



Issues, Etc.TM
Christ-Centered Cross-Focused Talk Radio

TRANSCRIPT

Rev. Todd Wilken, Host

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"Reformation Confessors: C.F.W. Walther"

Guest:

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WILKEN: I don't know whether it's a near-sightedness or a farsightedness; we can look back on the Lutheran confessors, the Reformation confessors, of hundreds of years ago and we can see very clearly the value of their contribution. Not only their insights, but also their faithfulness. That's really one of the things we give thanks to God for the most at the time of the Reformation. It's the faithfulness of those who came before us, and that really is giving God the credit for that faithfulness. He is the one who works to both will and do all these things, in us and those who came

before us. Now, when we get to people who are a little closer to our time, maybe the farsightedness sets in. We can see those far off, but those near, they're not so clear, and we have a harder time appreciating them. The Lutheran confessor that we're going to be talking about on this Thursday afternoon, October the 24th, in the line of good Reformation confessors, is nearer. He's here in America, he's nearer to us in time as well: C.F.W. Walther is both much appreciated and much reviled. And maybe that's part of our farsightedness in history.

Welcome back to *Issues, Etc.* I'm Todd Wilken. Thanks for tuning us in on this Thursday afternoon. *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week continues. Dr. Larry Rast joins us. We're going to be talking about nineteenth century Lutheran confessor, C.F.W. Walther.

Dr. Larry Rast is a regular guest. He's President and Professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Larry, welcome back to *Issues, Etc.*

RAST: Thanks, Todd. It's great to be with you.

ISSUES: The men that we've been talking about in the course of this Lutheran confessors series so far kind of belong to all of Lutheranism. They're deep in the historical roots. And Walther's a little different. He is ultimately an American Lutheran. Sometimes he's even called "the American Luther." Why do people think of him that way, and does that mean that his theology belongs only to American Lutheranism?

RAST: You know, that's a really good question, Todd, and I think probably one that some historical context would help untangle a little bit. When Walther and his colleagues came to the United States, Lutheranism here was in just a terrific mess. The leading figures of American Lutheranism were saying things like Luther had not gone far enough in theological reform, and so they were completing the Reformation as they saw it, and denying basic, basic Biblical teachings that Luther had recovered during the time of the Reformation. Things like the teaching of baptismal regeneration, that baptism really does forgive sins and brings a person into the family of God. Lutherans were denying that and saying, "No, it really isn't much of anything. It may initiate a child into a covenantal relationship with God. At best,

we can say is it's the public profession of an already existing faith," that kind of thing. Very Calvinistic in the first case, and very Baptist thinking in the second case. Or denying the real presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar – Lutherans were denying these things. And so when Walther and his colleagues hit the shores in 1839, they came into a context that really had lost Luther. And what Walther really had as part of his genius was bringing back the unchanging Biblical theology that Luther had properly rediscovered. And he did it by reading Luther and then citing Luther and interpreting Luther for the American scene. And in doing that, I think he's rightly called "the American Luther."

WILKEN: So he does respond to the particular context of American Lutheranism, the people who had come long before him. But I guess, then, to the second question: does that mean that he is particularly an American Lutheran, or that his writings, his thoughts really only apply in our context?

RAST: Yeah, good to clarify that. The simple answer is no, and I was beginning to allude to it before I forgot to answer it. The simple answer is because what Luther had recovered is, in fact, Biblical theology. What Walther was taking from Luther to apply here in the American setting is not an American Lutheran theology as such; rather, it is Biblical theology and it is applicable to the American setting in 1839 as to Luther's setting in 1517, as to St. Augustine's setting in 400, to the first century Christians as the Scriptures were being given by the inspiration of the Spirit, and of course, it remains as applicable today, in 2013.

WILKEN: Walther doesn't begin this way. He does not begin as kind of the towering figure of the Lutheran confessions – of the theology of Luther – that we know him to be today. Take us back to his beginnings, tell us a little bit about his life and how he came

to be a Lutheran theologian in the first place.

RAST: Again, it's a great question, and it's really quite a remarkable story. It's the story that testifies to God's faithfulness to a confused and meandering human being, shall we say. Walther himself was born into a clergy family. He was born in 1811, and his father was a pastor, and his older brother was a pastor as well. But the context – again, the setting for Lutheranism in Germany in the first two decades of the 1800s was really pretty bleak. Like America, later on, things had gotten very confused. The confessional position of the Lutheran Church had largely been lost. In fact, in 1850 Walther himself would say something along the lines of that in 1750, confessional Lutheranism disappeared from Germany. So he was born into and then grew up in a really challenging context, where there were two primary theological options. The first was rationalism. Rationalism taught that human beings by their own reason – in fact, human reason was the master. So we could determine what was true and what was false simply by the unaided use of reason. And that included interpreting the Scriptures. It would be a time when miracle accounts in the Bible were denied, and even going so far as to deny the vicarious atonement of Christ and compromised the two natures of Christ. So basic, fundamental, Biblical doctrines were being denied all over the place. Rationalism really dominated in many ways the upper echelons of the Lutheran Church in Germany at this point in time, including the universities. So that when Walther went off to university in the late 1820s and went to Leipzig, he was confronted by some pretty vigorous rationalism. And that was terribly disconcerting to him.

The other option was an extreme form of Pietism that put the primary emphasis in Christianity on two things: living the sanctified life and then emphasizing the

feelings of the Christian and individual. Walther was more attracted to this because one of the things that Pietists did, unlike the Rationalists, was to continue to hold up the Bible. Now, they saw the Bible primarily as a rulebook that gave the terms for holy living. But at least they were viewing it as the Word of God, and something important and critical to one's spiritual formation. However, they did it completely in terms of the Law. So Walther at Leipzig falls in with this group of people who are working vigorously to make themselves righteous in the eyes of God. And he and his colleagues are just failing at that spectacularly, as we would expect they would. And the result is for him is that it just – the Law does what the Law is supposed to do: it utterly and completely crushes him. It gets him to the point where he thinks there really is no hope. From that point, he is advised by some of his colleagues to pursue – how shall we say this – spiritual counsel, perhaps, would be the best way to put it. A well-known German Lutheran pastor, in Dresden in Saxony in Germany, a man by the name of Martin Stephan, and Stephan has gained a reputation by this time over about 20 years as a pastor of a little bohemian congregation in Dresden. He's gained a reputation of one who still upholds the Bible highly, who has a Lutheran confessional perspective, and who preaches Law and especially the Gospel. So Walther writes him a letter with, as he would say later on, "trembling hands," and as he receives the response from Stephan, he is terribly, terribly nervous about the answer he may receive, because he says as he recounts later on, "This was my last hope." He is really in dire spiritual straits at this point in time. And according to the "comforting letter" – at least Walther's description of it, as that letter comes to be called – Stephan distinguishes Law and Gospel for him and says, "Well, of course the Law has condemned you. That's what the Law does. You can never make yourself righteous before God by virtue of your own

work. That is why Christ came into the world, to save sinners, to save you.” And here this clear distinction between the Law under which he had placed himself, and now between Gospel, Walther, as he himself says, is freed. All he wants to do is to make joyous music to the Lord for the wonderful salvation that He has prepared for him in Christ. It’s truly a life-changing event.

WILKEN: Well, let’s pick up the story on the other side of the break.

We’re talking about 19th century Lutheran confessor, C.F.W. Walther. Dr. Larry Rast is our guest, President and Professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Thursday of *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week on this October 24th.

We’ll be right back.

[BREAK]

WILKEN: Welcome back to *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week. It’s Thursday afternoon, October the 24th. We’re talking with Dr. Larry Rast about 19th century Lutheran theologian and confessor, C.F.W. Walther.

Well, we have him now at this point in the story where he has been rescued from the hopelessness of his own pietism by Pastor Martin Stephan. What’s next for Walther?

RAST: Well, here things take a really interesting turn – and in some ways, a really tragic turn. And Walther, again, will comment on this pretty honestly later in his life. For one thing, he remains grateful to the end of his life for Martin Stephan’s clear proclamation of Law and Gospel. He recognizes that in Martin Stephan, he has heard the Gospel clearly. And he remains thankful for that. However, in his desperate situation, personally and spiritually speaking, and in the difficult circumstances of 1830s German Lutheranism, where basic

fundamentals of the faith are being denied in many places or simply being replaced with amoralism, he’s so thankful to Martin Stephan that in a way, he conflates the man and the message. And so Martin Stephan becomes, in some ways, for Walther and for a number of his classmates and fellow university students in Leipzig, Martin Stephan becomes an embodiment almost of the Gospel for them. And so they take the man and the message and they link them so closely together that it’s difficult for them to think of one without the other. And that will have terrible, terrible consequences in the years to come.

WILKEN: Tied in with this, of course, is something you just alluded to, and that is what’s usually called the Prussian Union – the attempt on the part of the government to force together a Calvinist set of churches with Lutheran churches, such as they were. And this eventually leads to, well, at least in the minds of Stephan and his many disciples, the need to emigrate to the New World. Tell us about it.

RAST: Yes, indeed. In fact, the key move with this whole conflation of man and message will occur when the Saxon state begins to challenge Martin Stephan and his preaching. Now, Stephan continues to preach Law and Gospel, to preach Christ and the like, but he also has the habit of gathering together with his followers in settings that are not “approved” within the context of the city of Dresden and the state of Saxony. So he begins to run afoul of the law. What happens at that point is that the followers of Stephan begin to interpret this as religious persecution that mirrors the Prussian Union. Now, I’ve got to make a point here: the Prussian Union is just that – Prussian. It applies to Prussia, a different and separate state in Germany. It did not directly affect Saxony, which is in Germany, but a different and separate country, you might say. So it wasn’t directly impacting the life and the work of Martin Stephan and his

followers, but along with many others in Germany, they were looking at this; they were observing this, and expecting the Prussian Union to be imposed upon them later on. That they were going to be forced into a new church, you might say, a third church that was neither Reformed nor Lutheran, but Union. And so as they experience what they interpreted as persecution, and as they worried about the imposition of the Prussian Union, in 1837, Martin Stephan and his followers, including people like Otto Hermann Walther and C.F.W. Walther, the two Walther brothers, along with a number of other significant and well-read laymen, people like Karl Eduard Vehse and [Franz] Adolph Marbach, among others, organized an emigration company – a Gesellschaft, as they called it. And their purpose in forming this was to transplant the remaining true Lutheran Church of Germany to some other country. Maybe Australia – well, then they decided no. Finally they landed on the idea of going to the United States, and they were determined that they would go to Missouri and make their home there. So they're viewing this forced union of Lutherans and Reformed from afar, and they're fearing that it will soon affect them. That drives them, finally, to make plans to come to America.

WILKEN: So, just to be fair with the history here, we're talking about a group that may have been jumping the gun and probably overestimated their place in history here, if they're thinking, "Well, we're the last remnant of the true Reformation." Is that fair?

RAST: Yeah, I think that's fair. And of course always in hindsight, it's easy to make that kind of an assessment. That's why I've continually said that they interpret these things as persecution. Well, if they changed a few of their habits and pursued some other opportunities that were perhaps open to them, there might not have been the kind of interaction – the tension-filled

interaction that they had with the governing authorities in Dresden. But they tended simply to blame, "Oh, well, that's everybody else's fault. We're the ones who are innocent in this entire matter, and so we must leave." So I think you're right; they did overestimate their importance.

On the other hand, to cut them a little bit of slack, they are right in the midst of a really, really highly charged context. Their pastor ends up being arrested, he has to go to court, he's finally let off the hook by the king himself – this kind of thing. So it is pretty dramatic, let me put it that way.

WILKEN: And to make a long story short, they emigrate; they discover that their allegiance to Martin Stephan – the history's not altogether clear here – may or may not have been misplaced. And in rather short order, after setting up a colony in Perry County, Missouri, they part with Martin Stephan and are kind of left with all these loose strings, saying, "What are we doing here in America now?"

RAST: Yeah. You know, it's one of these classic episodes where they blamed the Saxon and Dresden government and said, "Things are so bad in Germany that we have to leave. We cannot stay here any longer. And we're going to follow our leader to America, where we can establish Zion, the true church in freedom." But then once they get here, they have these issues with Martin Stephan. They depose him, and in a sense they put all the blame upon him and put him in a boat, row him across the Mississippi River to the devil's bake oven, over in Illinois, and say "Thank the Lord, the horrible man is gone, and now everything is fine." And it's not. Because they've confused, in their own minds, through this whole series of events and experiences that they've had, they've confused what the church is. And they identified it, initially, with Martin Stephan. And now that Stephan's gone, there's a massive vacuum that is

calling for someone to fill it. The clergy themselves say, “Well, we’ll fill it. We’ll just go back to the old order of things in Germany, and have a consistory led by clergy-run things.” But by this time laymen, like Vehse and Marbach that I mentioned earlier, say, “No, we’ll have the laity run the show since you clergy have botched this thing up so badly.” The result is there’s terrible tension, terrible infighting – very, very difficult times for the span of some two years. And finally at the end of all this – this is where Walther emerges as the leader of this group of Saxons in Perry County. He articulates a series of theses at a debate in Altenburg, Missouri, in April 1841, at which he redirects the entire community from the question of power – who’s in charge? Is it Stephan, is it the clergy, is it the laity? – he redirects it entirely and says, “No, the head of the church is, of course, Jesus Christ. And Christ works to create the church through the proclamation of the Word and Sacraments. It’s not a question of power or law, but rather, the Church is a matter of the Gospel. Where Christ’s Word is proclaimed, where His Sacraments are administered rightly, the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the entire Christian Church on earth, including us.” And with that redirection to the Biblical teaching of the Church that is centered in the Gospel, this little community is transformed from a legalistically-oriented group to a Gospel-oriented group, and Walther emerges as their leader.

WILKEN: With only about 30 seconds here, how old is he at this point? Off the top of your head? And this is just the beginning of stuff for him, isn’t it?

RAST: Yeah, it is. He’s 29 when they have the Altenburg debate. He shortly thereafter turns 30. But he’s a very young man. This opens up all these wonderful opportunities for him to pursue, that he will with great vigor, until his death in 1887. So he has a

long and fruitful life, and his leadership starts at the tender age of 29.

WILKEN: Dr. Larry Rast is our guest. He’s President and Professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. We’re talking about C.F.W. Walther, 19th century Lutheran confessor, as part of *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week on this Thursday afternoon, October the 24th.

When we come back, we’ll talk about that long and fruitful life: how he went from a 29-year-old leader of Saxon immigrants to a Seminary professor, president, and president of the fledgling Missouri Synod, and many other things in that long, fruitful life.

We’ll be right back with Dr. Larry Rast and more on C.F.W. Walther.

[BREAK]

WILKEN: Welcome back to *Issues, Etc.* I’m Todd Wilken. It’s *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week on this Thursday afternoon, October the 24th. We’re talking about C.F.W. Walther with Dr. Larry Rast, President and Professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Where we left off there was with a 29-year-old Walther who had kind of emerged because of his theological acumen as the new leader of the Saxon immigrants. How does he get to eventually, as you said, at the end of his life, not just their leader, but their seminary president, seminary professor, pastor of several congregations, and a whole bunch of other things that were required of him in the course of his life? How would you tell that story?

RAST: It’s an amazing story – really, truly a remarkable story of how God uses human beings. Shortly, in fact, within the week of the Altenburg debate, Walther moves to St.

Louis, where he becomes pastor of Trinity Congregation – Trinity in Soulard, still operating today. And there he, a few years later in September 1844, publishes a little magazine called *Der Lutheraner*, “The Lutheran.” And in it, in the first few issues of this marvelous little paper, he has a series that he himself writes – and he’s editing the newspaper itself – but this little series that he writes on the name “Lutheran,” what it means to be a Lutheran. And again, I earlier mentioned in the program just what a mess Lutheranism in the United States was at this particular time. Well, he writes this wonderful little series of articles. I gets printed and disseminated around the American Midwest. And up here in Fort Wayne, there’s a man by the name of Friedrich Conrad Dietrich Wyneken, who is pastor at St. Paul Lutheran Congregation here in town, still operating as well, and also is thinking about beginning a formal means of pastoral formation himself, so he’s thinking about starting a seminary – which he does a couple of years later in 1846, and that’s the beginning of our Concordia Theological Seminary here in Fort Wayne. Wyneken gets a hold of this paper and is reported to have said, “Thank God! There are other Lutherans in America!” And so Walther’s little action of publishing this paper becomes the initial move, once it lands in the hands of a networker like Wyneken, of bringing together scattered confessional Lutherans on the American countryside, on the American scene. And they begin to correspond; they begin to meet together. The various groups meet together first in September 1845 in Cleveland, and the second meeting is held in May 1846 in St. Louis. And there they produce the first draft of a constitution for a new synodical body. Then they meet again here in Fort Wayne in 1846 in July, where they revise the draft constitution, and then publish it in the newspaper, *Der Lutheraner*, and invite all those who are interested in being a part of this proposed new synod to meet in Chicago, in April of 1847. The

meeting is held; it begins on April 25th at First St. Paul’s in Chicago, on South Street; it’s still operating. And on April 26, 1847, they sign the revised constitution. It’s gone through a few more revisions since the publication form in *Der Lutheraner*, but they revise it, they sign it, and *Der Deutsche Evangelisch-Lutherische Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten* is born: “The German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and other states,” and the first president is C.F.W. Walther.

WILKEN: One of his contributions is kind of codified for us, in some ways – I use that word carefully – in the casual instruction that he offered seminary students in the course of his life as a president, usually called “the proper distinction between Law and Gospel.” What is this work and how central is it to Walther and his contribution to the Lutheran Confession?

RAST: Another excellent question. “The College,” as it’s formerly called, which was formed in 1839 in Perry County, moves up to St. Louis in the late 1840s, and in 1850, Walther moves from the presidency of the Synod to the presidency of the Seminary, Concordia Seminary St. Louis now. And there he begins his instruction, and you can imagine it’s not a big faculty at that point in time. There’s just a few folks that are teaching. So Walther teaches everything. His specialty is, of course, what we would today call systematic theology, dogmatics. He reads Luther; he interprets Luther for the students. But he also teaches pastoral theology – brilliant pastoral theologian – and in fact, interestingly enough, remains pastor of congregations through his entire ministry. He’s not ever without a pastorate, although obviously he has the associates that work along with him, because of the many demands on his time. But he teaches in a variety of fields. And one of the most popular things that he does is to speak on Friday evenings to students in a much more casual fashion. In the classroom,

particularly in systematics, it's dictation. He reads his lectures, the students copy them, they memorize them, they're examined. But on Friday evenings, he takes up other kinds of topics and speaks somewhat more informally – maybe that's the better word – with the students, and expands upon important things for being a faithful Lutheran shepherd. What we have now in the form of Walther's *Law and Gospel* are the transcriptions of these lectures that he offers to students in these particular settings. And what emerges there is the brilliance of Walther in bringing together all of the aspects of theology. This is a truly integrated theology that has a Biblical basis – exegetical theology at its core. It has a dogmatic core as well. That Lutheran confessional theology informs all of this as well as, of course, the writings of Luther and the other confessional Lutheran theologians of the 16th and 17th centuries. It's historical. He knows his setting, both in America – he's very aware of the challenges of the other American Sectarian groups and denominations, as well as the longer history of these traditions over time. But then above all, in the end, it's pastoral in character – that it is directing people, directing these students in the future to make their preaching as pointed, as concise, and as meaningful as possible to their hearers, both in terms of the law, carrying out its work as that which crushes and leads the sinner to despair so that they then can hear the beauty of the Gospel, the redemption, the salvation won for them by Christ's death and resurrection, in the clearest possible grace-filled terms. It is and continues to be – it really is a masterpiece of theology.

WILKEN: With about a minute and a half before our break, James in Redlands, California has a question along those lines. "What problems can be caused by not having that proper distinction between Law and Gospel?" About a minute and a half, Larry.

RAST: The first is Walther himself. I alluded to it a little bit earlier. The Law simply acts on its own. It will produce one of two things. The first is absolute and abject despair – what happened to Walther himself. The Law crushing, crushing, crushing every pretense of the human subject in terms of their making themselves meritorious, or worthy before God. It just crushes. And Walther himself actually had to leave Leipzig because of what the Law had done to him. It broke him. The other side of it is: if one allows this to fool themselves into believing they have actually accomplished the demands of the Law. One falls into a Phariseeism then. And there's no way out of that particular problem. So the Law on its own will not produce what God intends in the end, for the human subject. The Gospel has to be there for the despairing sinner to hear and to know the redemption that is prepared for them. However, a Gospel without Law, on the other hand, is no Gospel at all. What need is there for me if there is no law, no sin, no transgression? And so without Law and Gospel together, properly distinguished, the human person never sees Christ. And that is the absolute tragedy. Hence, the proper distinction must always be maintained.

WILKEN: Dr. Larry Rast is our guest. It's Thursday afternoon, October the 24th, Thursday of *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week. We're talking about C.F.W. Walther.

[BREAK]

WILKEN: Welcome back to *Issues, Etc.* Ten more minutes on this Thursday of *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week. We're talking about the Lutheran confessors, past and present. C.F.W. Walther, 19th century Lutheran confessor, is our subject. Dr. Larry Rast is our guest.

Kind of a way of rounding out the picture, if we could, Larry, of this man; lest we do a bit of hagiography. Let's talk a little bit about how difficult this imposition of work that he

put on himself was for him. He had several breakdowns, and he really does, from time to time, crumble under the pressure that he puts on himself for all that work. How would you tell that story?

RAST: Yeah, he does. You've captured it beautifully. The guy worked – I mean, it's unbelievable how much he worked. He must not have had the Internet or TV to watch. But I said he did not allow his name to stand for the presidency of Synod in 1850, and rather, moved into the presidency of Concordia Seminary at that point in time. He continued in that role until his death on May 7, 1887. However, he began to add other things to his work. He continued to edit *Der Lutheraner*; he later on added *Lehre und Wehre*, "Doctrine and Defense," to that, which was a scholarly journal. In 1864, he was reelected as president of the Synod, and throughout all of this, he continued as the chief pastor – the head pastor, you might say; what was called the "gesamtgemeinde," for the united congregations of St. Louis: Holy Cross, Zion, Immanuel, and Trinity. And he played the organ very frequently. This in addition to all the writing that he was doing, in addition to his editing. Not surprisingly, on several occasions, he simply overworked himself and had to take some respites for the sake of his physical health. But he also experienced some profound disappointments – you might call them psychological disappointments – over time. For example, he had great hope in the late 1850s that there would be a movement towards confessional Lutheran unification on the American scene. But that ultimately came apart in the late 1860s when the hope for union and movement towards union through the holding of free conferences simply didn't achieve the desired goal and basic differences on pulpit and altar fellowship remained. That was a terrific disappointment to him. There was a more modest unification that occurred in 1872, when the Old Synodical Conference was

formed. And he was happy about that, and he saw that as a way of moving Lutherans toward greater unity here in America – perhaps not universal, but a little more extended. But that, then, was disrupted in 1880-81 with the very vehement controversy over predestination. And then that again was just simply devastating to Walther as he experienced these things. He saw the weakness of human beings, as what should have been movement towards union ended up with greater fragmentation. And it affected him – not only physically but emotionally as well. And he struggled with that throughout his life, as a matter of fact. President Harrison's wonderful book, *At Home in the House of My Fathers*, which he published a few years ago, has some marvelous, marvelous human insight into Walther as he struggles with these things. It affected Wyneken, too. These men were so deeply committed, and they worked so incredibly hard, that when they experienced the disappointments that all human beings do, they were affected just as we are, and in some cases really had to seek help from their colleagues in the midst of these depressing circumstances.

WILKEN: A couple more things. Talk about what I have come to realize about Walther in his approach in all of the capacities that he was serving, as a leader and a founder, in some ways, of American Lutheranism. It was always a pastoral approach, rather than kind of the institutional approach. Talk briefly about that, if you would.

RAST: Very good. One of Walther's greatest contributions, in my opinion, is his *Pastorala*: his pastoral theology. And there's a partial translation of it; I would dearly, dearly love to see a full, complete translation of that marvelous text. It has so much to say to us, even in the present time. And even if not all the circumstances are the same that Walther faced, the principles are there. Like you said, Todd, in all things he's always thinking pastorally. He's a

remarkably open human being. He's a welcoming person. I get a little nervous with some of the historical accounts of his life that kind of separate him from his humanness, but he was dearly loved by his students, and he dearly loved them. He modeled for them what being a pastor was all about. And as a result, he would always try and disassociate himself from any kind of adulation, because he knew what had happened to him. He would always say, "It's about the message. It's about the message. Keep people, hurting sinners, pointed to Christ. Don't get in the way. Let them see Jesus." And that, I think, is a marvelous testament to his own self-assessment in light of who he was in Christ. He knew he was a sinner. He knew that he had been saved simply by grace, only by grace, and as a result, he simply was pointing others to Jesus. That, I think, is one of the wonderful contributions that he offers. And I really do hope that at some point, we'll see a full translation of that marvelous pastoral theology.

WILKEN: Two final questions for you, with about a minute and a half or so apiece. What did his death mean to the burgeoning confessional Lutheran America?

RAST: Here Walther demonstrates his marvelous strategic character. He knew he wouldn't live forever. He knew there would need to be future leaders, and so already, in the early 1870s, he's thinking about – he's in his 60s by this time – he's thinking about who will succeed him. So he, along with the Synod, is very intentional in raising up someone to replace him as President of Concordia Seminary St. Louis and Professor of Theology. That turns out to be Frances Peiper. He joins the faculty at St. Louis in 1878. He's groomed by Walther; they intentionally have an overlap in terms of their working relationship. They have a marvelous relationship in that regard, so that when Walther dies in 1887, Pieper is

there to pick up the reigns and to move the movement forward.

WILKEN: And finally, by way of summarizing his influence, what is your favorite of his works, and what is your favorite quote from this American Lutheran confessor, C.F.W. Walther?

RAST: My favorite work is *Law and Gospel*. And I particularly recommend the newer translation of it that Concordia Publishing House has had out now for just a few years, three years or so. It's the book that I go back to and read at least every couple of years, just to keep myself grounded, you might say.

However, my favorite quote from him is not in that book. It appears in the first speech that he gives to the Synod as President in 1848. He's elected in 1847, but he gives his first report to the Synod in 1848. In it, he captures beautifully, I think, exactly what we should be about, even in the press. He says this: "Let us, above all and in all matters, be concerned with this: that the pure doctrine of our dear Evangelical Lutheran Church may become known more and more completely among us, that it may be in vogue in all of our congregations, and that it may be preserved from all adulteration and held fast as the most precious treasure. Let us not surrender one iota of the demands of the Word. Let us bring about its complete rule in our congregations and set aside nothing of it, even though for this reason things may happen to us as God wills. Here let us be inflexible, here let us be adamant. If we do this, we need not worry about the success of our labor. Even though it would seem to be in vain, it cannot then be in vain, for the Word does not return void, but prospers in the thing whereto the Lord sent it. By the Word alone, without any other power, the Church was founded. By the Word alone all the great deeds recorded in Church history were accomplished. By the Word alone the Church will most assuredly

stand also in these last days of sore distress, to the end of days. Even the gates of hell will not prevail against it.”

Those were great words in 1848, and they're great words in 2013.

WILKEN: Dr. Larry Rast is President & Professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Larry, thank you very much for your time.

RAST: My pleasure, Todd. Thanks again for the opportunity.

WILKEN: *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week continues tomorrow, Friday. We'll talk with Pastor Matt Harrison, President of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, about 20th century Lutheran theologian Hermann Sasse. Now, you might not have heard his name or know who he is, but at the end of that hour, you will not only know who he is; you will have a deeper appreciation for the great contribution he did make and is still making to confessional Lutheranism.

I'm Todd Wilken. I'll talk with you tomorrow when *Issues, Etc.* Reformation Week continues. Thanks for listening to *Issues, Etc.*

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