropius, Terentius, Cornelius Nepos, Virgil, Ovid, and Horace; in Greek, Xenophon, Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Every day they read a chapter of the Old Testament in Hebrew. In Italian, they read Tassos’ *The Free Jerusalem*. Finally they read the English translation of the Bible. Nevertheless, these exercises weren’t enough. The boys also oftentimes had to accompany their fatherly teacher on his walks, and had to carry out all kinds of assignments in Latin; for instance, reciting orations. When the classes were finished, then the father would see to it that the children would get some exercise in the open air. To this end he would assign them all kinds of chores which had to be done outside. In general, he accustomed them fundamentally to absolute obedience. The tests of selfdenial, which he used to sometimes demand from them, were really not very far removed from severity. Nevertheless, it was his love through which they were blessed for their future lives.”

Later, Linke shares the following example of the way in which the elder Pastor Stoeckhardt raised his children. The elder son, Karl, was sent on St. Michael’s Day, 1823, to the Holy Cross School in Dresden. There he had so distinguished himself through his quiet diligence and exemplary behavior, that he could leave the school by Easter of 1826 with the highest reports of his teachers, in order to enter the University of Leipzig. He hurried home full of joy, to surprise his father with this news. “But how his joyful hope was extinguished! His father not only kept *himself* from every vanity. He also sought to suppress even the smallest impulse toward the same among his children. So his father refused to listen to him and didn’t even consider the report worthy of a glance. He acted in the same way on a later occasion, when his son wanted to present him with his certificate after completing the examination of candidates. This tendency, this very strict method, was excellent, and rested on truly Christian principles. The fruits of this kind of upbringing were excellent. Neither in Karl nor in his siblings did one notice even a hint of any selfsatisfaction. They always minimized the true merit in their worthiness, and in fact often came off rather selfdeprecating.”

Precisely for the sake of that last point quoted, I did not want to merely pass over this remembrance of the grandfather of George Stoeckhardt. For this point has made clear to me the source of George Stoeckhardt’s selfless and modest manner – one of his distinguishing marks. I have scarcely ever met a man so free from vanity, who could be so little insulted, or who could be so little embittered through setbacks he experienced. Also in his writings there is to be found no hint of pride in his learning, which is found so often among the learned. Even in his polemical writings, he never was personally hurt by the words of an opponent. This was, without doubt, a fruit of his father’s stern upbringing by his grandfather. Also George’s great faithfulness and perhaps also his outstanding gift for languages can be traced back to this upbringing.

There is still one more roundabout way, in which his grandfather’s influence effected George. The often-mentioned Karl Stoeckhardt, from whose biography I have benefited, was the private tutor of the Liebster family in Imnitz by Zwenkau before he became his father’s successor. He had a particularly close relationship with both students, which he taught at that time. Karl Stoeckhardt must have been a heartfelt, pious believer, as one can see from his published devotion and Communion book, “The Gates of Heaven.” Even after he was so quickly and unexpectedly taken from his position as private tutor and was called to be the substitute for his aging father, he was still in communication with his students in spiritual matters. Without doubt he had great influence on the development and formation of their religious life. The eldest of these students later became the wife of his brother, the chemist Adolf Stoeckhardt [George’s father]. Pastor Karl Stoeckhardt became his

father's successor after his father died. But this Karl soon followed him in death already on 17 April 1834. Let that be enough said about him here. Then Karl Friederich Schneider became the pastor at Roehrsdorf, who married George's sister, Marianne Stoeckhardt, in 1835.

Stoeckhardt family home in Tharandt
(George is on the far right at the bottom of the picture)

Chapter Two
Overview of His Life

Karl Georg Stoeckhardt [our George Stoeckhardt] was born in Chemnitz on 17 February 1842. His father, Julius Adolf Stoeckhardt, as mentioned in the first chapter, was the younger son of the original pastor at Roehrsdorf. He was a professor at the royal vocational school at Chemnitz. His mother was Rosalie Liebster, a student of Karl Stoeckhardt, who by this time had passed away. In 1847, Professor Julius Stoeckhardt was employed at the Royal Forest Academy in Tharandt by Dresden. In these excellent cities, full of opportunity, George Stoeckhardt spent his youth. From these cities, regular communication took place with their relatives in the parsonage at Roehrsdorf. Without doubt, it was here at the Forest Academy that a sense for natural beauty and a love of traveling was awakened in him.

He attended the city school. In addition, a private tutor prepared him for his enrollment at the Gymnasium. George had three sisters, the youngest of which was married to Pastor C.C. Schmidt in St. Louis, and she has outlived him. George was the only son of his parents. In 1857, he went to the prince's school at St. Afra in Meissen, where he completed his studies in the upper classes within five years. Considering with what zeal he later devoted himself to his studies, one can conclude that he must have been a diligent student. He must have also possessed great gifts of understanding, and also used these gifts in his studies.

At Easter 1862, after passing an examination, he entered the University of Erlangen. There he joined a Christian student fraternity, the "Wingolf." Through this fraternity, he formed friendships which would last long after his university years; friends such as Otto Kahl, the Lutheran missionary who died in 1874 in Trichinipoli, East India; Professor Friederich Zucker of Fort Wayne, Indiana; Pastor Menegoz, the Pastor at Paris, and others. In the autumn of 1863, he transferred to the Leipzig University of his Saxon fatherland, where he studied five semesters. There he, along with other likeminded students who had heard of the Wingolf from other universities, founded their own Wingolf in the summer of 1865. He particularly saw to it that a clear confession of Christ, the Son of God, was adopted in the statutes of the Leipzig branch. (Later he very much regretted that this confession had been left out in deference to modern theology.) In the same summer, God wonderfully

brought him and me together. We met in a meeting of the Wingolf fraternity. On our way home, we realized that we lived in the same dormitory. I was still only seventeen and a half years old, had just entered the university entirely inexperienced, and didn't know anyone. Thus Stoeckhardt became for me a leader to true Christianity and in the study of theology. Upon the conclusion of the winter semester, 1865/1866, Stoeckhardt took his candidate's examination.

Then after Easter he went to Berlin for a few weeks, in order to listen to the lectures of the professors there. He wrote me that they reminded him more of the professors at Erlangen, and that they went into more depth than the Leipzig professors did at that time. He especially praised Steinmeyer, Hengstenberg, Dorner, and the historian Ranke as, "powerful speakers – the likes of which are unheard of in Leipzig." By this time, spring of 1866, the threat of war loomed larger and larger, so he cut short his stay in Berlin. At Pentecost, he traveled back to Tharandt and applied for a teaching position in Leipzig. The negotiations over this teaching position dragged out for a long time, and were finally broken off entirely. Since war broke out between Prussia and Austria, during which even Saxony fell into enemy hands, and since his undertaking of the teaching position had been forestalled, he went with his mother to the seaside towns in the north. In September, after his return trip, he became violently ill with a fever. He nearly died from a medicine that was too strong, which the doctor had prescribed for him. He recovered rather quickly again when the medicine finally had an effect and broke the actual sickness.

In October he traveled to Neuendettelsau in Bavaria, in order to become acquainted with Pastor Loehe, his congregation, and his institutions. From there he wrote enthusiastically about Loehe's remarkable personality. It was the twentyfifth anniversary celebration of the Neuendettelsau Mission, and for the first time he heard about the great developments in the Lutheran Church of North America. He wrote about this, "It was unimaginable to me, that I had heard nothing about such a great and important work until then. One hears that everything is possible in America, only certain things are not. It is noteworthy that in the ecclesiastical field, the greatest works happen in secret, and find no support in the normal daily news." As it was already at that time, so it still is today.

In November, Stoeckhardt went to Erlangen, in order to listen again to the professors there. He then traveled to Neuendettelsau for a short visit at Christmas, before returning to Tharandt. There he found employment as a teacher at the Luisen Academy, which was supported by the Deaconess House of Dresden. Here he was a religion instructor for daughters of wellto do families. His students were primarily made up of boarders, although he also had a number of day students. He also taught other subjects, and was in charge of the entire curriculum. He carried out his work with great zeal and devoted faithfulness until Easter, 1870. Thereupon he concluded a very richly blessed vocation.

During the summer break of 1870, Stoeckhardt availed himself of the opportunity to visit the University of Marburg for a number of weeks, in order to become acquainted with Vilmar. Concerning Vilmar, he writes in a letter dated 1 August 1867, "Because of him, I do not regret that I am once again sitting in a college desk. He is a complete man, nothing less than a fanatic [*Fanatiker*]! But he is a thorough theologian, especially in Scriptural theology. His exegesis is excellent. Every day I listen to him for three classes: Moral Theology, that is, Ethics, in which he goes into much more depth than Luthardt, particularly in regard to human sin. Then I also listen to his lectures on Pastoral Theology and Dogmatics. Today he preached a gripping Mission Sermon concerning Christian hope, during which the tears streamed from his eyes."

In May of 1868 he took his second examination before the Consistory in Dresden. In the fall of this same year the Deaconess House decided to move the Luisen Academy to the Oberloetznitz. On account of this, he regarded his position there as a burden. But he promised that he would still carry out his work until the decision was implemented. He did this with all faithfulness until Easter, 1870. But this was a difficult time for him, because the time was drawing near for him to make a decision about the selection of his vocation. This caused him a great deal of trouble. He was oftentimes painfully conscientiousness. He always and only wanted to uprightly follow God's ways, but it often was difficult for him to recognize which way was God's way. Mission Director Hardeland had approached him about entering the Mission in East India. But his parents had expressed themselves as being so opposed to this, that he let such thoughts fall by the wayside. These thoughts

had never really taken root in him anyway. His inclination for more thoroughgoing theological studies and his gifts for teaching drew him to the university life.

He had come into contact with the Breslau Synod through the friendship of his parents with Besser, a member of their Consistory, as well as through personal acquaintances from the Breslau Synod who were members of the Wingolf. So the Breslau Synod offered him a position in which he would come to Breslau and serve their students as a tutor at their Seminary, which was being founded. At the same time, he would be able to help out with the preaching. Therefore he traveled in May of 1870 to Breslau, and he wrote to me about the impression the place made on him: "The Breslau life, as well as the theologians, pastors, students, *Gymnasium* students, and congregational members here have indeed made an overall good impression on me. It was an attractive and tempting situation. I would have to hold tutoring sessions, as many as and whichever I wanted. The selection of practical undertakings would be left in my hands. But already here at the Luisen Academy, my alltoofree position has been a bit risky."

So he decided that he would apply for the tutor position at the University of Erlangen, for which he had been approached. Of this he writes, "I considered the wellordered, restrained position at Erlangen to be more appropriate to me, especially since I was more familiar with the historical affinities and the way of life in Erlangen, than with that of Breslau." In order to have the tutor position conferred on him, he had to take a faculty examination. He needed more time to prepare for this, so he took a position offered to him by his university friend, Pastor Menezog, as an assistant preacher. During this period of service, he would chiefly have sufficient time to prepare for the faculty examination – that is, if everything would go as planned.

But here the saying proved itself true, "how God's ways are curved and yet go straight for those whom he calls his children." In the most profound peace, Stoeckhardt traveled to Paris eight days after Pentecost, in the beginning of June. A few weeks later, the FrancoPrussian War broke out. This would make the spiritual activity of a German, moreover of a born Saxon, entirely impossible in Paris. Indeed Stoeckhardt was twice arrested as a spy. But when he could prove that he was an entirely harmless German, Stoeckhardt obtained a permit issued by Governor Trochu, so that he could carry out his ministry in Paris until September 4. On the Sunday after the Battle of Sedan, he came out of the quiet of his church on the *rue des Billetes*, where he had held the divine service. All of Paris was in an uproar: Emperor Napoleon had been captured by the Germans! He had been deposed, and the Republic was proclaimed! The antiGerman sentiments, inspired by the mobilization of the German armies, made it impossible for a German to remain in Paris. So Stoeckhardt had to leave the city by the quickest route.

He traveled to Belgium. He stopped in the city of Bouillon, the ancestral city of Gottfried von Bouillon. Since this city was located very close to Sedan, he started out for the battlefield. Thousands of his wounded countrymen were in desperate need of bodily and spiritual care. There God preserved him during this time of need, and he worked three months as a military preacher. He had supposed that he would be able to soon enter Paris again with the victorious German army. But when the siege of Paris dragged out for a long time, and when his service on the battlefield of Sedan was not longer needed, he traveled back to Tharandt, in order to take up again his interrupted preparation for the faculty examination. He wrote, "After the fastpaced way of life in Paris and the experience of the battlefield, to sit quietly behind a desk did not seem right." But he could add, "Still I feel that the quiet atmosphere is more agreeable to my goal for Erlangen, than if I would have had to find spare time for studies in Paris."

In January he received the theme for the written work of the faculty examination: Isaiah 8:209:6. (A student at St. Louis wrote me that on the day before his death, 8 January 1913, Stoeckhardt held his last lecture on Isaiah 9!) On 13 May 1871 he could relate to me, that the work had been accepted. On 10 June, he wrote that he had also completed the oral examination, and that he had not only been recommended to the Bavarian Ministry of Religious Affairs [*Kultusministerium*] for the position of tutor in the Old Testament, but also in the New Testament. This happened without any special written work, but only after an oral examination! He began his public activity as tutor and at the same time as religion instructor in the upper classes in the *Gymnasium*, beginning in the winter semester of 1871. He held this office until the fall of 1873. He felt so much at ease with this twofold activity, that he declined an entirely private offer made through Professor von Zezschwitz that he

should be nominated as the successor of Pastor Loehe. In his mind, he felt dutybound to serve those whom he had been called to serve at the university and school. He did not have any inclination for something greater.

At this time he was working on a dissertation concerning the “Son of Man,” in order that he might attain the title of Licentiate of Theology, and be able to become an assistant lecturer at the university. This work however was not received by the faculty at Erlangen. The theological faculty of Leipzig University, to whom he later presented it, finally granted him the title of Licentiate of Theology, on the basis of this dissertation. The reason why the faculty at Erlangen did not receive this work, as far as I recall, was this: that it contained too much that was devotional, and not enough that was strongly scientific. This shows that Stoeckhardt neither considered nor taught theology as a “science” in the modern sense of the term. Instead, theology to him was always a *habitus practicus*, a θεόδοτος, a practical, Godgiven matter. To him, theology should serve this purpose: the salvation of men. This apparent failure in Erlangen was actually the means in God’s hand, by which God brought him to that place, where his gifts would become beneficial to a much greater circle, namely, the theological faculty of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.

Next he traveled home to his Saxon fatherland. There he was married on 7 October 1873 to Miss Anna Koenig, a relative of the wellknown Pastor Siedel in Tharandt. Right after that, he entered the office of deacon in Planitz by Zwickau, being installed on 13 October 1873. A contributing factor to this call was that a man such as Stoeckhardt would be especially suited to stem the tide of the Free Church congregation there. Since 1871, St. John’s Congregation existed in Planitz, which grew by leaps and bounds under the gifted and capable leadership of Pastor Ruhland. Stoeckhardt tackled his work here with all earnestness and zeal. He diligently made home visits. Part of his official work was to preach sermons. Listeners from neighboring towns came to hear him (but this was not really pleasing to him). He led Bible classes in private homes. He established a young peoples’ society and a men’s society. His specialty, however, was *Seelsorge*. As much as possible, he tried to maintain a sense of decorum.

Despite all this, he did not neglect diligent theological study. Soon he was urged to especially study more thoroughly the doctrine of church and ministry. The occasion for this was that the civil authorities abolished compulsory marriage and baptism, a practice which had existed up to that time. It was immediately clear to Stoeckhardt that in place of civil compulsion, the church would now have to take the lead in training the people. And so he banded together with likeminded pastors and congregation members in petitioning the Consistory, asking that the right be extended to the pastors to refuse the Lord’s Supper to all those who openly despised church marriage and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Through this controversy, he came into contact with Pastor Ruhland, against whom he had previously worked. He diligently studied the appropriate doctrines and also became familiar with the literature of the Missouri Synod. All the petitions were denied by the Consistory. Because of the way the Consistory handled the matter, he came to the conviction that the Consistory “had an entirely, fundamentally different understanding of sin and repentance, and along with that a different understanding of faith and justification, than do the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Indeed, the Consistory actually no longer stands on the chief article of the Lutheran faith.” On 6 June 1876, Paul Gerhardt’s Day, he declared himself free from the Consistory. Right away they suspended him from his office. On 15 June he replied with the clarification that he *resigned* from his office.

Right away he joined St. John’s Congregation, for he had become more and more convinced that they held to the correct doctrinal stance. Eighteen families followed him, and he was called to be the second pastor at this congregation. He had already printed a paper on the circumstances and future of the Saxon State Church as well as several other pamphlets. In cooperation with Pastor Ruhland and the publisher Johann Herrmann, he established the periodical, “The Evangelical Free Church.” He instructed a number of boys in the *Gymnasium*, teaching the subjects of the lower classes. The publication of the periodical not only brought him into disfavor among those who had remained in the State Church, but also gave the Consistory evidence with which to prosecute him under the law.

Before this could go to judicial proceedings, he received a valid call to be the successor of the sainted Pastor Brohm at the Holy Cross Church in St. Louis, Missouri. He accepted this call immediately, without waiting for the judicial proceedings. He considered it more important to serve the church through the accepting

of this call, than to let himself be forced into inactivity for months by those hostile to his witness. The judicial proceedings took place on 12 May 1879 in his absence, and it ended with his being sentenced to eight months in prison. His fellowaccused, the publisher Johann Herrmann, received a sentence of three months. Later, this was graciously reduced to a fine. The entire matter was never pursued, so that in 1891, and once again in 1909, Stoeckhardt could visit his old Fatherland unhindered.

He was installed into the pastoral office at the Holy Cross Church in St. Louis on 13 October 1878, the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity. Along with his pastoral duties, he was also given the assignment of holding exegetical lectures for the students at Concordia Seminary. Nine years later the full professorship of Old and New Testament Exegesis was conferred upon him at the same Seminary. He held this position until he was called to his eternal home on 9 January 1913. He carried out his work with untiring diligence, aside from a necessary break on account of a serious illness. The title of Doctor of Theology was awarded to him in 1903 by the faculty of the Norwegian Synod in North America.

His first wife, who was of one spirit with him and had borne both joy and suffering with him for twenty-five years, died on 27 September 1898. God did not grant him children of his own, but he adopted two boys and raised them. One is a businessman in St. Louis, the other is a pastor at Concordia, Missouri. In the fall of 1901 Stoeckhardt was married for a second to Miss Mary Kohne of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He spent twelve happy years with her. Next to the grace of God, we owe her a debt of gratitude. For thanks to her faithful and attentive care, Stoeckhardt was able to recover from a painful nerve disorder, which forced him into inactivity from the summer of 1900 into 1901. With his health renewed, he was able to have his most important works printed: the commentaries on Romans, Ephesians, and First Peter. His work, which was such a rich blessing to the church, and this blessed and happy marriage were suddenly and unexpectedly brought to an end with Stoeckhardt's entrance into his heavenly home on 9 January 1913. While his wife was visiting relatives, he was found dead, half clothed in the bathroom, by his elder son. He had perhaps taken a bath that was too hot. All attempts at reviving him were undertaken to no avail. A stroke had ended his life.

Chapter Three

Docendo discimus

How Stoeckhardt Always Learned More and More by Teaching

Stoeckhardt had special joy in his teaching activity at the Luisen Academy and later in Erlangen. Indeed, teaching students was more consistent with his gifts and inclinations; but he was even more zealous about comprehending the topics assigned to him. At the beginning of this work on 12 January 1867, he wrote to me: "In the few hours in which I have been here, I have already noticed that there is nothing easy about giving a simple and clear instruction in the truths of the Catechism. This work demands great and profound study, and the skills demanded are just as deep as those which one needs for theology. In fact, it comes much easier to me to present something dogmatic and exegetical to theological students in a systematic method, than it is for me to present the same truths to children in a childlike form. And so it happens to me again and again, for instance, that the instruction of the older girls in the first class is easier than the Catechism class, which I have to give to the third class. But I believe that it is a very good school. In fact, the theological schools forget something with all their technical terms; and adults could learn something if they would become more like children again in their speech and thoughts."

Now at the same time Stoeckhardt was far removed from the movement to become shallower in regard to education, according to the modern method. He would not empty the instruction of its actual content, in order to make it more childlike. The following introduction to a letter written on 29 November 1867, proves that he was opposed to this: "After a halfyear of getting used to the flow of things in the school, my thoughts are turning to how to teach girls; what is to be taught; what is to be omitted; how might the work load be made somewhat lighter – all in the interest of the children. Because of this, preparation still demands more and more of my free time, but this produces ever more interest. L. agrees with me (L. was a likeminded theologian, who was employed with him). Before anything else, the excellence of our Small Catechism is proven to us over and

over again, and the rich gain from studying the Catechism produces just as much material for practical application during instruction, as it does for one's own theological knowledge. For with that a need becomes perceptible: that people have very little love for exegesis and knowledge of the Bible. Our Lutheran Catechism is thoroughly biblical; that is, it doesn't only conform to Scripture. It is full of a biblical perspective. Biblical pictures, parables, and ways of speaking are all woven together. And when every theologian has made it through the Catechism once in Catechism class, I can recommend nothing to him as being more important, than that he do as much exegesis as possible, especially in the Old Testament. Such dogmatical study, such as what B. likes (B. was one of our classmates who just loved all kinds of dogmatic formulations), is in fashion. But this for a Lutheran is actually the archheresy. If someone first sticks his nose into the old dogmaticians, such as Gerhard, then he also has to take his Bible in hand, for only in this way are the old dogmaticians understandable. Plus, the old dogmaticians contain only exegesis, so he also has to put the modern garbage aside." One can already see here the growing Lutheran exegete, who brings no human thoughts into the Scripture, but only lets himself be led by the thoughts of God, as they are revealed in the very words of Scripture.

Thus Stoeckhardt was a very diligent reader of the Bible. Indeed he read most of the Bible in the original text for his own edification. He also recommended this to me. And so we read the Bible in fellowship together through all the years, although we did not live together. We kept in step with the reading and would talk about the portions we had read in our letters to each other. Still I imagine that Stoeckhardt was more faithful and more conscientious in this than I was. In many of his letters he draws connections to the daily lectionary, from which we drew our schedule. Once, on 14 October 1871, he writes the following from Erlangen. I am making this public for all young – and no less for us old – theologians for selfexamination and for stimulus: "Whatever one receives from God through prayer and meditation on His Word is indeed meant to be passed on, if not always from hand to mouth. If one also spends a little time gathering more treasure for himself, later he can give that treasure to others so much better. I have found again and again, that daily time spent in quiet prayer, together with the daily reading of a chapter – or as is more seemly for a theologian, chapters – from both the Old and New Testament – that time spent never diminishes the time he has for work. Rather, the degree to which I regularly adhere to the first, to that degree does the second get accomplished more quickly." It may be that in this, Stoeckhardt appeared to those who knew him as a bit legalistic or pedantic. To him this orderliness in the reading of Scripture was not an external law. It was an inner compulsion. Certainly this orderly contentment caused him no harm. Indeed many a theologian would benefit from both making it a rule for himself, and the following this rule to study Scripture in a prayerful way in his study. This is not detrimental to his work in his calling. As the old saying goes, "Going to church delays nothing!"

From the excerpts about dogmatics which I shared above, no one should draw the conclusion that Stoeckhardt was an indifferent unionist. That has already been shown from the quotation which included his judgment on how Luther's Small Catechism is in conformity with the Scriptures. I spent his first vacation from school in the Luisen Academy, Easter 1867, with him as a guest in the home of his parents. During that vacation we studied some dogmatics together. Later he wrote to me the following about the study of dogmatics: "I find that the dogmatic material is impressed much clearer, when one studies from time to time one single dogma, for instance that of the Lord's Supper. It is good to study this thoroughly for oneself – first according to its Scriptural basis, as we have done it with Hofmann. Then – before one goes through it chronologically and in a dogmatically-historical way, beginning with ancient times, according to the old dogmatician Schmidt – he should study it in connection with our confessional writings. Especially the article on the Lord's Supper in the Formula of Concord is very sharp, exact, and in depth. When the dogma has been clearly considered from every aspect according to the Scriptures and through our Lutheran doctrine, then I find that the other dogmatically-historical material is much easier to figure out."

One thing certainly always sticks out in all Stoeckhardt's dogmatic studies and teaching. No one can ever accuse him of being a mere "scientific" theologian. Theology was no mere theory to him, but he always sought after the practical application. He wrote about this in a letter from Erlangen, in which he described his religious instruction at the *Gymnasium*. He expresses it this way: "In the first part I began with the doctrine of

faith, and now I am beginning the article concerning God. When I was ready with the actual doctrinal material according to the scope given by Thomasius in the dogmatics book, I had the impression that the chief matter would now first be to answer the question, ‘What good is this?’ What can I take from the fact that God is spirit and love, that he thinks, wills, and loves as a living, personal God – in a much more perfect way than we? Therefore I want to seek to develop the thought in the next class, on the basis of Psalm 139, that man first begins to know and understand God when he grasps God as David did. The students certainly need to thoroughly grasp, on the basis of Psalm 73 and John 3:16, that one first grasps God as love when one feels surrounded by his blessings and the demonstrations of his love, when his heart notices and receives the Giver through His gifts.”

Soon thereafter he wrote about the exegetical lectures with the students, which he had to hold in Latin: “I already have true joy as I deal with the students in this way, and the Latin does not hinder it too much. I intentionally use German however when I am dealing with the dogmaticalpractical excursus, which I add after every expounded paragraph. It may be against the tradition of the university to deal with lecturing in this way. But I am not bothered by that. Even in the exposition of the Holy Scriptures I maintain the same point of view, so that the students surrender themselves entirely to the Holy Scriptures, when they read the Scriptures for edification. After all, the students are also human.”

So all his studies and work, all his learning and teaching, were directed to this one point: to serve people for salvation. This was his inner mission, urging him wherever he was. For instance, in Tharandt he took care of a youth society. In Erlangen he visited poor families. He influenced his students at the Luisen academy to share their blessings with the poor for their whole life. He could not pass by an opportunity to share God’s Word with friends and relatives. He had to say something to them about the one thing needful. Therefore his speech was seasoned with salt at all times, although he had a somewhat low-spirited manner. He could be very lighthearted, but I never heard him speak carelessly.

Tharandt

Chapter Four A Family Man and a Faithful Friend

Concerning Stoeckhardt’s own home and family life, I can say little from personal experience. I traveled there only in the years 1876 through 1878, and at this time his wife was suffering a great deal; she was often gravely ill. So it was as if a cloud hung over their home. The management of the household, ever expanding through boarders, was placed in other hands. Nevertheless every guest was lovingly received, and in 1877 an entire multitude of synodical guests were there. But everyone noticed that the cross was borne in willing submission under God’s hand, and indeed with happy Christian faith. Later, in the fall of 1889, I was a guest in his home in St. Louis for many weeks. The *Frau Professor* had fully recovered soon after their crossing over to America, and at that time she was still in very robust health. So she was able to welcome me in a very friendly manner as an old friend. Furthermore, Stoeckhardt, who was always a diligent worker and made the most of every minute, was very much exacting even in the household. He did not allow his house and work to be in disorder.

I know more about the parental home of Stoeckhardt, since I was often a guest there during my years as a student and candidate. The first time I visited there I breathed the air of a Christian home through and through, and I felt very much at home. The city councilman – Stoeckhardt’s father held this position during his professorship at Tharandt – was a very friendly gentleman. At times he gave us young people so many nuts to

crack, so to speak, that we did not know whether he really meant his odd questions or whether they were jokes. The son inherited this quality from him, for as his students know, he could have been bluffing them sometimes with the way he asked a question. Father and son both had a sharp eye for the comical, but they were always far removed from loveless mockery.

The heart and center of the home was his mother; a pure, gentle woman. In her death notice, her husband gave this testimony about her, that for her entire life, she lived with her Lord in a heartfelt bond. One always had the impression of her that she walked before the Lord, and this influence just flowed from her. All who came into contact with her could not avoid this impression. I do not believe that anyone ever dared to speak an inconsiderate word in her presence. Yet she was friendly towards everyone, and far removed from any melancholy spirit. Her mother, Frau Liebster, was also a very friendly and pious Christian woman. I certainly do not err in the assumption that both women were just like the mother and grandmother of Timothy (2 Tm 1:5). They impressed upon our George Stoeckhardt a pure faith, which lived in him, and which showed itself in a very upright, pious, pure character. Thus he also clung to them with special love, although he was also a loving and obedient son toward his father at all times.

When he left the State Church, he acted according to the words, "Whoever loves father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." At that time his mother was already in her grave for four years, for she went to her heavenly home on 18 March 1872, at the age of fiftyfour years. But his father was a well-known man in favor of the State Church. In fact he was a member of the synod in the State Church. Despite George's separation from the State Church, his relationship with his father remained on friendly terms. As a matter of fact, Pastor Ruhland was even allowed to visit George at his father's home.

George Stoeckhardt also had three sisters, and he was very close to them in brotherly love. The eldest, Johanna, was married to the man who had earlier served as George's private tutor, the Hanoverian Pastor Peters. George often visited them in their new home in the north of Germany, and their children later visited him in St. Louis. The second sister, Martha, was married to a Bavarian lawyer named Jordan. He had been a friend of her brother's from his student days. Their very blessed marriage was however of short duration, for the young wife died in her first childbirth. This was a very difficult trial for the entire family, for they were all particularly fond of this daughter and sister. The youngest sister was Marianne. She was still a student in the Luisen Academy during those years when I visited the family. After the death of her father, she followed her brother to America.

Along with this description of the family of Councilman Stoeckhardt, I must also mention the close relationship of the Stoeckhardt home with the parsonage of Tharandt at that time. The wellknown Pastor Siedel, from whose biography I have taken the picture of Tharandt in this book, was a faithful friend of the family. Since this was the family of a councilman, they were regularly in church. Siedel's sermons made a powerful impression, and his exhortations to practice Communion piety led people to hope that he would be a leader in the fight against the unbelief and immorality so rampant at that time. It was the greatest disappointment Stoeckhardt ever experienced, when Siedel refused this.

Just as Stoeckhardt was bound with all the members of his family in heartfelt love, so also was he a very faithful friend. Most of his friends were members of the Wingolf fraternity. This was especially true of those who were members of the Wingolf fraternity at Leipzig, which Stoeckhardt had helped found. In this fraternity, a true bond of Christian friendship existed. Indeed there were many different opinions about how this fraternity should be run. Now that we are older we think much differently than we did at that time. But one thing must be said: that for us, the Wingolf fraternity was a pure source of youthful joy, a defense against all kinds of temptations, and a school of life.

Now since my little book is purposefully going to fall into the hands of many who are not at all familiar with German student life, I will recount now what is meant by the Wingolf, so that all may understand it. There exists among the students of German universities a multitude of fraternities, which students join. The members of these fraternities distinguish themselves externally from each other by wearing hats in the colors of their fraternity, and by wearing a sash across their chest, which would be the same color. Internally, they are closely bound together. Many are subjected to rules, strictly enforced. The fraternities are normally led by three speakers, and they carry out their business at meetings. At these meetings, only the *Burschen* (those who have

been students for three semesters) have a seat and a voice. Then there are the *Füxen*, (those who are students in the first two semesters) who are under the leadership of the *Füxmajors*. The *Füxen* must be initiated into the customs of the fraternity, from which others are excluded. The social gatherings generally take place at a tavern [*Kneipe*], which they rent as their meeting room. Here they customarily hold two *Kneipe* evenings each week.

On the festival days of the fraternity, such as their founding day; on the common festival days of the university, such as the changing of the rector; and on the holidays of the Fatherland, these fraternities would make public appearances all decked out. This means that their speaker, accompanied by their standardbearer and cadets, would all appear in beige, lacetrimmed coats, white pants, high top boots, and velvet berets with feathers in the colors of the fraternity. In their hands covered with white leather gloves, they would carry the weapon of students, the rapier. Although the student fraternities, at least at the larger universities, are strongly in the minority, at that time they firmly took into their own hands the business of representing the student body exclusively, at least formally. Most of these fraternities, whose finer distinguishing marks we cannot deal with here, are “fighting” fraternities. That means that they hold duels. This practice was firmly rooted among the student body (as opposed to the officials of the schools).

From the 1770s on, organizations arose at the German universities which were directed more toward the Christian students. From these organizations, the Christian fraternities arose over time, which fought to pervade this entrenched, external form student life with a Christian spirit. They insisted that each of their members confess that Christ is the Son of God. Furthermore, they demanded of their members a strictly moral life, moderation in drinking, and diligence in studies. They rejected the duel fundamentally. They therefore considered members of the “fighting” fraternities as cowards. In certain respects, it took more courage to wear the black, white, and gold colors, than it took to duel! Most of these Christian fraternities took the name, “Wingolf,” and they bound themselves to a common covenant. Every two years, all the branches of Wingolf would meet together during Pentecost Week in Eisenach. Other Christian fraternities had a somewhat less restricting tendency, but they also rejected the duel. The oldest of these is the *Uttenruthia*, founded in 1830 at Erlangen, from which the Wingolf at Erlangen separated in 1851. The oldest Wingolf is that of Bonn, which began in 1841. They were the first to take the name “Wingolf,” which means “Bond of Friendship.” Soon after, the Wingolf at Halle and Berlin were begun. Now the Wingolf fraternity exists in almost all German universities, and even in many vocational schools.

Stoeckhardt always placed high value on the external form of the life of the student fraternity, but he neither overestimated nor underestimated it. He wholeheartedly fought against the undeniable danger of alienating people. It was perhaps precisely this danger which concerned him most. He was concerned that people who had not experienced the way of life in the fraternity, who did not value the fraternity as he did, would hear a little something about it and jump to wrong conclusions about it. In the summer of 1866, I was preoccupied with the thought of leaving the fraternity. This happened because I had so entirely become involved with life in the fraternity, and it was costing me so much, that it became too much for me. It got to the point that I was sometimes neglecting my studies. So I wrote to Stoeckhardt about this. He advised me against leaving the fraternity, but at the same time he stressed that the fraternity should not impose dues or keep its members from their studies. At the same time he wrote the following:

“I don’t actually know what kind of justification should be further given for our Wingolf, than the one which is already so often given: Whoever wants to undertake his studies with blessing, needs fellowship; and both study and fellowship need Christianity and Christ, through whom everything happens. Now this justification is a foregone and natural conclusion (natural for those, who know something about Christianity), and the Wingolf desires nothing more than to unite these three inseparable things. Thank God we can testify before God with a good conscience, that the Wingolf has essentially fulfilled these assignments. Because this principle of the Wingolf is really too simple and selfunderstood, some people are always setting this selfunderstood principle aside. Some people don’t pay attention to it at all if they aren’t pleased with something in the Wingolf, or if they have some objection to the life and operation of the fraternity. It was during those three semesters at Leipzig, in which I did not have the Wingolf, when it first became obvious to me the great

value of that simple, selfunderstood truth. It took being outside of the fraternity in order to understand its value. Now you know that I am certainly no idealist, and you also know that I hate that phrase about the Wingolf, ‘Who knows what kind of bulwark for the Church against unbelief the Wingolf will be, etc. etc.’ No matter how much one is disillusioned by the fraternity if one tries to make it into some kind of saving institution, nevertheless, it is no exaggeration or mere fantasy that the Wingolf is a real blessing. Because it is based on Christ and bears his name among the students, it must be a blessing, and many must be blessed by it. It also gives to each one the opportunity to take some blessing from it according to their need – a blessing for which they certainly wish, and one which they certainly need.”

In connection with Stoeckhardt’s measured words of praise about the Wingolf, I too, the author of this book, must mention, that the Wingolf was a great blessing to me personally. The fraternity gave me a firm support in the wide sea of university life, which was fully new to me. At the same time, it gave me just as much definite direction in my personal life as it did in my studies. It also met my great need for fellowship. The most important thing the Wingolf gave me, as far as I am concerned, was Stoeckhardt. He was my elder student [*Leibbursch*]. He especially understood how best to take younger students under his wing and lead them. Let me just say in general, that the institution of elder students [*Leibburschen*] was something entirely excellent, at least as it was used among us at that time. It was the exact opposite of what happens at many *Gymnasien* (especially at boarding schools), and at many American colleges, where the younger students are teased, illtreated, and tyrannized. Among us the institution existed as the nearest thing to an ideal friendship between the *Burschen* and the *Leibfüxen*. In fact, this close friendship for some lasts their whole life, or is revived again after a longdistance separation or after a certain period of time lapses. This is the kind of friendship I was able to experience.

As for the influence of this kind of fraternity on one’s later life and work, I would like to share two portions from Stoeckhardt’s letters. In the letter quoted above from 15 July 1866, he also wrote, “Later in life, it apparently becomes natural – and for a Christian, selfunderstood – that Christianity should be the basis and norm for every special relationship in life, and it should be so also for the congregational life especially. It often happens in our times that Christianity is an isolated thing, not a daily feature.” No doubt Stoeckhardt would add, that Christianity remains a very private matter among too many in our time. They don’t bring it up in conversations with others. Too few people make known in social life and in business, that they are Christians. Those who actually do are the rare exception. “It is now a common complaint, that precisely this spirit of community, this cooperation of Christian abilities and personalities, is generally missing. I recently read from Zezschwitz a very gripping description of these isolated, lonely adults of our time. Now I have a certain feeling that later in the ministry, one especially misses the unified spirit of cooperation with those who are of one spirit and mind. For this reason I believe that one cannot value highly enough, and cannot maintain zealously enough, the friendships formed in earlier times. He needs this support for himself as he carries out his work in the congregation. And it is partly for this reason that the student fraternities exist. The Wingolf cultivates the small measure of Christian power and truth which it possesses into its fellowship, and through the fellowship of its members. This is what gives the Wingolf a superiority over other such fraternities, and all its members share in this fellowship for the rest of their lives. For this, I owe a continuous debt of gratitude.” Of course, later on in the congregations and conferences of our Free Church, Stoeckhardt found that same fellowship again, which he so loved about the Wingolf. He was always so pleased to nurture fellowship, especially when it could be fully nurtured in one mind and spirit.

In a later letter dated 12 February 1867, he writes in connection with his overseeing of the regular school work, which he was doing at that time, “The only things missing are true, golden, academic freedom, and the excitement of the Wingolf. The blessings one enjoys in his relationships during his student days are unappreciated blessings. Although those days by their very nature are short and fleeting, nevertheless, the freedom and relationships students enjoy make a lifelong impression on each and every one who experiences them, and also on his work. If it wouldn’t give the appearance of rationalism, which talks about ‘The benefit of the good, the benefits of virtue, the benefits of Christianity,’ and so forth, I could write a book about the benefits

of the Wingolf. Just like someone could just rattle off his work without thinking during his college and student years, so also one could just rattle off his work without thinking in his vocation. This is especially true in the field of education. I am indebted to the Wingolf, because it bears in itself an instinctive reactionary spirit against such a rattlingoff mentality in spiritual things. It is actually selfunderstood, that a love for children and a fresh, lively approach to lecturing should be qualities of a teacher, but it seems to me that both these qualities do not come naturally in practice. I feel that this requires daily work and effort, and is indeed an art, which one must learn. It is just like how the principles of our Wingolf are supposed to be selfunderstood – in theory these principles are acknowledged by all, but in practice they are by no means naturally made a reality. The moral of it is this: No ideals need to be set up, because everyone has enough to do just to accomplish that which is natural and selfunderstood.”

The foregoing portions of his letter show how earnestly and deeply Stoeckhardt regarded the fraternity life. If this entire matter remains foreign and incapable of being understood, then just take this from the whole discussion: that Stoeckhardt took a profound interest in his friendships. Sharing his statements on this matter also permits me to express my gratitude for the blessing which his friendship brought me.

Since Stoeckhardt possessed such a great seriousness from his earliest years, it can already be assumed that as a friend, he was not blind to the weaknesses and mistakes of his friends. Just as he maintained his own purity, so he also pained his younger friends to do. First he would attempt this with friendly irony, of which he was a master. This was almost always effective. But biting, spiteful ridicule was always far-removed from him. Also silence or avoiding someone for a short time, and a rejecting of that which did not please him was one of his training methods, which rarely failed in producing the effect. If necessary, he did not have to struggle to find a word of earnest rebuke. A chief benefit of friendship, for which he himself always prayed, was the intercession of one’s friends. I have no doubt, that it was precisely this continuous prayer for each other which kept us on the right path throughout our very eventful lives.

Chapter Five

Ministry of Peace in Time of War

Stoeckhardt was a peaceloving man, and of a thoroughly nonpolitical nature. In the troubled times during the outbreak of the War of 1866, the good Saxon lived in Berlin, entirely peaceful in his studies. He was in correspondence with enthusiastic Prussians in the Wingolf, except he would not allow himself to be drawn into an allout war of words. When he studied for several weeks in Marburg during the summer of 1867, he could very much sympathize with the Prince of Hesse over the loss of sovereignty – his own Saxon fatherland had lamentably experienced the same fate. Despite his sympathy for the Hessians, he would not go through thick and thin with the Hessians. He wrote to me from Marburg on 1 August 1867, “Even in circumstances in which consequences and stubbornness are unreasonable in our eyes, there is still a kernel of truth. In the current talk of rebellion, (the Wingolf at Marburg was calling for such extraordinary measures) the truth is justly brought up that in a time of general settlement and adjustment, one must maintain freedom by staying out of all arguments and counterarguments, and just living peacefully. Instead, against reason, there is this feeling of piety for divine order and a horror over the Prussian despotism and spirit of revolution. I had a dispute with one of the most brusque speakers. He almost became violent. He wanted to make it clear to me that nothing is to be established with arguments in this matter. The love of Hesse and this Hessian horror over the Prussian revolutionaries – that is a matter of conscience! A deep understanding of this situation certainly merits attention – since with it comes all kind of absurd ideas.”

In July 1870, when the war between France and Germany had just broken out, Stoeckhardt wrote to me from Paris, “Oh, how unfortunate it is that there is so little earnestness and conscience! Personal insults and squabbling can bring about the loss of thousands of human lives!” At this time, he was certainly being influenced by the French interpretation of the proceedings at Ems, but every Christian can profitably take to heart the following comments, and remember them in times of political upheaval. “In this war, before everything else, it will be the job of Christians to remain detached. For every single person his job is to quietly

carry out his normal, routine work for as long as the war lasts. Let him not become so involved in the newspapers that he is enticed away from the Book of Books. In the midst of the outward unrest, let him persevere in gathering for prayer, and thus be preserved in the peace of God. Such service of daily prayer and of carrying out his work is more pleasing to God than the service of a military pastor or chaplain.” We experienced the same thing in 1866, that students – without any clear sign from above, out of mere youthful enthusiasm – left the lecture halls and became military chaplains. We experienced this also in 1870 at the Leipzig Mission House, that a qualified boarder at the Mission House applied for a military position, and then died of the fever at a military hospital. This was always somewhat hard for me to understand, in view of the great need for workers in the heathen missions.

Nevertheless, Stoeckhardt was ready for whatever service, for which God wanted to use him. When the political situation made it impossible for him to take up his ministry in Paris, we find him on the battlefield at Sedan, carrying out the ministry of peace in a time of war.

Stoeckhardt himself had made public various details about this activity, which appeared in the March edition, third issue of the publication of the Main Society for Inner Mission in the Kingdom of Saxony under the caption, “The Battlefield of Sedan.” The name “Stoeckhardt,” was not given here, but after that, it was given, if I am not mistaken, in the “*Allgemeine evangelischlutherischen Kirchenzeitung*,” and later in the “*Abendschule*.” For my purpose, which is to present a memorial tribute to him, it will suffice to reproduce the single letter which I received from him at that time. This letter also has the advantage over those previously published, in that Stoeckhardt directly gives the impressions which he was receiving there on the battlefield, because he was right in the middle of his work there as he wrote it. He writes:

“Douzy by Sedan, 27 October 1870.

“This serving in the battlefield, with its brief suffering and great joy, is a bit of history for me – something which I have never experienced before. It is impossible to give a clear picture of it, so I will just write a few features, which come to mind. First, how it happened that I came to Sedan is so peculiar. On the fifth of September at noon I received notice that I was being expelled from Paris. Up until that time I had been hoping to remain and wait it out. So the next question was, ‘Where should I go now?’ Menegoz and I both thought of the same answer: to the latest battlefield, since it was near the Belgian road to Germany. The next objective was only to find where one could carry out this or that little service to the wounded soldiers of our country and faith. Then, in one day I met nine military pastors, mostly members of the Wingolf, who all left Sedan on the day after my arrival. They asked me if I would visit the soldiers in their place. With that, a field of work was open to me now. To give you an idea of the extent of this field: in just the first week I went through fifteen villages with perhaps 4000 wounded men – and all these were without any spiritual care whatsoever. All over the place there were multitudes of dying men, and wherever I went, men desired that I would come often.” (In one account given in “*der Bausteinen*,” he estimated that the total number of wounded and sick, who died after the battle in the military hospital, to be as high as perhaps 16,000 men!) “Now I had to make a choice, whether or not I would remain. I had only planned at first for one to two weeks, in order to enter into Paris with the Germans.” (!) “When after eight days I made the rounds through all the halls where the dying lay and places full of screaming misery, I asked God, as much as I could, for help and helper. That’s when B. came.” (a mutual friend of ours, and a candidate of the Breslau Free Church.) “A few days later four members of a Bible Society came, and provided all the wounded and sick with New Testaments.” (In the account given in “*der Bausteinen*,” it says that these messengers, sent by the BritishPrussian Bible Society, had been given fourteen days to finish the work, during which time all requirements were to be met. So the Book of Books, God’s New Testament Word, found a home in this congregation on the battlefield. A short book has been written full of gripping, beautiful accounts about the effect of the Bible on the battlefield.)

“Then came two ministers from Hesse. Those were indeed precious days in that enemy land, when we could divide the work between the four of us, and in one day we could visit and refresh the hearts of four times as many sick and wounded. Behind closed doors, we could share our joy over this work. Then I found three

friends in the Hotel of the Golden Cross – Greis, Mann, and Juengling. I could exchange my experiences with them every day. At nine in the evening, the retreat signal would often sound, but one could ignore it. It only meant that orders had been given to get into the houses. The white armband with the red cross really protects against everything, at least when there is no danger. And where there is danger, the gentlemen with the armband do not even appear in public.

“I always had the secret wish in my heart that I could be among Saxons, since in the first weeks there were only Prussians and Bavarians, although the particular rivalry between men of different states in such times naturally is pushed into the background. Still it happened entirely by itself, that after the departure of the last Saxon military chaplain at Douzy, where the Saxons were stationed, I was transferred there, one and a half hours from Sedan. Right away I found here about 500 wounded, and some typhus patients. It was truly a season of death – on average, in one evening, when the vesper bell rang, I would bury four men in the cemetery. Still I learned some theology at the countless beds of the dying, at which I stood, for which I thank my God. It may be overly optimistic on my part, but I decided to consider all that as faith, which appeared to be faith according to the speaking and confessions of the sick. Nevertheless I have really come to the conviction, that God himself, in a wonderful way, loosens the soil of the heart through pain and suffering. Then the seed of faith breaks through, which in time of peace would have fallen on the crust of the daily, comfortable, secure life. Despite the present, bad weather of autumn, it is like spring to me: What I see, hear, and experience in the military hospitals is like a breaking through and sprouting of young, childlike faith. Oh, how this strengthens one’s own faith! One sees so many people who can pray! Three examples are especially unforgettable to me. The doctors had given up on two of them. These three were gravely ill. They called on their faithful God and Savior. They prayed the prayer of Hezekiah (Isaiah 38), and the three became healthy! I have been able to read Psalm 103 with them, and have prayed with them the hymn, ‘Praise to the Lord, the Almighty.’ I don’t know of anything which could be so humbling as such experiences of the unmerited grace of God. There is nothing left over when one gives all credit to God’s Word – that is, when one ascribes everything to God’s Word – which promises to smash rocks and burn up thorns.

“So, in the four to five weeks I have been here, I have become so attached to my work here in Douzy, that it has become like home to me. The time is growing ever closer, when I will have to be transferred and will have to leave this place. This weekly work has taken on such a peaceful, normal character for me. On Sundays I always preach on the Gospel in a Catholic church, first to the healthy. I am preacher and cantor, sexton and organist. Then I repeat the sermon in a modified form in several halls. Then during the week I hold short devotions, in connection with the Gospel, in the individual sick wards. For the last fourteen days I have once again been all alone on the entire battlefield, and I have to take care of Sedan and the villages around Douzy. Still it is easier than it was at first, since the Prussian Commander has provided a buggy for me with which to carry out all the military hospital visits, and then too the number has significantly diminished in comparison to the beginning. There are still 160 here, and the same in Sedan and its vicinity. Still the joy in such work builds from day to day. It is actually no work at all, but a recreation for me. Only through such repeated visits, can a real bond really be formed. Plus, the spiritual care can become somewhat more firmly entrenched and more thoroughly pervade. Now I am waiting for the Saxon military chaplain, who has been appointed as my replacement. What then? Whether the door to Paris will be open, or whether I will comply with my parents’ wishes and visit them in Tharandt I do not know. I would most like to be able to remain here longer. These words have become so meaningful to me: ‘With the hands of a mother He always leads his own wherever they go.’” – So far the letter.

On November 28 he wrote me on a battlefield post card, (which really belongs in a postal museum because it is so rare), that before he would return to Paris (that had always been on his mind), he would make a trip to Germany, and would be in Leipzig perhaps by December 9. He didn’t have any idea that the siege of Paris would go on for months, and that there would be no possibility for a return to his activities there. The “visit” to his former homeland would become a final destination. His activities in Paris and Sedan were certainly a quick, fleeting episode in his life, but it certainly taught him many great lessons. This episode is

important because it kept him from losing sight of the salvation of souls when he now was about to begin his theoretical work at the University of Erlangen. This experience at the beds of the dying always reminded him that all theology should teach the true art of dying [*daß alle Theologie die rechte Sterbenkunst lehren soll*].

The State Church Congregation and Deaconage at Planitz

(The new church was dedicated at the beginning of fall 1876, after Stoeckhardt went over to the Free Church)

Chapter Six On the Battlefield

After the eventful year of 1870, Stoeckhardt's life seemed to be turning to more quiet paths. The tutor position at the University of Erlangen brought him very orderly activity, and he took advantage of any spare time remaining to further conscientious study. Only on occasion did he have conflict with the rector of the *Gymnasium*, who appears to have been somewhat morally lax, while Stoeckhardt took this very seriously. He kept himself far removed from the field of churchpolitics, and he saw his only duty as this: to serve the souls which were commended to him. When he was approached about whether he would want to be Loehe's successor, von Zezschwitz really emphasized the furthering of the kingdom of God. Stoeckhardt wrote, "I thought about the souls, with which I feel myself very attached here through my tutoring duties and instructions at the *Gymnasium*. One feels a responsibility for souls, but not for the kingdom of God. Some people speak about the church and about the kingdom of God, instead of speaking about souls, with which God is alone concerned; souls, which want to serve God. I entirely agree with the Lutheran understanding of the church. In this doctrinal matter, the salvation of individual souls is the only factor which our venerable fathers emphasized."

Another time, he warned me of the intrigues of church politics. Because I was a worker in the Mission House at that time, I had more contact with church politics, being in correspondence with Director Hardeland. Stoeckhardt said that these things leave one very empty. So I have no doubt, that he did not accept the call to Planitz with some church politics agenda, that is, to step up as something of a baffler against the Free Church. What he wanted here was, without doubt, nothing other than to serve the souls commended to him. But because he did this with all faithfulness, he entered into the middle of the battle. In this he resembles in part one much greater, namely, Luther.

He regarded his work in Planitz as consisting before anything else in this: that he was to feed the congregation commended to his care with the Word of God. He did this primarily through preaching and Bible studies. His sermons must have been something else, for they caused quite a sensation. Stoeckhardt wanted nothing to do with any agitation and wanted to maintain unity with his pastor, a man who was minded in favor of the State Church. Nevertheless, although he only wanted to feed his congregation, he soon became well known throughout the parish of Planitz. There were people which had previously gathered together privately for hours of edification, because they did not find the official services of their parishes sufficient. Such souls desirous of salvation attended his sermons and Bible studies. This cannot be attributed to his manner or to the external form of his presentation, for he preached without using rhetorical crutches. He preached simply and in a straightforward manner. Even in later years his manner of presentation made entirely no impression whatsoever, because he spoke the first sentences of his sermon without much emphasis and almost with difficulty. Once he got going and the fire burned in him, his voice would ring out and there would be a fire in

his eyes. The words would come streaming out of his mouth with the power of an unswerving conviction. What drew those souls desiring salvation, was without a doubt this: that what he spoke was “as God’s Word.” They noticed: here is someone for once, who still stands squarely on the Word of the Bible. He does not preach the old doctrines of our Lutheran Church merely out of custom or by command, nor as the conservative faction. Instead, he lives out the old Lutheran doctrine, and with his sermons he seeks souls, and wants to save them. One widow of my congregation went to those private hours of edification in her younger days. Then she went to the Bible studies and sermons of Pastor Stoeckhardt. She told me that once, as he greeted her on the way to church, he looked at her in such a way that she said to her father, “It is as if he looks at the soul!”

This personal note shows his effect on people. He sought after the conversion of each individual. He had great zeal, with which he dedicated himself to special *Seelsorge* toward all people, even toward those who despised the church. This would eventually have to bring him into conflict. It often happened that people he wanted to visit, would lock the doors when they saw him coming. During the evenings, on his way to the Bible studies in Waldhaeuser, a remote section of the village of Oberplanitz, several men finally always had to accompany him. This happened because some were throwing stones at him and made threats against him, so that his members feared the worst. But even in this situation, he was always calm, and he would not allow himself to be kept from his work either by threats or even by the most severe weather. He was dedicated to further carrying out this work for souls. In this his wife was a true helper to him, and she took especially good care of young ladies in the congregation.

Having such a large congregation (already at that time it numbered 10,000 souls; now the number is up to 25,000), he would have to also exercise discipline in order to save all these souls. He describes in one of his letters to the Consistory the circumstances of the congregation as follows:

“If, according to the customary procedures regarding discipline, I were to report to the church authorities about all the public discipline needed among the congregational members at Planitz, then I would have to send you a list of a thousand names! (The procedure for church discipline was that every person under Communion discipline was supposed to be reported to the authorities, before the pastor could refuse them Holy Communion.) There are so many people here who live entirely without God’s Word and Sacrament. Their steadfast despising of the Word and Sacraments is one of the normal grounds for *excommunicatio minor* (exclusion from Holy Communion). But even among those who still come to church, there are so many who are in need of discipline according to the standard of the confession and general articles of the Saxon Church. If I were to report all these people, who still make an appearance at church and present themselves for Holy Communion, but are in need of discipline, then I would be in continual correspondence with you! If I were to publicly admonish these people and, if this is not fruitful, then also publicly excommunicate them, this would result in an absolute uproar and upheaval! They would all say that it is an injustice, that they be excommunicated, while nothing happens to the thousands who have excommunicated themselves [by not coming to church and Communion at all]! You see, there has been drawn a definite line between those who don’t come to church at all [*die Unkirchlichen*], and between those who are at least partly religious [*die Halbkirchlichen*].”

Moreover, the confessional Communion announcement had to be handled so informally, that it was impossible for Stoeckhardt to have a prior conversation with the communicants. Therefore Stoeckhardt had to write in the same petition:

“In regard to the exercise of the power of the keys – It is not only important for a pastor to have a conversation with the member about to be excommunicated after the last step of a formal, public decree of excommunication has been issued by the Consistory. This is also necessary for the confessional-Communion announcement between the pastor and the communicants. Otherwise the communicant may be acting deceptively. There are even some chaotic circumstances, in which the communicants in local congregations first come to the parsonage or to the sacristy to announce at 8:30, a half hour before church – this, while the pastor is

giving the confessional address! Some even dispense with this entirely! An announcement on the day before Communion is a rare exception. Sacrileges are committed against the Sacrament, and the entire churchlife is harmed. In this way many sinners become hardened and secure in their sin year in and year out. Unexamined, they come to the altar without objection, and we pastors aid them in their hardening! I have come to a conviction, not only theoretically but also practically, which I feel strongly about, and which I herewith am setting before you, the High Consistory. What we have here is not the Lord's Supper. How St. Paul, how Luther would reproach us, if they would see the Communion practice around here! In every other area of my call I have joy, but confession and the administration of the Sacrament has now become an offensive thing to me!"

He then asks in this petition for an order to the effect that a personal confessional announcement would be instituted, to be carried out several days before the day for Communion. He himself offers to set aside two evenings and a day of the week for this very purpose. When this was not granted, there is no doubt that he could no longer carry out his ministry with a good conscience.

Despite this sad state of affairs in his congregation, which he could not have possibly changed alone, Stoeckhardt still was earnestly devoted to carrying out his duties as fatherconfessor and pastor with all faithfulness. He describes in the abovementioned petition his method in dealing with such people in need of discipline as follows:

"Since I have been here, I have immediately sought out the notorious sinners – the drunks, the adulterers, the divorced, young ladies who have fallen into sin [*gefallene Mädchen*] as well as their tempters, etc. – as soon as I have acquired knowledge of their sin. I often find out about these sins when I am simply carrying out my ministry around Oberplanitz, and to some degree in Niederplanitz, as members confide in me as their pastor. These sinners generally fall into two classes. The one group which I have visited and admonished are made up of people who have lived without all connection to the church for a long time, so I consider this ministry as mission work. The other groups more or less maintain some connection with the church...In the last fourteen days alone I have admonished seven young ladies who have fallen into sin [*gefallene Mädchen*], three drunks, and a blasphemous woman. This gives you something of a profile."

Interfering with this pastoral work, there now came an ordinance from the Consistory, in which the pastors were commanded to refrain from carrying out their own proceedings against those who despise marriage and baptism! The reason for this ordinance was as follows. The civil law issued in 1874 for all Germany was going to also be enforced in the Kingdom of Saxony beginning in 1876. Up until the end of 1875, all couples who had not left the State Church had to be married in church, because the wedding performed by a State Church pastor was the only legal, valid form of marriage. After 1876, each couple could decide for themselves whether they wanted to have a church wedding or not, since a wedding recognized as legally valid only had to take place before the civil officers. This civil marriage would now satisfy the government authorities. At the same time, the legal obligation to bring children to baptism also was abolished, which had existed up until that time. This matter awakened the consciences of the State Church Christians. As a result, this led to the wellknown situation in Hannover, in which the High Consistory made a hasty and unnecessary change in the wedding formula. This led to the Harms separation. In Saxony, people took less exception to the changing of the wedding formula, which was carried out more carefully. But they were very offended that those who despised marriage and baptism, who even refused the so-called churchmarriage, could not at the same time be denied Holy Communion. Therefore, on 7 September 1875, a host of pastors met in Zwickau and united in the following theses:

"1. We consider all stubborn obstinacy against the requirement of churchmarriage as an emancipation from the church, as a despising of the Word which instituted marriage, and as a denial of the evangelical truth in our time. Consequently, we maintain that this is sin, and that it must be regarded as a testimony of an unrepentant condition.

“2. Therefore we also believe that a decree which only denies the churchmarriage rites to such obstinate sinners, but then turns around and lets them unconditionally or even just provisionally attend the Lord’s Supper, is an aberration from the Lutheran sacramental understanding. Such an understanding of the sacraments also includes churchdiscipline, and is indeed a matter of confession for our church.

“3. Therefore we consider ourselves as being bound by conscience to most humbly and most urgently appeal to the High Evangelical Lutheran Consistory, that if someone does not want to be married in the church, we may be allowed to exercise Communion discipline. And indeed we further ask for a decree that we be allowed to follow this pastoral method: after we have exhausted all attempts at admonition, we may be allowed to exclude such people from Holy Communion and consequently also deny to them all other church rites.”

181 pastors from various parts of the land gave their approval to these theses, which were presented to the High Consistory as a notice and resolution. These same pastors also rightly thought of the theses as a battle cry for the Gospel. For the authorities wanted to take action by withdrawing church privileges and services through legal measures. But the pastors wanted to bring the Gospel into the position of authority, in which all church rights and privileges are included. For whenever the pastors admitted people to the Lord’s Supper, they also gave to them the seal of the forgiveness of sins. And whenever someone receives the forgiveness of sins, then to such a person also belongs all the rights of a Christian according to the word of the apostle, “All things are yours.” To pronounce and seal the forgiveness of sins on a member of the church whose life gives offence, is at the same time a misuse of the Gospel. Indeed, the Consistory was attempting to make people pious through human laws. And so it was a battle for the Gospel, and the pastors were fighting for the spiritual existence of the church, grounded in justification.

The church authorities had obviously no understanding of this. On 30 November 1875 they issued the ordinance mentioned previously, in which they deferred the establishing of church regulations in this matter to the convention of the State Church. In the mean time, the Consistory’s practice would have to be maintained. In this ordinance, Stoeckhardt, along with a host of State Church pastors, saw a restriction on the right of every pastor, vested in him by the Scriptures and Confessions, to use the binding key on an openly unrepentant sinner, or to refuse Holy Communion to such sinners until sustained repentance and improvement. Even if this decision by the Consistory should only be valid until that next session of the State Church convention, it was still a restriction on the binding key precisely during a critical time. Indeed, this was doubly serious, for through the suspension of the legal obligation to baptism and marriage, the longdeveloping, inner apostasy of many members of the state church would become public. These people were happy to be able to live beyond the influence of the church, without having to actually leave the church. In addition, one could foresee that the State Church convention would hardly be inclined to apply strict disciplinary standards. Already at their first session in 1871 they abolished the old, clear confessional pledge and substituted for it a doublemeaning vow formula. Moreover, the High Consistory itself held such a pitiful opinion in this matter. They were willing through this ordinance of theirs to bind the hands of the pastors, so that they could not refuse Holy Communion to those who openly despised baptism and church marriage. Why would the State Church convention act any differently? Therefore fifteen pastors, including Stoeckhardt, appealed to the High Consistory on 15 January 1876, with a very humble petition. They asked for “either an explanation of the point in question from the decree of 30 November 1875, or for a private reassurance for the consciences of the undersigned,” namely, in the sense that they should not be denied the right to at least temporarily suspend such as who despise baptism and church marriage. But the fifteen petitioners were greatly disappointed in their confidence placed in their church authorities. On 19 January 1876 they were informed that a private suspension would absolutely not be allowed to them. The Consistory even defended their action by saying that such a private dispensation would be contrary to an old church ordinance of the Saxon Evangelical Lutheran Church (the General Articles of 1580!). Now the pastors considered this as a matter worth a fight. Indeed, they were fighting for the most sacred right, without which effective *Seelsorge* could not possibly be practiced. And Stoeckhardt led the fight through to the end, even though all his partners in battle at first rallied around his cousin, Pastor Karl Schneider of Roehrsdorf by Meissen.

Space does not permit me to describe the individual parts and turns of the battle, since this could only happen in a fair and unbiased way through including a publishing and explanation of the reports, which fill fiftyseven pages of the ordinance report of the High Consistory. So I must limit myself to mentioning the most important things. The ordinance of the High Consistory denied pastors the right to refuse Holy Communion to anyone without first reporting it to the Consistory and receiving their permission. This ordinance made its way into the public eye through the Dresden newspapers. Stoeckhardt recognized this publicizing as a pressing need, so he went public with the ordinance through the printing of the abovementioned correspondences, as well as through several pamphlets. When the congregation members heard about this, a large number of them petitioned the High Consistory under the leadership of the master shoemaker, J.W.G. Bock in Lichtenstein. In their petition, they asked for a return to the church discipline practices commanded in God's Word and appointed in the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. They did not hesitate to refer to the Free Church, "which practices the true, salutary discipline practices against all who despise God's Word." They also referred to the fact that Sulze [an unbelieving pastor in Dresden, spoken about in depth later in the chapter] could remain in the ministry, about whom they rightly said that the passage applies, "The one who eats my bread betrays me." It is not fully clear how it happened that this largescale movement of congregation members (there were 1500 signers, not counting a host of appendices) later fizzled out. A remark in the ordinance report of 1876 casts a light on this subject, according to which "an explanation from Bock himself was forwarded to the High Consistory, in which he himself said that they, the laity, were not at all clamoring, in fact, did not want to leave the State Church. Instead he in fact would resist every separation, and that they, the laity, recognized that a blessed church discipline could only happen when the pastors would actively practice loving *Seelsorge*. So what the laity wanted was that the High Consistory would work to bring this about soon in a truly blessed way." Later on Bock obviously backed down on his support of the petition, and he exerted his significant influence on his followers in such a way that they would resist any kind of separation. So now the pastors, fighting for the salvation of souls, were more and more abandoned by those for whom they fought – and this happened secretly, behind their backs!

I must draw attention to another point in the continued correspondence. This is in regard to the old ordinances, which the Consistory misconstrued and misused [from the General Articles of 1580], and to which the Consistory appealed, saying that the earlier, farreaching experience of a similar desire (that the pastors be granted a private dispensation) was not granted. On 18 February 1876, the three petitioners (G. Baumfelder, Pastor at Ortmannsdorf, K. Schneider, Pastor at Roehrsdorf, and G. Stoeclhardt, Deacon at Planitz) answered this, who had now for some time led the fight together:

"The High Evangelical Lutheran Consistory at Dresden, in reply to our request of 15 January of this year, has duly brought to our attention our sin of a longsleeing conscience. The Consistory has neglected to give a justification for their practice of discipline in reply to our appropriate petitions. Now, we herewith confess with repentant hearts before God and our authorities, that we have richly merited this charge. We make as the confession of our heart the very text assigned to us by the High Consistory for the coming Sunday, Oculi, Nehemiah 9:3034, 'You are just in everything which you have brought upon us, for you have dealt with us fairly, but we have become godless, and our kings, princes, priests, and fathers have not carried out your law and have not paid attention to your commands and witnesses, which you have let testify to us.' But we also praise God the Lord, that he graciously hears us when we stand in front of our congregations and chant before the altar that very prayer, which the Evangelical Consistory itself has prescribed for us in the twentyfifth collect of our Agenda, 'Your Spirit must enlighten the blind, enliven the discouraged, and awaken those who are spiritually flippant and secure, so that they make no delay in the salvation of their souls.' Yes, we praise God that he has raised us up from a long sleep, that he has taught us to recognize that we have greatly sinned, and that he now urges us to take our holy offices more earnestly than before."

From this the great earnestness is to be recognized, with which each of these men led the battle. It is also to be seen how far they separated themselves from casting themselves as judges over others. But it

understandably remains, that no reply came from the authorities to this confession. Neither were the two sides merely talking past each other. In precisely this way it becomes clear why Stoeckhardt finally explained that “to him, continuation of this fruitless correspondence just was not consistent with the seriousness of the matter.” He therefore dispensed with a formal objection against the High Consistory, which could have been filed with the civil official in charge of religious matters in Saxony.

In his resignation letter to the High Consistory, Stoeckhardt included a reproach that the Consistory fundamentally had an entirely different understanding of sin and repentance, and with that also of faith and justification. To understand this, it should be noted that the Consistory did try to defend their practice against the demand of the pastors to be able to keep open, unrepentant sinners at least temporarily from the Sacrament. They took their stand in part saying that a pastor cannot read hearts, and in part on the basis of the parables of the lost sheep and coin. To this it certainly must be answered that this matter did not deal with secret sinners (which fact even the High Consistory could discern just as little as they can read hearts), but with open sinners. The debate was not about repentant, but unrepentant sinners – sinners who did not want to leave their sins – those are the sinners which the pastors wanted to keep from the Sacrament. Finally, the Consistory disapproved of an instance reported to them by Stoeckhardt. He gave them an example of how he would carry out discipline by way of the case of a young woman. He wanted to withhold Holy Communion from this young woman. She was of an entirely worldly mindset, and had rejected all admonishments. The Consistory disapproved of this on the grounds that if a person desired to receive the Lord’s Supper, then that would have to be seen as a sign of true repentance.

So now Stoeckhardt sent the Consistory an explanation that he could not now, nor could he ever carry out their ordinances, confirmed by the correspondences of 19 January to 24 March. He also said that the Consistory failed in their duty by protecting open errorists (such as Sulze). He further said that he could no longer recognize them as an “Evangelical Lutheran” Consistory, but as one that had declared itself independent of, and fallen away from the Word of God and the Confessions. So, as earlier mentioned, his suspension from office naturally followed, to which he responded on 15 June with the clarification that he *resigned* from his office.

The last correspondences with the Consistory were not carried out in common anymore. The three opponents had decided that they should act alone, since this now dealt with matters of conscience. As earlier mentioned, only Stoeckhardt and Pastor Karl Schneider carried out this last step in the battle: the resignation from the ministry. Pastor Baumfelder lost his zeal, just as had earlier happened with the other thirteen of the fifteen signers of the petition of 15 January. Schneider had not signed that petition. So it seemed that the battle begun by 181 pastors and supported by more than 1500 congregation members was all in vain. But this confession by word and deed had God’s promise, and has not gone without fruit.

St. John’s Parsonage and Church at Planitz
(The parsonage, formerly known as the “Villa,” is where Stoeckhardt lived from 1876-1878)

Chapter Seven

“I believe, therefore I speak; but I am however greatly plagued.”

After his resignation from the ministry in the State Church, Stoeckhardt immediately joined the Free Church, or as it was officially called, the St. John's Separated Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Planitz. On 18 June 1876, the first Sunday after Trinity, he addressed the members of St. John's during the forenoon service, following the sermon. He explained the position which he and other Christians held, who after leaving the State Church, now joined St. John's. In the afternoon of the same day, he was called by the congregation as their second pastor. On the following Sunday he preached his first sermon. The festive installation into his office however first took place on 6 August, the Eighth Sunday after Trinity. This happened so late because his wife was very ill, so he could not immediately take up the full duties of his office. On 30 June, he had to vacate the deaconage, and he moved into the so-called “Villa,” a home which belonged to a benefactor of the congregation, Miss Marie von Haugwitz. This home was later enlarged by the wife of Pastor Lochner, and the congregation purchased it as their parsonage. Stoeckhardt could only sparsely furnish the home while his wife was ill in Tharandt.

The installation service on 6 August was truly a double festival, because I, the author, was also installed with Stoeckhardt on that day as pastor of the Holy Cross Separated Evangelical Lutheran Congregation in Crimmitschau. This congregation was founded because there were already a large number of families in Crimmitschau. For many years they had belonged to the congregation at Planitz, but now there were still several more families and young people joining them from Crimmitschau. These people became aware of the apostasy and lax discipline practices in the State Church through the writings of Stoeckhardt. When he was suspended from the State Church and left, they associated themselves with the Free Church as well. This little flock was now large enough that they called me to be the pastor of this newly founded Holy Cross Congregation. At that time I had just returned from East India and had left the Leipzig Mission House. Since this congregation still did not have a church building of their own, it followed that my installation should take place in the St. John's Church in Planitz. This was a special joy for me, yes, even a faithstrengthening experience. For after my threeyear absence from Germany, I now found myself in complete unity with my old university friend in this doctrinal controversy, so little understood by many.

And then to be installed with him at the same time into the ministry of the Free Church was indeed a special occasion. At this time also Pastor Karl Schneider in Roehrsdorf, Stoeckhardt's cousin and my brotherin law, resigned from his ministry in Roehrsdorf and left the State Church. He was called to the newly established congregation in Frankenberg. At this time there were five existing congregations in Saxony, and they decided to form one Synod. Their constitutional meeting took place in Dresden on 17 August.

Now it is not my assignment here to write the history of the Free Church. I will only mention one important thing which will show what a great influence, what great importance the forming of the Free Church had on the later life of Stoeckhardt. This circumstance already began with the second edition of our official publication, called the “The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church.” Stoeckhardt recognized that it was of the greatest importance for us to have some public forum for the matters of the Free Church. This really concurred with the longheld wish of Pastor Ruhland for such a publication. A book publisher was prepared to take on himself the risk of printing such a paper – and, as we shall see, this wasn't just a financial risk! This publisher already belonged to St. John's congregation: It was Johann Herrmann (who passed away in 1904). He was from Zwickau, and was a founder of the wellknown publishing house, Johann Herrmann's Publishing House in Zwickau. These three men, Ruhland, Stoeckhardt, and Herrmann, prepared the plan for the founding of this periodical and then immediately carried it out. On 1 August 1876 already the first edition of the paper was distributed, which is now in issue 39. It exists entirely for the purpose of spreading the pure doctrine and religious matters of our Free Church.

It was a noteworthy coincidence that at the same time as Stoeckhardt felt obliged to leave the State Church, the wellknown Dr. Sulze, an open denier of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, was called from Chemnitz to Dresden's Church of the Three Kings. This really was tantamount to spreading his unbelief right under the noses of the church government. It is unimaginable that anything else could show how horrible the

apostasy of the State Church was, and how incapable the Consistory was of true church government. They were entirely unable and unwilling to prevent this corruption. Even the "*Allgemeine evangelischlutherische Kirchenzeitung*," which sought to continue with the State Church at any price had to admit that this was a very evil thing – that Stoeckhardt should be kicked out while Sulze was promoted. These were years when the paper still took an especially critical stance against "Missouri." But this coincidence also did nothing to jar the sleeping consciences of the believing pastors. They were still opposed to the Separation, and thought it premature. They said that Stoeckhardt's move was too hasty. They took great pains and used every means available to fight against and suppress the Free Church movement. Perhaps the hatred for Stoeckhardt would not have been so great if he had not associated himself with the muchhated Missourians.

It was at this same critical time, Pentecost, 1876 – when Stoeckhardt made a decision about an offer presented to him (if I am correct) by Professor von Zezschwitz, to whom he was very close from his Erlangen days on. Von Zezschwitz inquired whether now that Stoeckhardt did not want to remain in the Saxon State Church, if he would be willing to join the Breslau Synod instead. If he would have been so inclined, then this Synod would have finally had the occasion to declare the Saxon State Church as one no longer Lutheran. But Stoeckhardt declined. He could not join the Breslau Synod, the largest free Church in Germany, while it was still in fellowship with the Saxon State Church, a church which promoted someone like Sulze. Indeed, Stoeckhardt had just separated himself from that church. Neither was Stoeckhardt inclined toward Missouri at the time when he began the battle for granting the right of dispensation for church discipline in the Saxon State Church. Just prior to the battle, he had printed a pamphlet on confirmation instruction, in which some errors were found. This matter made it impossible for him to be called as professor in St. Louis in 1878. But he stood squarely in the center, firmly on the doctrine of justification, and steadfastly on the infallible Word of God. And so he pressed on through God's grace, fighting and working for the salvation of souls, for full doctrinal clarity, and eventually sympathized with the despised Missourians. In this way the Saxon Separation was kept isolated from the other Free Churches; two different Free Churches arose in Saxony. This was the beginning of some hostility between the two.

The attitude of the believing theologians in Saxony was as follows. They sought before everything else to condemn the move of Stoeckhardt, and they especially tried to cast the Separation in as unfavorable a light as possible among the people. They did concede that Stoeckhardt rightly exposed the dangers of the State Church and the sins of the church officials. But they still earnestly rebuked him for displaying a lack of love, and they said that this was merely a matter of professional opinions. Of course, the whole matter really dealt with the honor of God and the salvation of souls. Now Stoeckhardt was a friendly and thoughtful man in his personal life and in all things which only concerned him personally. Yet he was never accustomed to merely ignoring things that might be dangerous to souls. He called it as he saw it. So in his articles describing the situation in the Saxon State Church, he quoted the very expressions which the highest authorities of the State Church commanded to be used. Finally, they brought charges against him before the royal officials in charge of religious matters in Zwickau. On 10 October 1877, Stoeckhardt was accused of alleged crimes against the officials of the State Church. On 11 October Pastor Ruhland was accused of alleged slander against the State Church. Then, in the beginning of 1878, the civil officials authorized to deal with church matters (who carry out the same functions as the bishops in the Catholic kingdoms) charged Stoeckhardt with alleged slander against the High Consistory and against other personalities in the State Church. This happened in the royal court in Zwickau. He was declared innocent of these charges. But then *the High Consistory itself* pursued the matter. They charged Stoeckhardt with *slander of the Christian Religion and the Christian Church!* This process and its outcome was already described in the second chapter. It is worth mentioning however, how Stoeckhardt defended himself against these unheard of charges leveled against him. (Just think – Someone as zealous for the Word of God and the divine honor was called a slanderer of the Christian religion!) Unfortunately, I could not study the papers he wrote in defense of himself and of his fellowaccused publisher, Herrmann. (The state attorney's office in Zwickau sent at my request a notice informing me that the justice ministry had been minded to allow me a viewing of the materials. But now this request has been denied. There is furthermore no trace of these materials in Stoeckhardt's estate.) I do, however, have an original letter which Stoeckhardt wrote to his fellowaccused on

16 April 1879. From this letter I will share the following most important parts. The letter goes like this:

“Dear Herr Herrmann!

“The court date, coming ever closer, forces me to make several more comments, which I will turn over to the court. The court of Zwickau has granted me a further dispensation, which I have now declined. I now understand the procedure of the whole matter to be as follows:

“The state attorney or the court desired that, at least in the public proceedings, the common petitions should be read by both of us. They insist likewise, that our petitions be read in an orderly way, slowly, and loudly, so that the jury can understand our petitions.” (Unfortunately, the reading of the petitions in the public proceedings happened too fast, and the request of Herr Herrmann for a slower reading was met with no real consideration.) “In this I would emphasize and repeat the following points over and over again, and with these points make a special appeal to the consciences of the jury in my concluding remarks:

“1. The Separated Lutherans have, as do all Saxon subjects, the right of religious freedom guaranteed to them by the state constitution. Such religious freedom includes the freedom to confess as one believes and to express without restraint one’s religious convictions. The accusation leveled by the state attorney was therefore an obvious violation of the constitution.

“2. The Separated Lutheran congregations in Saxony are recognized by the Ministry of Religion Affairs [*Kultusministerium*], and the congregational constitutions have been approved. In their congregational constitutions they pledge themselves to the canonical books of the Holy Scripture and the confessional writings of the Book of Concord. Now it can be thoroughly proven that our petitions and complaints in the previously read petitions and legal complaints are taken from the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions. Furthermore, the state attorney doesn’t even make an attempt to refute this. So, is this justice, when we say, testify, and prove in our petitions, that ‘so and so uses the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions against the apostasies and errorists,’ but then the accusers can just ignore all this and simply say, ‘this and that is an *obvious* slander and blasphemy,’ bringing absolutely no proof for their allegations? The accusation leveled by the state attorney is what would be an *obvious* blasphemy against the content and words of the Bible and Lutheran Confessions. Now I entirely do not desire from the judges and jury, that they should think they have to judge the Lutheran faith. Instead, I desire that they merely protect this faith in Saxony according to the religious freedom assured to us by the state.

“3. Now the judges and jury members who believe other than we do should furthermore be convinced that this entire matter and process entirely does not belong in the worldly, civil court. In other countries in which religious freedom doesn’t only exist on paper but also in practice, such as England and America, the civil judges would laugh at this and sake their heads, if religious questions were brought before them. The heathen Roman judge Gallio, spoken of in Acts 18:12ff, told the Jews who accused the Apostle Paul of insulting their Law and worship, ‘If this were a real crime, dear Jews, then I would listen to you fairly. But since this is a question about your doctrine, Word, and Law, take care of it yourselves. I have no intention of being a judge in this matter.’ This is real justice, of which everyone who has a conscience approves. Judges and jury members who pass sentences according to their consciences have to say to the offended Consistory and pastors, ‘This is a question about your law and your religion. Take care of it yourselves! Discuss it with the people, concerning whom you have sworn that you would teach them from the Bible and Lutheran Confessions. Hold religious conferences over this matter with them. Oppose their attacks in your church publications. We will have nothing to do with this matter!’ In our appeals we have often repeated that all accusations having to do with religion, faith, doctrine, conscience, in short, with the invisible kingdom, do not concern the civil reputation of the persons and councils in question. The laws and punishments of the empire only deal with civil reputation, when it speaks about slander and libel. This powerful distinction between religious judgments and civil slanders is written into the conscience of everyone who has a conscience. I therefore appeal to the sound human reason of the jury and to their consciences, which will have to stand before God, to whom they also must give an account before his judgment seat to come.

“On your behalf, dear Herrmann, I would impress on the jury these thoughts over and over again, and

then expressly repeat it again in short summary form as a conclusion. Then they will be able to see for themselves, and draw this conclusion: that the separated Lutherans are by no means enemies of the state. They will see for themselves that in civil matters we gladly give to the government what belongs to them.

“If in the proceedings my attempted escape should be brought up, then I would ask them to note that in August 1878 I received a valid call to be the pastor of the Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church in St. Louis, and that I have accepted the same...”

The accusers of Stoeckhardt were probably not even annoyed that after his excellent defense plea, which was also used by his fellowaccused, Stoeckhardt did not deal more with the accusation itself. For to this day this whole matter has been a disgrace to the Consistory and the State Church; a disgrace which will never be blotted out. Here they actually were all set to put a man like Stoeckhardt, who deserved a promotion to the highest councils of the church, into prison, while they let an open Godhater like Sulze run around free – even put him into official church positions.

We should also describe Herrmann, who was accused with Stoeckhardt as the editor responsible for the “Evangelical Lutheran Free Church,” as a man who could have just been declared innocent, or come away with just a small fine. Someone intimated to him once that he should have just said that he didn’t really understand the matters in question, since he wasn’t actually theologically trained. They figured that in this way they were helping him out. If he would have just said this, that a layman and business couldn’t be expected to have his own judgment in such controversies of a religious and theological nature, then his case would have been considered a mere extenuating circumstance. But this faithful man, who now for a long time already has enjoyed his reward (he died on 24 March 1904), refused such a temptation. He let it be known that everything Stoeckhardt wrote was written from the heart, and that he was a firm advocate of everything Stoeckhardt said. So now he too was sentenced to three months in prison. (After an appeal was made, Stoeckhardt’s sentence was reduced from eight months to four, and Herrmann’s was reduced to two months. Finally the court had pity, and his sentence was changed to a fine of 180 marks.) Herrmann had passionately challenged the charge of blasphemy in his defense plea. The state attorney made the comment that God could be slandered when his earthly agencies were slandered; therefore slander of the High Consistory was the same as slandering God. Despite this, Herrmann was at least declared innocent of this.

The entire matter, at least as far as the High Consistory is concerned, is long buried. No one likes to think that such a thing could have happened in the controversy between the State Church and the Free Church. But if someone is going to describe the life of Stoeckhardt, then one has to speak about it. Moreover, casual observers could be quite offended over the “escape” of Stoeckhardt, or even over the fact that Stoeckhardt was sentenced to prison at one time. So it is entirely in place to give Pastor Ruhland’s report on this matter, which was printed in the “Evangelical Lutheran Free Church” in 1879. It says:

“The Zwickau Weekly News of 14 May has made public the following court proceedings: ‘On 12 May the public courtroom proceedings took place against Karl Georg Stoeckhardt. This happened in the royal court here in Zwickau, under the presiding of the Lord Assessor Mueller; assisting him as jurors were the businessman, Herr von Bose; the landlord, Herr Thuemmler; the architect, Herr Becker; and Professor Dr. Gebauer, all of this city. Stoeckhardt is a former pastor at the congregation of Separated Lutherans in Planitz, and now is pastor at the Lutheran universitychurch in St. Louis, North America. Public proceedings also took place against the book publisher, Johannes Herrmann. These were accused of publicly slandering the Saxon State Church, of public libel in their periodical, of slandering the Evangelical Lutheran High Consistory, and of slandering the church authorities of the St. John’s Congregation at Dresden, etc. The evidence for the trial was based on countless articles published by Stoeckhardt, appearing in a periodical published in Planitz under the name, “The Evangelical Lutheran Free Church,” between the years 1877 and 1878. The activities of the fellowaccused Herrmann came into question because he is the editor responsible for the abovementioned periodical. He had already testified in the course of the questioning, that he himself had read and edited the articles in question., given to him by Stoeckhardt, before they were printed in the mentioned periodical. His

name however was not included. But in printing the articles, he expresses his own personal agreement with the same. On the basis of the evidence (which the newspaper doesn't even mention), Stoeckhardt and Herrmann were partly declared innocent, but were sentenced to eight and to three months in prison respectively. The defense attorney for the accused was the advocate, Herr Jahn, who works here in Zwickau.' Thus far the mentioned newspaper article.

“Note well, that it was not some Saxon State Ministry [*Staatsministerium*] which raised these charges against Pastor Stoeckhardt and Publisher Herrmann. The state attorney did this at the urging of the High Consistory, and made the following charge: ‘Stoeckhardt and Herrman are to be reprimanded in court proceedings on eight counts of blasphemy, § 166 clause 2, 74 in the imperial law code; on five counts of libel against the Royal Saxon High Consistory according to § 185, clause 185, 187, and 196 of the imperial law code; on three counts of slander against the church authorities at St. John’s in Dresden, one count against the pastors Sulze and Graue, and two counts against Pastor Peter according to § 185, 187, 196, 74 of the imperial law code of 7 May 1874.’ The royal court in Zwickau has not fulfilled the hopes of Pastor Stoeckhardt’s prosecutors and their clients, Sulze, Graue, and Peter. They wanted Pastor Stoeckhardt and the Publisher Herrmann to be condemned as blasphemers and imprisoned for years. In this also the High Consistory was not given the satisfaction of seeing an outcome with which they could take revenge on Pastor Stoeckhardt and Publisher Herrmann, who dared not only to escape the jurisdiction of the Consistory, but also to occasionally speak the full, although bitter, truth. In this matter, may all Evangelical Lutheran Christians, both in the Fatherland and outside of it, note what is understood in Saxony by freedom in regard to the Evangelical Lutheran Confessions. How fondly they receive people like Sulze, who have openly blasphemed our Confessions as ‘a crown of thorns made up of doctrinal statements,’ as ‘mere heathen babble,’ as ‘irreligious,’ and as ‘mythological!’ Yes, people like Sulze are protected, who has publicly made this horrible statement: ‘The most dangerous teaching is the teaching that God rewards good and punishes evil.’ Here people are protected who intentionally seek to root out of the people the last vestige of conscience and moral, religious zeal. On the other hand, how these people would love to do away with those who wish to preserve the people as heirs of the Reformation, as a holy people who cling to the old, pure, Evangelical Lutheran Religion! But such true Lutherans are the ones who are warned against as robbers, deceivers, and apostles of the devil! How long will it be until the veil will finally fall from before the eyes of those who always imagine that under the protection of a StateChurch government they will find freedom, security, and protection!”

If the effect of Stoeckhardt on the Free Church during his short time with us were to be measured, it would nevertheless be a longlasting effect. His sermons made a deep impression. The congregation was richly blessed at that time with two highly gifted pastors. The church was so consistently full, that the congregation saw the necessity of building a new church. This was decided in the summer of 1878, right after Stoeckhardt’s departure. Stoeckhardt’s labors in the synod were also a blessing. At the second meeting of the synod, held in the summer of 1878 in Wiesbaden, he gave an excellent presentation on *Indifferentism*, which has been printed on pages 1070 of the proceedings from the annual meeting. The theses were presented as follows:

“1. Indifferentism is the cancer of modern Lutheranism, which has grown from the syncretism and unionism of the previous centuries and decades. That we have to deal with this church scandal has not come about because of a love of controversy or disputing, but above all, because God’s will and command obliges us to fight against everything contrary to God’s Word, and because our salvation and the salvation of others is at stake, which is endangered through every abomination.

“2. Indifferentism is apathy toward God’s Word and the blessed doctrine of Christ revealed in it. This indifferentism shows itself...

- a. as apathy toward religion in general;
- b. as a downplaying of the importance of pure doctrine;
- c. as toleration of error and errorists, both of a crass and a fine nature;
- d. as toleration of practices contrary to Scripture;

- e. as mingling and melding false doctrine with pure doctrine;
- f. as altar and church fellowship with the heterodox;
- g. as abandoning needed, scriptural polemics;

“3. The foundation and root of indifferentism is nothing other than unbelief. Those who are indifferent have not made their consciences captive to the Word of God, especially in regard to the doctrine of justification. They subject the doctrine of our God to their own inclinations, reason, and earthly considerations.

“4. Indifferentism fights against the Word of God, in particular...

- a. with the holy commands of God, in which he tells us to keep his doctrine pure in all its parts;
- b. with the earnest warning against every falsification of this doctrine;
- c. with the particular command to rebuke all false teachers and to separate oneself from all fellowship with them;
- d. with the express condemnation of every indifferent spirit, which is condemned as a horrible and damnable sin.

“5. The orthodox church of all times has had to struggle against indifferentism more than anything else. At all times she has had to testify to and fight for the pure doctrine as its greatest jewel, and at all times it has had to hold itself from all temptations to make concessions to errorists. The ecumenical and Lutheran symbols prove this; the testimonies of the church fathers and of the Lutheran fathers confirm this, from which the general practice of the orthodox church is drawn.

“6. The horrible result and effect of indifferentism is:

- a. it makes the firm ground of faith uncertain;
- b. it darkens especially the merit of Christ;
- c. it advances the growth of false teaching;
- d. it robs believers of the light of the pure knowledge and certainty of faith;
- e. it takes from the believers the true joy, power, and support need for confession and battle, and
- f. it makes them dull and apathetic toward sins and scandalous life

“7. The only and sufficient means by which to defend ourselves against indifferentism is the true, simple clinging to the Word of God, as well as diligent, thorough instruction in pure doctrine, especially the doctrine of the deep corruption caused by sin in men and the doctrine of justification by grace.”

Stoeckhardt, until the end of his life, maintained this position against indifferentism, a position also the synod adopted. This man, who in his home life and personal matters was so friendly and goodhearted; this man, who was so often almost childlike; this man tolerated no error when it came to God’s Word. He met head-on every attempt to suppress even one truth with great determination. It didn’t bother him at all, what the results of this might be. He never pursued plans for church politics, but he confessed God’s Word and proclaimed the truth.

His main activity in Planitz, after his pastoral work in the congregation and in the “Evangelical Lutheran Free Church,” was the education of a host of boys and young men in the *preGymnasium* subjects. This work came to an end in the summer of 1878, when new students no longer stepped forward. But when one thinks of the fact that most of these earlier students of his accepted teaching positions in the service of the church in North America, one sees that he was given the opportunity to have an even greater sphere of influence there. Our congregation at Dresden would have been glad to call him, but the Holy Cross Congregation in St. Louis had gotten to him first. And this was certainly the providence of God, that this call was extended to him first, and that he immediately accepted it. For over there work awaited him, for which he was best suited, and which corresponded to his great teaching abilities and his untiring zeal; work, which would extend as a blessing over a wide circle.

The Parsonage of Holy Cross (Left)
(Stoeckhardt lived here from 1878-1887)

The Homes of Stoeckhardt as Seminary Professor
(Stoeckhardt lived in the home on the right from 1887-1893)

(The home in the center is also the Walther home, where Stoeckhardt lived from 1893-1906)

Chapter Eight

In a foreign land, but faithful to the homeland

Stoeckhardt was not politically minded. Already in his student days he would laugh when others were in heated political arguments. From this it can be concluded that he was above a party spirit. He was not caught up in enthusiasm during the Schleswig-Holstein affair, which he partially lived through during his days in Erlangen (1863-1864). Neither did he take a stand during the sharp antagonism between Prussia and Saxony, between North and South, which threatened so often in 1866 to divide the best of friends from each other. But he could not even get worked up for *Kaiser und Reich*, when this was achieved in 1870/71, as many did. He looked at the matter from a deeper perspective, and recognized the blows which this external progress would deal to the religious and moral life of the people. Moreover, he kept before himself a sense of reality; he would not let himself be swept up by mere slogans. So he could also then turn his back on the Fatherland without any real pain, when God placed him into an assignment in a foreign land. And the treatment which he experienced precisely at the hands of his particular Saxon fatherland only made it all the easier for him to leave. Nevertheless, although he spent almost half of his life in the United States of North America, he remained a good German and a fine Saxon – and not just in language!

Indeed, in the beginning it seemed to us as if he would forget Saxony and our little Free Church after his emigration to St. Louis. We were very much offended, when he wanted to bring me over there too. It was a very deep, personal matter for our Free Church, and especially for our president at that time, the sainted Pastor Ruhland, when he did not really assist us much. We thought that compared to the new, great things he saw and experienced there, our work would seem too insignificant, and our need too unimportant. But we would soon realize that he had not forgotten his Fatherland and the little flock, which was supporting, suffering for, and fighting for the pure doctrine here. This was true despite the greater assignments which the Missouri Synod gave him. When Pastor Ruhland was killed in an accident in Detroit, during his trip to America in 1879, Stoeckhardt wrote a heartfelt letter comforting the St. John's Congregation. And he brought our work to the attention of the American Lutherans through articles appearing in *Der Lutheraner* and in *Lehre und Wehre*. In this way, interest in our work by no means decreased, but rather very much increased. Later on, Stoeckhardt wrote a series of articles in *Der Lutheraner*, which then also appeared in Germany as a separate printing under the title, "The Condition of the Church in Germany." Through this work he wanted to raise the awareness of the Lutherans in America to the fact that it is impossible for Lutherans here to remain in the State Churches, if they are actually earnest about their Lutheran faith. But then he also gives an account of why the Saxon Free Church cannot make common cause with the other Free Churches. In this writing, he again shows how he was opposed to every form of syncretism. At the same time however, he also shows a warm interest in his homeland, as well

as a real concern for the well-being and troubles of the church here. This interest is also expressed in countless letters, which I have at this time. His interest in our church was nourished and kept active through this continuous personal correspondence. In 1883, his brotherinlaw, Pastor Paul Kern of Chemnitz visited him in St. Louis. From that time on, Stoeckhardt urged me year after year to come and visit him in America. And so finally in 1889, I was prevailed upon to spend several weeks in his home. I also had the opportunity to take part in the convention of the western district in Concordia, Missouri. In 1891, he visited his old Fatherland, and took part in our convention at Steeden. He preached in our church to a great crowd of people concerning the letter to the congregation in Philadelphia.

His letters also show not only an everactive interest in the old Fatherland and in the future of the Free Church. They also show at the same that keeping us interested in the American church and preserving a true spirit of unity between us were matters close to his heart. So he had us take part in the work, battles, and needs of their church. He wasn't at all ashamed to seek our advice occasionally. And at the same time we had the comforting knowledge that we were of one mind and heart, although we were separated by an ocean and unable to speak face to face,. Even in his last days, in fact, on the day before his death, Stoeckhardt reported to his brotherinlaw, Pastor Paul Kern of Chemnitz. He wrote a letter about the major church situation at that time, especially about the Norwegian Statement on Union. He concluded in an appended comment on this news with the words, "Yes, it appears as if there is no peaceful possession of the pure doctrine. In the new year there will certainly also be new battles to fight. God rules over everything for the best!"

One time our paths actually threatened to go their separate ways. But even then he acted out of the most energetic love for us, his old comrades in the faith and in battle. It happened at a critical time in our history. Already in 1894, agreement had been found between the Hermannsburger Synod and our own. And in 1896, this church fellowship which had been entered, threatened to be broken off again. This happened because we, in wellintended zeal for purity of doctrine and uniformity of practice, went too far, and became too strict. So he warned us quite earnestly in a detailed letter. He continued to admonish us even when this letter did not find immediate attention among us. This matter really bothered him a great deal, as also a later private letter to me proves, in which he earnestly admonished me. But it is without doubt that nothing less than faithful, earnest love moved him to deal with us in this way. This is shown from the fact that in 1909, he visited Germany one more time. During this visit, he not only showed the most tender concern for the wellbeing and troubles of our church, but he was also ready to have a personal conversation with me in regard to this letter, in order to set aside whatever could have been a hindrance to unity. Even if it would have become such a hindrance, at any rate it would not have been his fault.

During his justmentioned last visit to Germany, he preached again to our convention in Steeden and later in Planitz. The love for his old Fatherland was once again powerfully roused in his heart, and he more than once expressed the thought that, if God would grant him a few years for retirement, he would like to perhaps live them out in Germany. But God had concluded otherwise. For God called him away from his work into his heavenly Fatherland. And it seemed as if Stoeckhardt indeed expected this. On his last birthday here on earth, he did not read a psalm of praise in his home devotion, but Psalm 90, and he said many times, that on that day he was 71 years old, and thus had stepped over the first boundary of human life, which Moses gives there. Still he was by no means weary of his ministry or life. Rather he would have gladly liked to continue working.

With that I make a conclusion of that, which I am able to write on the basis of my own personal knowledge about my dear friend. Since there is still no detailed biography of Dr. Stoeckhardt in the German language in America, where he spent half his life, I sought the permission of the publisher to include excerpts from a translation of three articles, which Professor Dau had printed about Stoeckhardt in English. A fourth article, which will deal with Stoeckhardt's polemics, is not yet in my hands, and so I cannot include that. Still, on the basis of his letters I can say this about his polemics: Stoeckhardt was unyielding in doctrinal controversy because he stood firmly on God's Word, and he would not yield one iota from God's Word. No one surpassed him in esteem or in exegetical abilities. No lust for success, no fear of failure could pressure him. He was at the same time by no means a church politician, but a childlike, faithful confessor, as firm as a rock.

Chapter Nine

“Hold on to what you have!”

The significance which Professor Dau attributes to his colleague, now in eternity, can quickly be recognized from this, that in the beginning of his first article, he classifies Stoeckhardt with the founder and longtime leader of the Missouri Synod, Dr. C.F.W. Walther. He writes that from the homeland of Luther, from Saxony, have come two theologians to North America, who have assisted the Lutheran Church in America in an excellent manner. They have built up the Lutheran Church in America in the nineteenth century, and with that they have left a mark on the Missouri Synod, which will not soon be wiped away. Professor Dau then shows how Walther's work, the building and expanding of the synod, was pretty much completed when Stoeckhardt came to America. He also shows that during the nine years (1878-1887) in which the two men worked together, the Synod had to face its most fierce assault in the doctrinal controversy over the election by grace. He remarks that this controversy did not only deal with the decree of election. He proves that this controversy concerned the entire domain of salvation-appropriating grace. This was true because the controversy fundamentally was a matter of preserving the doctrine of grace alone. Also at stake were the distinction between Law and Gospel, in particular, its effects; the doctrine of free will and the powers of natural man in spiritual things; the doctrine of universal justification; and finally even the principles of sound scriptural exegesis. Also the questions about the certainty of grace and the requirements for the true unity of the church, together with the corrupting character of syncretism, had to be addressed in the course of the controversy.

Professor Dau concludes this consideration by saying that it was, and still is, a doctrinal controversy of the first rate, a mighty wrestling for the maintenance of the prominent theological position in the world. The Missouri Synod had achieved this position through the laborious work of a half century. From the perspective of the Missouri Synod, it was a heroic effort to preserve the achievements of earlier victories of the truth.

Stoeckhardt entered this struggle almost immediately upon his arrival, for the beginning of his pastorate in St. Louis and the beginning of the election by grace controversy almost coincided. He had a close relationship and cooperation with Walther and the St. Louis faculty, since he was a *professor extraordinarius*. This brought him immediately into the public literary battle, for which the election controversy is famous. He was known and regarded as a theological leader, even before his congregation had time to fully discover his excellent abilities as a pastor and preacher. And when Walther was called home after several years, the job of preserving Walther's work fell on his shoulders, along with others.

Stoeckhardt foreshadowed the nature of his own activity in the conclusion of his address at Walther's funeral. There, as Walther's mortal remains were about to be carried from the Seminary to Trinity Church, Stoeckhardt said, “And what do we learn from this suffering and death? We are convinced once again that the grace in which we stand, the grace about which this departed teacher testified to us, is truly grace. We have the truth, the whole truth in its entirety, because we know and experience the crucified Christ, and otherwise we want to know no one else. This departed man calls to us, ‘Hold on to what you have, so that no one may take your crown!’” (*Der Lutheraner*, 1887, p. 86).

The first article for the official synodical magazine which Stoeckhardt contributed after the death of Walther and his own election as professor of exegesis, bore this title, “How can and should every Lutheran see to it, that the pure doctrine be preserved for his church?” The article looks both to the past and to the future. It is filled with earnest thoughts, which recent events had awakened in the author's soul. Perhaps without knowing, or without wanting to know, Stoeckhardt shows the standpoint from which he regarded his assignment. In view of these events, Stoeckhardt believed that the assignment of himself and his colleagues was plain. He writes:

“Lutheran Christians belonging to the reading audience of *Der Lutheraner*, for years, even decades have watched the progress of the Lutheran Church in this country with their thoughts, wishes, and prayers. I particularly think of those who are members of the Synod which this periodical serves. It comes as no secret to any of them that their church, their Synod, has reached an earnest turning point. The sad experiences of the

recent past are still fresh in our memory. (Prof. G. Schaller, another St. Louis faculty member, died on 19 November, six months after Dr. Walther). The founders and early leaders of our Synod have now gone to their heavenly home one after the other, and now they rest from their work. Only a few of the original witnesses still stand in their places. Generally, the old generation, which lived through and experienced the beginning, is now in the process of dying. A new generation is coming forth. Such a change of times, such a change of affairs, such a change of personnel elicits earnest consideration.

“Each one will be able to recognize what God wants of us American Lutherans, both in the present and in the future, if he considers the previous years. What is the summary and the result of the previous history of our Synod?”

Stoeckhardt then goes on to speak about the period of the Missouri Synod’s formation. He begins with the Saxon immigration and the formal conclusion of the election by grace controversy. He proves that the grace of God has been given to his Synod in an extraordinarily great measure. He writes:

“Now it is clear that the most important matter in the present and in the future, is that we preserve what we have. We are rich in every way, in all doctrine and in all knowledge. Thus we lack no earthly gift. Now we want to take care that we lose nothing of that which we have received. Oh, certainly, we wish for this with all our hearts. This is the earnest prayer of every Lutheran who recognizes the gift of God, who examines and understands the times and the signs of the times, and who loves his church. ‘In these last troubled times, grant us steadfastness, Lord, that we may keep your Word and Sacrament pure until our end!’ And not only to our end, dear Lord God, but help that our church may never lose this her treasure, so that our children and descendants may have this beautiful light shining on them until the last day!”

We mentioned before that these thoughts of Stoeckhardt rose from his personal feelings; that recent events had brought them about in his reflecting mind. If we consider it this way, then these thoughts seem quite natural and opportune. At that time, most Missourians probably felt the same way as Stoeckhardt did. But this view is not sufficient. Stoeckhardt let his perceptions flow into a course of action, which can only be explained by that fact that his work as a public teacher in the Missouri Synod was to preach, “Hold on to what you have!” The feeling was not transitory, but lasting. In the article quoted above, Stoeckhardt shows he considered this preservation, this holding on to what we have, a matter of life and death for him. He continues:

“Those Lutherans who know what they have received, also know the enemy only too well. They know how he wants to rip that precious possession away from them again. They know the dangers which threaten them and their church. If the pure doctrine vanishes from a place where it had found a home, that is the guilt of men. This is what lies within the hand and power of men: that they can lose that which they have, that which they have received. And indeed it is the ingratitude of men which forfeits the gift of God. That is the greatest danger which we have to fear – ingratitude. And this dire, sinister guest already makes his appearance here and there in our circles and parishes. He is twofaced. Ingratitude shows itself before anything in this, that one becomes accustomed to the pure doctrine of the divine Word. He is satisfied, yes weary with God’s Word, and thus falls into lukewarmness and indifference. And the result is that a person makes room for a worldly mind and spirit. If God’s Word is no longer a person’s joy and the desire of his heart, then such a person seeks out other evil pastures and joys. And the pleasures and lusts of this world then fully smother the last movements of spiritual life.

“Lutheran Christians, to whom the salvation of their souls and the wellbeing of their church are matters close to their hearts, are people who see and truly understand this great danger, ingratitude. They want nothing to do with this double danger: coldness and worldly-mindedness. But when they become aware of how this spirit is fast taking over their areas, then they give themselves over to weeping and sighing. They are deeply troubled over this, that the good old times are gone. They paint the good old times in rosy colors, although life in the good old days was really no better. They paint the present and the future in black. They think that a single

individual or a so few people could not possibly withstand and stem the tide of time. This is not what is needed. What is needed are new, extraordinary means and methods in order to avert great harm, damage, and apostasy.

“But, my dear Lutherans, test correctly how things stand, and consider how we can advise and help. We still have – thank God! – the pure Word and Sacrament. We still hold the full, complete blessing in our hands, and many rejoice with you in this blessing. God’s Word still has the place of authority in our church. Whatever then has been proclaimed and written on the basis of the Word must still have power to make an impression and take an effect.

“So if now every single Lutheran who boasts in pure doctrine will also do his part to preserve what he has in his own place with faithfulness, diligence and zeal, then he also is helping his church to do the same – to remain in that, which has been entrusted to her. In this we need no new wisdom, no stylish effort.”

The main thought of this article is then further fleshed out in two sequels, and applied to almost every demonstration of spiritual life in a Lutheran congregation.

Continuous instruction is the means for preservation of pure doctrine. Soon after Walther’s death, Stoeckhardt applied himself with great determination to write clear, easytounderstand articles in *Der Lutheraner* on the chief doctrines. In later years, this plan was taken up by the faculty of Concordia Seminary. Almost every faculty member, in rotation, contributed to this series of doctrinal articles.

Some of Stoeckhardt’s articles include “The Pastoral Directions in the Epistle to Titus,” a doctrinal essay to the convention at Waverly, Iowa regarding “Directions for the Congregational Life, which Are Contained in the Letters to the Corinthians,” an essay on the “Seven Letters of Jesus in Revelation,” delivered to the convention at Alta Iowa, and his essay at Omaha, Nebraska on “The First Christian Congregations.” The careful reader of these articles and essays will be impressed by the earnestness of the author of these spiritual treatises. He will feel that the author is fighting the corruption of spiritual backsliding. And even to the most recent times, Stoeckhardt usually dealt with all kind of practical questions of congregational life and activity in the periodical of the Synod, such as saloons, theater, lodges, bazaars, etc. He always repeated and impressed on the readers the old position of the Missouri Synod. In a later article we will talk about Stoeckhardt’s polemics. But it must already be said in this context that even what he wrote in his polemical writings always had as its goal to maintain, reaffirm, and strengthen the position which the Missouri Synod held.

It is a necessary task of a churchman, a pastor, a theologian, to understand and grasp the meaning of the signs of the times. But this is no easy assignment, and it has its own particular dangers. “To distinguish the spirits,” ranks among the special gifts of grace, with which the church is endowed by her head. One may err in understanding the signs; another will misunderstand the meaning of the signs. At times Stoeckhardt also had a false understanding, and at other times he was misunderstood. He came to the American Lutheran church as a German through and through, and he remained such to the end of his life. At first he thought it was a strange phenomenon for a church body to undergo a transition in language, or to make changes in the manner and method of church work. In fact, he was a bit scared of it. For example, doing away with the timehonored *Christenlehre* or *Kinderlehre*, and the adoption of Sunday School in its place, appeared to him as something very ominous. He was determined in his expression of unfavorable opinions about such things, perhaps more than many of us. We were the ones who wanted to try doing the nextbest, when we found that we could not do the best. But also in this matter, we fully understood Stoeckhardt’s position. We who were close to him had the opportunity to observe how his position flowed from a firm commitment to the greatest necessity of preserving pure doctrine. As a skilled observer of people and events, he adapted to those things which he recognized as needs – real needs, not imaginary ones. Many of us still remember the active interest and part which he took at the 1905 Convention in Detroit. The question was whether English congregations should be admitted into the German Missouri Synod. His arguments, since they came from someone like him, made quite an impression. Moreover, his arguments hit the nail on the head, and contributed greatly to that change in synod policy, by which our Synod became a GermanEnglish church body. The author can say this from personal experience, that Stoeckhardt had conscientiously compared his commentaries, which have given him a good reputation, to the standard English commentaries. His beloved Romans Commentary shows that he diligently studied Hodge. He

often brought into consideration the “International Critical Commentary,” which was acquired for the Seminary library in part at his urging. In my own English work at the Seminary, let me say that I am grateful that I at times received valuable suggestions from my German colleague. These suggestions revealed that Stoeckhardt regarded the times and the needs of our times with open eyes. He was a man on whom what he observed made a strong impression, and that impression urged him into action.

The quiet undercurrent of his life was nevertheless this, which we have tried to point out: Preservation, a firm holding to the old truths and to the old ways. A single characteristic of a great man rarely explains the way he handled every circumstance. But we are convinced that this trait will explain most of the public dealings of our colleague, now gone to his heavenly home. And we treasure him for this very reason. Firmness and clinging to the old truth is an inspiring example. Preservation is just as constantly necessary as adaptation, in the changing scenes and different tasks in the church militant. Iron and granite are good building materials, also in building the temple of God. The master builder hews and forms them for his wise and foremost goals. They are some of the fruits of his grace. Through his writings, Stoeckhardt will continue to teach steadfastness and perseverance, just as he taught these virtues to the generation among which he lived, moved, and had his being.

Holy Cross Church of St. Louis in 1872 Stoeckhardt at the time of his pastorate at Holy Cross

Chapter Ten The Preacher and *Seelsorger*

Dr. Stoeckhardt entered the Missouri Synod as the called pastor of Holy Cross Congregation in St. Louis. He was installed into his office by Dr. Walther on the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity, 1878. Walther preached on 1 Corinthians 4:12. The sermon was printed according to the wish of the pastoral conference of St. Louis (*Der Lutheraner*, 1879, p. 26ff). It is fitting then that as we consider Stoeckhardt’s life’s work in America, we should first speak of him as preacher.

First, to dispense with the externals, let it be noted, that at the time when Stoeckhardt was installed, the Holy Cross Congregation was joined together with Trinity, Immanuel, and Zion – the St. Louis joint congregation [the *Gesamtgemeinde*]. The Pastor of this federation was Walther, and the pastors of the four member congregations were Walther’s assistants, at least in theory. They filled each other’s pulpits in a regular rotation, and so the four pastors in the federation not only preached to their own congregations, but also to the other three. In actuality, each congregation was still independent. In his installation sermon, Walther does not refer to the matter of the union of the congregations. He installed Stoeckhardt as “our pastor,” and as “the shepherd of our souls.” Thus he even considered himself as Stoeckhardt’s member.

The Concordia Seminary was within the parish boundaries of the Holy Cross Church. From its founding this congregation counted among its members the professors of the Seminary and their families. At the time when Stoeckhardt entered his pastoral ministry there, most of the theological students, perhaps 100, were communicant members of this congregation.

So Stoeckhardt’s activity as preacher was given the widest scope from the start, as much externally as inwardly. Not only were all the Lutherans in St. Louis, in principle, his listeners. Among these listeners were men who themselves were powerful preachers. Moreover, there was a host of beginning preachers in various stages of homiletical development – the theological students there for three years. It is not necessary to say that

constant preaching under such circumstances is an assignment, before which the average preacher would lose his courage. In addition consider the scope of pulpit work, which was required of the pastor at Holy Cross. There were two services every Sunday, four when you add both feast days after the high festivals. There were services for all minor festivals, except on the days of the apostles. There was also a weekday service, which Stoeckhardt devoted to preaching on a book of the Bible. All these services were well attended. The St. Louis Lutherans were diligent churchgoers. Even the services on Sunday afternoons and the evening services on Tuesdays were remarkably well attended. Thus the great preaching ability of the pastor at Holy Cross was fully recognized.

The time Stoeckhardt had to prepare himself for preaching was limited. Although the orderly situation of his congregation reduced his work load as *Seelsorger*, nevertheless he still had five hours of lecture at the Seminary. Outside of this, he enlisted the help of several students in the Senior Class in serving the sick at the city hospital. In fact, he organized the class into a Hospital Mission Society.

Despite these manifold duties, Stoeckhardt wrote out his sermons in the first years of his pastorate, with few exceptions. But no one ever heard him make use of his manuscript or notes during the actual preaching. And his manuscripts were written with such care, that they almost were ready for the press. In later years, he contented himself with writing out an outline for his sermon, or even a mere sketch of things which were impressed on his memory during his meditation.

If the character of his listeners at Holy Cross made any kind of impression at all on Stoeckhardt, he never betrayed it in his demeanor or delivery. No sign of deference or of a wish to be more refined, more pleasing, was ever noticed in him. We have seen few men who were so free of airs, of theatrical presentation in speech or motions, of rehearsed selfconsciousness, than Stoeckhardt. Outside of the mental work, which he devoted to his text, there was nothing rehearsed about his delivery. Everything was ruggedly natural, spurning all pompous language, every oratorical and fanciful upswing, every superficial gesture. With his medium stature and powerful build, with his large head set on massive shoulders, with a thoughtprovoking look on his face, and lively, twinkling eyes he stood in the pulpit, leaned back just a little, as if he wanted to put stress on his expressions. Without the least effort to hide or soften his strong Saxon accent, he spoke with a clear voice of great range and flexibility. His voice would easily rise in modulation with building emotion. His delivery was intensified with very few gestures, and what few there were, were quick, sudden, and powerful. They were normally carried out with both hands, with the head bowing forward and his entire body somewhat lowered. We cannot remember that ever Stoeckhardt reached out his arm at full length in the pulpit, or even raised his arms above his shoulders. While he was expounding the text, he spoke slowly, as if he was studying it. It was as if he would pluck truth after truth from the text, discovering each one. Changes of tempo in his delivery were many and rapid. After he had spoken one or two sentences in a slow, almost hesitating manner, suddenly a thought would come which he would express quickly, which would go like a leap to the climax. Then for a while his speech would flood forth, until just as suddenly the conclusion came.

The secret of the power, which Stoeckhardt exercised in his preaching, lay in the *content* of his sermons. They were filled with the marrow and substance of Scripture, powerful, solid, and wellconstructed. He did not offer his listeners a thin, homiletical, watereddown soup for spiritual convalescents, with a fat blob of rich thoughts floating on top, rich thoughts which are notably rare. No, he offered substantial nourishment for the healthy appetite of a soul hungering and thirsting for God's truth. Those who came from his services all had reason to think about the words of the Psalmist, "They were satisfied by the rich kindnesses of your house, and you quenched their thirst with pleasures, as with a stream" (Ps 36:9).

There was nothing trivial in Stoeckhardt's sermons. The great truths of sin and grace, of the way of salvation with its welldistinguished marks of repentance, faith, love, and hope – new birth, new life, eternal life – this was the stuff with which Stoeckhardt filled the cup of every sermon to the brim. Pictures he seldom used; anecdotes never. The impressive descriptions which he drew of the visible church in our day in his Lenten Sermons were essentially parts of the elaboration on his theme. He brought such descriptions of current church life into his sermons in order to judge them. He was obligated to teach his congregation [*Pfarrkinder*], as spiritual people, how to be judges over all things.

We noted above that Stoeckhardt scorned every external pomp in speech. With that it should be said that he never fell into oratorical pageantry. But there is often an indescribable charm in his speech. Whoever examines it closely finds that he reproduces the expressions of the biblical languages, the extraordinary beauty of its word pictures. And when he used synonymous expressions or similar pictures in place of the actual passage, it was with this thought in mind, to draw out of the biblical narrative the full sense of the terms, phrases, and symbols. Stoeckhardt was a master of the German language, and when his speech, as in the Advent Sermons, was influenced by the prophetic language, or when his emotions were strongly stirred, as in the sermon on the lost son, then one finds extraordinarily beautiful turns and poetical flashes in his style.

So much for Stoeckhardt as preacher. The proof, which Professor Dau gives in what follows concerning countless individual sermons mostly appears in the homiletical monthly of the Missouri Synod, the "Magazine for Evangelical Lutheran Homiletics" (which can be ordered through the publishing house at Zwickau). These sermons provide a wealth of homiletical material, which will hopefully soon be gathered into postils, so that they will be made available to a wider audience. Especially helpful are the text studies, in which he deals with many of the Gospel and Epistle pericopes both exegetically and homiletically.

Now a word about Stoeckhardt as *Seelsorger*. What he meant to his members [*Pfarrkinder*] is somewhat elusive, because it must be drawn from the observations and opinions of others. For whatever deals with his work as *Seelsorger* in the confessional, at sick beds, and at other special occasions between *Seelsorger* and the souls entrusted to his care, all that belongs for the most part to the life hidden with God in Christ. But with what zeal and faithfulness a *Seelsorger* carries out his work can to some degree also be viewed differently. In one instance mentioned above, Dau made the observation that there was not all that much demand for special *Seelsorge* from Stoeckhardt, because the Holy Cross congregation was a wellordered, established congregation. That is correct, but still he was not deceived by this. He did not regard this part of his pastoral ministry as a secondary thing [*Nebensache*]. He writes about this in a letter addressed to me on 12 June 1883:

"With spring comes the Easter term and the conclusion of my college instruction at Pentecost. From here on out, the senior class is particularly busied with private preparation for their examinations. So now there is usually a bit more leisure time for me. But this year, all kinds of events have frustrated the order in the congregation. After Easter there were a rather large number of sick people who had smallpox, especially among the congregation members who live farther away. As far as making the sick visits and home visits is concerned, it has become even more inconvenient for the pastors in the city than for those in the country. The latter have horse and wagon, but we can only travel here and there by street car. I have the street cars at my disposal to go east and north. But to the west, the city is much less populated. To get to our members who are farmers and dairy farmers, I have to travel a long way and on hardly passable roads. In this a person can keep the German habit of traveling by foot, which no one but Germans do around here. The fresh, healthy air here is conducive to good health. After Easter I also normally begin again the round of home visits, and that pretty much takes up all free evenings. It is well into winter by the time I finish the rounds. But I find more and more that such visits in the homes are becoming just as important as receiving of visitors for the confessional communion announcement. My congregation includes many young children, new immigrants, and people who have only come to know Lutheranism and Christianity in the last few years. Therefore they need much more care and attention than the veteran, timetested members of the congregation."

From this letter it is to be seen how earnestly and with what attention he took care of individual members of the congregation and individual families. This only serves to confirm again what I already could find praiseworthy in him during the description of his youth: that he carried out whatever was entrusted to him with all faithfulness and diligence, and that that to him, the work to be done before anything else was the work for the salvation of souls. This will also be proven again in the following chapter, in which I once again let Professor Dau speak.

Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis 1887-1892

Sitting, from left to right: R. H. C Lange, M. Guenther

Standing: G. Stoeckhardt, F. Pieper, A. L. Graebner

Chapter Eleven The Scriptural Exegete

Dr. Stoeckhardt's theological specialty was exegesis. The first time his name appears as an instructor in the catalogue of Concordia Seminary was in 1878/1879, in the Hebrew exegetical department. In the following years he was mentioned as an assistant professor, lecturing on the Old and New Testament. In 1887 he was listed as a regular professor. Not counting one semester during which he was absent from the Seminary because of illness, he devoted thirty-five years to Scriptural exegesis at Concordia Seminary and to publishing exegetical writings. An entire generation of Missouri Synod pastors sat at his feet. This long period is sufficient for giving an individual characteristic to the teaching chair of the Old and New Testament exegesis at Concordia Seminary. And since Stoeckhardt held the chair so long, it makes it obvious, given the circumstances in which he carried out his office, to see that he had a deep and profound influence on the theologians who are presently serving in the ministry of our Synod.

From the period of 1878-1893, we have no exact indications as to the details of his exegetical lectures. After that the records tell us that for the following years he taught the students in the first year on Genesis and the Gospels of Luke and John. For the students in the second and third years he taught selected Psalms, selections from Isaiah and other prophets, as well as the messianic prophecies. In the New Testament he lectured on the Epistles to the Romans (10 times), Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Hebrews, as well as the Epistles of Peter and John.

This overview of Stoeckhardt's academic work shows an inwardgoing tendency. He followed the sound method of leading the Bible students to a comprehensive and penetrating knowledge of the church books of the divine revelation. He wanted to make them thoroughly familiar with those books of the Bible which contain the heart, the essential content of the saving doctrine in the most comprehensive form. It was as if he would lead the students with himself up to the great mountain ranges of the Book of God. He would take them up to the high peaks, from which they could have an embracing overview on all the surrounding plains and valleys, rivers and streams of the prophetic and apostolic books. If someone has a fundamental understanding of only one book of the Bible, then this means so much for a general understanding of the entire Bible. How much more this is true if one has a good exposition of the chief parts or writings of both Testaments!

In the foreword to his "Biblical History," he has expressed himself about his understanding of the general character of both Testaments. Concerning the Old Testament he says, "Biblical history, and each larger section of the same, is a finely arranged whole, put together from many individual parts; from separate stories. In the exposition, it was the aim and goal of the author to present the main points of each particular story in a short outline, and then to present its context in connection with the whole." And in the foreword to his biblical history of the New Testament, he says, "In the Old Testament, the Holy Ghost accommodated himself to the characteristics of the people of Israel, who at that time were like children under their guardians. In a truly childlike and detailed way, the Holy Ghost tells what God did for their faithful fathers and their seed after them. On the other hand, in the New Testament, he transmits the great things which God did in Christ for the church of the new covenant in the fullness of time. He does this also in a clear, simple way, but at the same time in compact and vigorous language. In explaining the Old Testament history, it was fitting to do so simply; to briefly summarize and bring to light the main points of the story. On the other hand, actual exegesis of the New Testament history indicates an unfolding of rich biblical text. The biblical history of the New Testament is, like

the Old Testament, made up of purely separate stories, in which the course and process of the history clearly steps to the fore. The undersigned sought to do justice to both kinds of circumstances – on the one hand, he presents each individual part by itself, and then places each individual story into the context of the whole. In so doing, he seeks to bring the course of New Testament history into a clear presentation.”

Stoeckhardt’s gift of concentration explains to a great deal his undeniable success as a professor of exegesis. There is a laborious method to carrying out exegesis, which works its way through a book inch by inch, verse by verse, section by section, chapter by chapter. With this procedure one measures the book as with a surveyor’s chain, and finally one arrives at the high ground of reaching some special scope through discovery. We do not want to quarrel with those who advocate such a painful exegetical method, going into the most minute synopsis. This method has its charm and advantages for advanced students. But we think that the short and direct method, when one concentrates on the chief matters of the text, is more beneficial for carrying out exegesis.

It is selfunderstood that this method on the part of the instructor not only presupposes a comprehensive understanding of the entire content of the text, but it also places great selfrestraint on him. But in restraint one shows himself to be a master of every subject.

Among the exegetical works of Stoeckhardt, without doubt his commentary on Romans is most praiseworthy. In the foreword of this commentary, Stoeckhardt explains and justifies his exegetical method at some length:

“The Epistle to the Romans is recognized as the chief doctrinal book of the New Testament. So it is that when one expounds on Romans, it is certainly the chief assignment of any exegete to present the doctrinal content. This is certainly impossible without sufficient examination of the biblical text and context. In this present work, the undersigned devoted himself to do justice to the vocabulary of the Epistle. Then he seeks before everything else to bring himself and his readers to a correct awareness of the eternal divine thoughts, expressed in the apostolic letter. Purely historical interests, with which many modern exegetes of biblical books busy themselves (this is especially true of the letters of the Apostle), ought not to claim the title of being the special scientific way. Every writing should be judge according to its own peculiar nature and according to its own purpose. And the purpose of the Holy Scripture is what Holy Scripture says about itself, as Paul clearly testifies in 2 Timothy 3:16.

“This commentary followed a method of running exegesis, expanding on the verses with contextual explanation, as one finds for example with Hofmann, Godet, and essentially also Phillipi. This method seems to me to best agree with the abovementioned goal of exposition. With the so-called glossatorial method, which attaches linguistic and grammatical comments to a single part of the text, one easily loses the thought process and context. If one, on the other hand (as often happens with many modern commentators), deals with grammatical, lexicographical, historical, and archaeological material in the footnotes, and limits the actual exegetical exposition to a free reproduction of the content of the Epistle, then he tears apart things that belong together, such as language and grammar, form and content. In this commentary, the biblical text is still given the greatest consideration, and must always remain the central point of consideration. It is the job of an exegete to draw the sense and content from the words as they stand written. So exegesis ought not soar above the text as a selfcontained spiritual product. To our knowledge, no exegete has succeeded in dropping out all linguistic considerations from the contextual discovery of the thought process. In that case, the exegete must weigh in his mind how much of the linguistic material he is going to take up in the body of the exposition, and how much he wants to relegate to the footnotes. Plus, the reader is constantly forced to look up and down the page.”

Stoeckhardt had already indicated this method in his earliest exegetical contribution to *Lehre und Wehre*, as well as in his admonitions to the pastors of our Synod in regard to studying the Bible. Whoever reads his later commentaries knows that, through this method, he not only reaches his goal of explaining the text of the Scriptures. Even those who do not have a special mastery in the original languages of the Bible know that Stoeckhardt also was able to powerfully grasp the heart and consciences of his readers through his excellent

ability of clearly bringing home the practical nature of the Scriptures for all people, whatever their lot and circumstances in life. His commentaries can be read with pleasure. The only thing needed to enjoy his commentaries is that one opens up his Bible and occasionally reads along with it. But for the most part, Stoeckhardt has incorporated his own translation into the commentary, and wherever he deviates from Luther's translation, he explains why. He does not quote writings to which only a few privileged scholars have access. When he cites Bible passages, which indeed is not to be shunned, then these have been chosen and placed together with such care, that the reader is richly rewarded for his effort in consulting them.

Stoeckhardt wrote all his commentaries with a view toward their immediate use by pastors and theologians engaged in the work of the church. His summaries of the context of a portion or subportion of the text being explained is always worth a look for the homiletician or preacher. This will tell him how he can quickly but effectively expound the content to his congregation. Frequently there appears a pious meditation in the course of exegesis, a blessed thought which enlivens, refreshes, and frees the mental strain, caused by the previous complicated exposition. This pious thought has the effect that the reader sees and feels for himself the point under consideration, through direct application to his own spiritual life. There are also some polemical parts in these commentaries, which were suggested to the author by the experience of the church for which and from whose midst he wrote. If we are not in error, we have seen a review of his commentary on Romans which criticizes the fact that polemics were included. They think that such a thing has no place and is inappropriate in an exegetical work. But according to Stoeckhardt's thinking, polemics are homiletical hints. They are edifying and admonishing remarks. Polemical digressions are part and parcel of the true and correct work of a scriptural theologian. He expressed what to him was a firm principle, when he wrote in the foreword to "Biblical History of the New Testament," "Finally, let it be noted that the applications made in this commentary to the present generation of Christians and to the present circumstances and conditions of the Church are no accident. Rather, they are in accordance with the rules of interpretation presented by the Scriptures themselves, Rom 15:4, 1 Cor 10:16, 2 Tim 3:16. An exposition which simply stops with the past entirely ignores this fact: 'Jesus Christ, yesterday, today, and forever.' Neither does it conform to the intention of the Holy Ghost, to drop all applications. What the Scriptures say about the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and about the early Christian Church, is directed toward this aim: that Christians of all ages truly recognize what is theirs in Christ, and what the Christian Church is all about." Stoeckhardt is a theologian of the old school, in which theology in all its parts is a *habitus practicus theosdotos*.

The scholarly side of his treatises does not suffer at all as a result of these practical features. He works with critical keenness. He gives consideration to all commentators who have written before him, whether he agrees with them or not. If someone wanted to set up a list of the authors he quotes or considers in his Romans commentary, he would see how much time the author spent studying other commentators before he applied himself to writing down the contents of the various pages in his own commentary.

There is no infallible human exegete of the Scriptures. It would be a misuse of the gift of qualified exegetes, with which the Holy Ghost has adorned and blessed the church, if someone wanted to read the commentary of any exegete without caution and one's own judgment. An opposing viewpoint will certainly arise here and there against certain explanations. But the powerful impression received by every unbiased reader of Stoeckhardt's exegetical works, is this: that we have before us in these writings the most earnest effort of modern times to make clear to the reader of Holy Scripture the actual meaning of the Holy Ghost.

Stoeckhardt's own home after 1906 and a corner of his study

Chapter Twelve

The Burial

The sudden calling away of Stoeckhardt from this life had a shocking effect not only on his own family, but also on the students of Concordia Seminary and on the Synod as a whole, yes, even on those who heard about his death outside the Synod. In *der Lutheraner*, the congregational periodical of the Missouri Synod, his colleague, Professor Pardieck, wrote:

“A heavy blow has befallen our institution and our entire Synod, since it has pleased almighty God to take from our midst our beloved and honored Doctor Stoeckhardt, and to transfer him to the church triumphant. His death came totally unexpectedly, in that a stroke on 9 January brought his earthly life to its end. Although the news of such a sudden death came as a shock to us, yet we have no fear whatsoever that his sudden death was an evil, sudden death, from which all Christians pray to be preserved. He indeed knew that his life had stepped over the boundary which the Scriptures draw saying, ‘Our life lasts seventy years.’ He also knew that he had already begun to reach that time ‘when one lives long’ (Ps 90:10), to press on toward the goal. He therefore considered his death, and already longed for his death. Through this became wise. And as for that which is the true preparation for a blessed death, he indeed knew that a long time ago – He had spoken, preached, and written much about God’s grace in Christ, of repentance, and faith. And it was always his custom that what he preached to others, he also practiced. What he lived in the flesh, he lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved him and gave himself for him (Gal 2:20). Christ was his life, so death was his victory (Phi 1:21). Yes, for one who, like him, lived in the grace and in the fear of God, even such a sudden death is a blessing. Without sickness, suffering, and pain, without first having to undergo a long period of inactivity and inability to work, God has now called him out of fresh, blessed activity, in which he had just had book and pen in his hand; and God has called him out of the battle into rest and peace” (1913, p. 17).

His burial took place on Monday, after his body lay in state on Sunday, 12 January, in the great hall of the Seminary. In the great hall, the president of the faculty, Dr. F. Pieper, gave an address, which has been printed on p. 18ff of the abovementioned periodical. Then Professors Schaller from the Seminary of the Wisconsin Synod and Hove from the Seminary of the Norwegian Synod addressed the assembly in the name of their respective institutions and Synods. Then the casket was brought into the Holy Cross Church, where Pastor C.C. Schmidt, Stoeckhardt’s brother-in-law, gave the funeral sermon, and the general president of the Missouri Synod, F. Pfoth, gave an address. Prof. Fuerbringer spoke the prayer. All of this can be read on the following pages. From the church, the body was brought to the cemetery and was buried. There his body now rests in peace, waiting for the day when God’s trumpet will also awaken him; the day when God will gather his elect so that they, united with their Savior, will also celebrate a glorious reunion, free from all trouble. In this reunion I also rejoice, and on this happy note I conclude my memorial to him, a work which I have undertaken with joy.

Prayer (spoken by Prof. Fuerbringer)

Lord, our God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and God of all comfort, we take recourse to you in this hour of great grief, for you are our only refuge forever and ever. You have torn us to pieces, but you will also heal us. You have beaten us down, but you will also bind us up. We thank you at his casket from our hearts for all the good that you have done for our departed brother during his life, both spiritually and physically. We thank you that now, after the burden and heat of his life’s day, you have taken him into your heavenly peace, free from the bitter pain and struggles of death. We thank you that you have placed him into the blessed inheritance of the saints in light; that you have graciously given him the reward which you have promised to

your servants; and that where you are, also your servants are with you in your glory. We thank you also for every good thing which you have done through your servant for those in his home, as a dear husband and caring father to his now mourning family. We also thank you that you have given him so many richlyblessed years of activity in our institution and in our Synod. You have given him to us as a noble, precious gift, and have preserved him to us for so long. You have now taken him from us according to your will, which is always good and gracious for us. Therefore even in this hour of mourning, we say: May your name, O our God and Savior, be praised! We also ask you that you would be near to those who mourn in these sad days, with your heavenly comfort through your holy Word and Gospel. Comfort them according to your promise, to comfort even as a mother would. Fix their eyes on that inheritance which is unchanging, unblemished, and unfading; the inheritance which the blessed have now already entered, and which is kept in heaven for all those who by your power will be preserved for salvation through faith. Give to your church a true replacement for this pious, gifted, diligent, and faithful worker. Give us men who steadfastly and firmly will testify and confess your Word and truth, without fear of men or desire to please men, despite friend and foe, in good days and in bad. And teach us also at this coffin again to rightly consider that we must die, so that we may become wise. Enlighten our eyes with your eternal light. Let us see your face in righteousness; let us be satisfied when we awaken to your image, Amen!

Funeral Sermon on Psalm 116:15
(by Pastor C.C. Schmidt)

It has been a long time since all of us, who are gathered here today, have been placed into such sorrow at the occasion of a death. We all often experience a sudden death in our midst, and we then receive heartfelt sympathy among our fellow Christians, concerned for us and with us. This whole congregation knows and feels what it is like for the family of one who has died so unexpectedly; for the family that has been affected by suffering and misery at a time which seems so inopportune for them. We cannot find the words to express our sympathy. All of us feel such pain with the mourners; we mourn and cry with them. But this death affects us all, our whole church. It seems like a heavy hit from the wrathful hand of God, so that we are entirely terrified over this and are brought low. And we seek comfort in our bitter sorrow – comfort for them, the mourning family; comfort also for ourselves, for our church. Where? As Christians always do – in God’s Word. He richly offers us such comfort there in the text that has been read.

The Death of His Saints is Precious in the Eyes of the Lord.

That shall be our comfort today

1. When we have recognized the departed as a saint of the Lord, and have considered his life as precious.
2. Therefore we are comforted now in faith, that his death is precious in the eyes of the Lord.

1.

Saints of the Lord are not saints in the way men understand this. Saints are not people in whom there is no sin to be rejected, or who have given up the world and have spent all their time in meditation. Neither are such saints of the Lord, who set themselves apart through good works and sacrifices for their fellowman. Saints of the Lord are all sinners, who have repented and believed in the Savior of sinners. Although they are sinners, although sin still clings to them, their sins are nevertheless washed away, they have been made holy and justified through the blood of Jesus Christ. These are they who fear and love God, and who therefore avoid the way of sinners, and lead a Godfearing life. This is the true way of the saints, the saints of the Lord.

The one who has now fallen asleep was such a saint. As such we have known him. He was a sinner just like all other children of men, and he could not bring it about during his whole life, to be entirely holy and

without sin. He also knew this about himself; better, he knew this about himself more than anyone else. And how this humbled him before his God! He daily had to appear before him with the confession of sins. But he turned to God precisely with this confession, and asked him to purify him from all sins through Christ's blood. And his comfort then was the Word of grace and the forgiveness of sins. This was the joy and happiness of his heart – the certainty that he was pure from all sins through Christ. He believed and trusted God in his Word of grace.

Therefore he was also a pious man. We knew him in no other way. He publicly kept God before his eyes and in his heart. He sought day after day so to live before God and the world, as is appropriate for a Christian, so that his life would please God. This was the fruit of his faith, the fruit of his sanctification through Christ's blood.

God leads his saints wonderfully, often in such a way that it seems as if he doesn't lead them, doesn't think about them at all, and gives them over to all misfortune. How fully the one now fallen asleep had to experience this! But it is in the furnace of misery where God purifies his own. The dark valley, in which they often must wander, is where he is in great measure. And it is there where he was found faithful. The evil enemy has not conquered him. The Lord was at his side, and the Lord made the temptation have such an end, that he could bear it. And after the tribulation, the Lord has again let his gracious face be seen by him, and his soul was again refreshed. This is also true in that God let him find another wife after the years of being a widower. She loved him and honored him. She has been such an excellent helpmeet to him.

He was a pious man, as we have said. As such, he showed himself also in his home. He loved his children and cared for them in the best way he could, just as every Christian father should do. His care for them shows itself before everything else in this, that they, whom he loved, with him know the Lord and want to serve him. To all who lived with him, he was an example of piety, faith, and of a confident life. He was a saint of the Lord.

And we have also considered his life precious. For his life belonged first and foremost, and according to his best powers, to the church, to our Lutheran Church, which is so dear and precious to us. God outfitted him with rich gifts, with which he could be a true, capable tool for the building and maintenance of the church. And because he was a pious and Godfearing man, he indeed applied his gifts, diligently studied, and acquired much knowledge, which put him in good stead for his high calling. He became a master in the Holy Scriptures, as few are able. He was able to understand the Scriptures scripturally, and was able to expound their meaning excellently. And because he feared God, the Word of the Scripture meant more to him than any word of man, more than human regard and honor. In the State Church, he could have had a spectacular career; but the Word of God and the affection of his Savior was more important to him, was more precious to him. So he joined the small, despised Lutheran Free Church.

After his immigration into this land, he then served for nine years as the faithful, conscientious *Seelsorger* of this congregation. But his best powers, the best fruit of his work, and his rich theological knowledge and experience belonged to our whole church. Already as a pastor he taught at the Seminary; for twenty-five years he was a full professor. To lead the students into the Scriptures, to teach them true scriptural exegesis, which is the first and best art of a true theologian – that was his chief work. So through him, for over thirty years, a great part of our preachers have been led through him to aptitude in teaching the Scriptures. As with his words, so also he has served the work of the church with the pen. He has written much, whereby he became a leader to those in the ministry. He also wrote much for the teaching and edification of the Christian people. And in the evernecessary battles for preservation and defense of the doctrine of Scripture and of our Lutheran Confessions, he always stood in the front lines as one of those who calls into battle. And his trumpet always gave a certain sound.

So the one now fallen asleep was also to us a saint of the Lord in the service of the church. His life was considered precious to us. We thank God for it and mourn his death as well. It is a sad thing for us, that we have to see him leave us. We consider his death as a heavy loss, since he could have still continued in fulltime work, and could have still served a few years.

Yet because he was a saint of the Lord, we are not without comfort in all our pain and suffering. No, we have a precious comfort, the comfort that his death was precious in the eyes of the Lord. For the words of our text say this: “The death of his saints is precious in the eyes of the Lord.” So we ask: why did he have to die now? Why has he died so suddenly? Did God not see that death overtook him so unexpectedly? Such a thing is not possible for the saints of God. Their death is much too important of an event in his eyes. It cannot happen earlier and otherwise, than as he wills. Death must be God’s underling. Precisely in death, when he has his saints die, God shows himself to be a faithful God and Lord to his saints. He means what he says, when he calls them his saints. He loves them, and he wants to save and bless them.

Just read what the Scriptures say about the death of the saints. The Lord Jesus assures us, “Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies.” And in his highpriestly prayer, he says thus to his Father: “Father, I want those who are with me, whom you have given to me, to be with me were I am. I want those whom you have given me to see my glory.” Concerning the servants of the Lord especially, those who have served him in his church, God says through the Prophet Daniel, “The teachers will shine like the brilliance of heaven, and as many as point to righteousness, will be as the stars forever and eternally.” Yes, the death of his own saints is precious in the eyes of the Lord.

Is it not something great, that such promises should be kept for people? Is it not an inexpressible blessing, to come from the work of this time to eternal rest; from battle and fighting to perfect victory? To have death behind you and now to be safe in an incorruptible, blessed life; to be clothed in the heavenly majesty; to enjoy that joy which the eternally rich God has prepared for his children – is that not more blessedness that we can imagine or grasp? Even the grave and its decay must then lose its terrors. They cannot keep the almighty God from making good on what he has promised to his own saints in their death.

Can this rich, sweet comfort not comfort us concerning this death too? Yes! Take it to heart, you to whom his departure has become such a difficult thing. This comfort will shine on your heart, and it will help you bear your sorrow in Christian submission. It will produce in you the firm resolve to live in the faith and life, in which the one now fallen asleep lived, so that your death may become like his death.

May God grant to us all his grace, so that we may be and remain true saints of the Lord; so that we, made holy through faith in the blood of Christ, may live our lives in the fear of God, and finally also die as such saints of the Lord. For the death of his saints is precious in the eyes of the Lord. Amen.

Address
(by President Pfothenauer)

Our Savior calls out in John 7, “Whoever believes in me, as the Scriptures say, from him streams of living water will flow.” With that, he testifies that all Christians are wonderful people, in that through their works they make the wilderness green and blossom, and they change death into life. Christians are even taught by God; the Word of God has made its home in them, and they constantly deal with the Word of God. The Word of God is spirit and life, and it is the power of God which saves all who believe in it.

This passage also especially applies to the teachers of the church, who constantly deal with the Word of God by their call. And indeed the more gifted the teacher, the greater the field of activity, to which God has directed him. And how much more richly and widely do the streams of life flow from him!

Such a richly gifted and highly blessed teacher was our now fallenasleep Doctor Stoeckhardt. For an entire generation he has instructed a whole host of theological students here in St. Louis. To them he has opened the understanding of the Scriptures, which overflowed and filled them with the water of life. Upon completion of their studies, his students then have gone out into the cities of our country, to our far-reaching prairies and into the lonely mountains. Yes, to almost every part of the earth they have gone out, and have shared the living water, to which Dr. Stoeckhardt pointed them from the Scriptures. So now through the service of this dear teacher, in thousands of places, many children of God live in their congregations as in a fine, watered garden.

They are as trees planted by streams of water, which bear their fruit at the appropriate time. Their leaves do not wither, and whatever they do, prospers.

Who would blame us then, when we today mourn over such a great loss! Not only do our young theologians and our many pastors mourn, who once here sat at Stoeckhardt's feet. No, our whole Synod, yes, the entire church has suffered a loss!

Still we want to hold our mourning in check, and we do not want to forget the comfort, which God's Word gives our Synod in this sad time. This comfort is threefold:

1. While God has visited, humbled, and wounded us by taking our teacher from us, still we recognize that he has fulfilled his glorious promise to our teacher. Their faithful God has promised to all faithful teachers, that after their days' work is completed, he would take them out of their work and battle, and place them into his heavenly kingdom. This promise has now been fulfilled to our dear father. After a long, rich day of work, he has gone to the rest of the people of God. What here he only saw in a dark word [sic, Luther] as through a mirror, now he sees face to face.
2. The second comfort is this, that the stream of living water, which has flown from Dr. Stoeckhardt to us, does not cease to flow with his death. His students in the entire world will continue to teach in accord with his mind and spirit. The excellent books and writings, which he has left to us as a rich inheritance, will be a deep well, out of which future preachers, teachers, and listeners will continue to draw the living water.
3. The third comfort is the best. Our teacher Stoeckhardt has left us and will not return to us. But our real teacher, the Lord Jesus, remains with us. He will not abandon us, nor let us fall. When Moses died, he gave to his people Joshua as their leader. When Elijah went to haven, his spirit rested on Elisha. And as for the church of the New Testament, we know from the Epistle to the Ephesians, that the exalted Savior will continue to give prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers to his church until judgment day, so that the saints may be equipped for the work of the ministry, whereby Christ's body is built.

So we want to thank the Lord for this great gift, which he has given to us for so many years in our teacher, now fallen asleep. We ask him heartily, to give us such teachers for all time, who believe simply in Christ, who draw all their teaching only from the pure well of Israel, and from whom streams of living water overflow upon our Synod. May he do this for us, for the sake of his mercy! Amen.