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**Friends of Light (*Lichtfreunde*):
Friedrich Münch, Paul Follenius, and the Rise of
German-American Rationalism on the Missouri Frontier**

In the fall of 1835 a Protestant missionary preacher in his mid-twenties, Dr. Johann Gottfried Büttner, by coincidence visited the area fifty miles west of St. Louis, where Gottfried Duden had lived for several years and had written his famous *Report on a Journey to the Western States*.¹ The area surrounding Duden's farm had already developed into a formidable colony of mostly highly educated German immigrants, Rousseauists as well as radicals, rivalled in its scope only by the "Latin Settlement" near Belleville, Illinois.² With this visit the foundation was laid for a series of theological and religious controversies which lasted to the pre-Civil War years and in which Friedrich Münch emerged as one of the leading, if not *the* leading, German-American rationalists. When he died, nearly eighty-three years old, at the end of 1881, he had written six books and pamphlets as well as innumerable articles, essays, and reviews on the subjects of theological rationalism, educational ethics, and modern materialism.³ By the mid-1850s his fame (as *Far West*) as publicist and politician was so well established that he was urged to leave his retreat in the pristine Lake Creek Valley near Dutzow, Missouri, to enter the presidential campaign of 1856 and rally the support of the German-American vote for John C. Frémont. He subsequently gave speeches, along with Friedrich Hecker, in the major Eastern cities (in New York's Music Hall to an audience of at least ten thousand).⁴ During the crucial Civil War years he was a senator in the Missouri legislature, a "Charcoal" who disregarded the threats to his life voiced by the pro-slavery faction in his immediate neighborhood.⁵

In the fall of 1816 Münch had entered the Hessian state university in Gießen as a student of divinity, where he became involved in the political activities of Charles Follen's radical group of *Burschenschafter*, die "Schwarzen." After he had passed the theological examinations in December 1818, he became tutor and vicar, and then served as assistant

minister in the parish of his father, a Protestant pastor in the remote Upper Hessian village of Niedergemünden, Münch's birthplace. After his father's retirement in 1825 Münch took over the parish. Discontent with the hopeless state of affairs in Germany, he retired from his post in 1833 and joined Paul Follen(ius), his longtime friend and political ally, in founding the liberal, ill-fated Gießen Emigration Society. After this society had disbanded upon arrival in the United States in mid-1834, they both settled down in the immediate vicinity of Duden's farm (Follenius actually bought Jacob Haun's farm, where Duden had composed most of his *Report*). Follenius died in 1844, after his attempt to establish a political paper, *Die Waage*, in St. Louis had failed.⁶ In politics and religion he, the former noted court advocate and political dissident, and Münch shared the same convictions and closely cooperated in the religious disputes and controversies to come.

In the missionary report Büttner had submitted to the *West Pennsylvanian Classis (Hochdeutsche Reformirte Classical-Synode von West-Pennsylvanien)* in 1836, he expressed his disappointment about the fact that Münch, the former Protestant minister, was unwilling to form a congregation and recommended instead to meliorate the repulsive conditions of public education in order to enable the young generation to become educated and capable members of this state.⁷ Büttner's account of his visit so infuriated Münch that he wrote a reply for the *Anzeiger des Westens* of St. Louis, which already had published a repudiation of another missionary report. This was Münch's first theological contribution in the United States and it contained all the tenets he would explicate and defend in greater detail in later years.⁸

Münch holds against Büttner, first of all, that the individual has inalienable and indispensable rights in the so often abused area of religion. The right to subjectivity (already inferable from the evident religious and denominational pluralism) and to self-consciousness. Religion is accordingly conceived as an origivative, productive, and continuous critical effort directed towards the edification of one's self and others, teleologically understood on a historical scale as ever increasing perfectibility and actual perfection of the religio-ethically determined human being. Religious matters thus become the self-interpretation of the individual in his relationship to the Supreme Being, the universe as well as the society.⁹ The implied fundamental conceptual separation and distinction between church or any ecclesiastical organization and Christianity leads to a general, emancipative notion of Christianity which not only supersedes its traditional institutional, denominational confines, but legitimizes the subjective spiritual and religious independence beyond and opposed to institutional fettering and restriction. Münch subjects creedal systems and religious customs to historicity: They are merely the incidental robe of religion, human invention fashioned after the varying course of time from which they emerged; and the busy activities of clerics tend to obstruct the unaffected, joyous development of spirit and mind by antiquated forms, presented as the essence of religion, forms in which spirit and life have died away. The light of reformation had dawned in Germany, but its

task remained unfinished and high-spirited men of modern times againrevealed the errors that remained. Their voice, says Münch, expressing the simple truth clearly and candidly, might be heard to hinder the (religious) party which replaces with stale bigotry and obsolete forms what it lacks in the true spirit of religion.

Münch's theological and religious position is part of what had been perceived at that time as a second *reformatio*, brought about by enlightenment and modern scholarship which aids and fosters the dismantling of all dogmatic, obscurantistic and mystical additions which engaged, enfeebled and adulterated true religion, genuine Christianity.

In this vein, Münch entered the ongoing controversy published in the columns of the *Anzeiger des Westens* in 1837 involving an anticlerical German-American farmer in the Bonhomme Bottom near St. Louis, to whom Socrates was more religious than the entire clergy, and Pennsylvanian synods.¹⁰ For Münch religion is an essential attribute of the individual, a matter of the *entire* individual, providing him with the faculties of perception (*Erkennen*) and thinking. These make the religious ideas accessible to him, faculties which must be nurtured and developed. At the same time religion is a subject of the heart (*Gemüt*) which bows to the feeling of infinity in devotion. In this respect religion touches aesthetics, the realm of the beautiful, and insofar it requires a form according to the rules of aesthetics. This capability allows the individual, through knowledge and education, to scrutinize the historical in the religious development, to subject the dogmata and maxims to his philosophical, the religious forms to his aesthetical judgment. In this regard any coercion and limitation was alien to original Christianity.

From this point of departure Münch adds the organizational aspect as a decisive element to his intervention in the controversy, which later would become a focal point of the religious battles waged by the rationalists against traditionalists trying to establish synodal church bodies in eastern Missouri. The completion of a sterile system of dogmatic and scholastic induration and incrustation during the medieval era as well as the introduction of the Trinitarian doctrine (by coercive means), ridiculing common sense, meant the beginning of the end of true religion and Christianity. When the farmer of the Bonhomme Bottom generally criticizes synodal corporations as means of undue tutelage of free congregations and their members by domineering clergy, Münch concedes that any ecclesiastical corporation would have served a good purpose had they kept up light and spiritual freedom among their brethren in order to convey and secure the fruits of the progress of scholarship in their former homeland and had they prevented the "unworthy from seducing the guileless through deception and folly." Münch would not yet combat the synods on principal grounds (as institutional encaging opposed to subjective freedom). He adds, however, as a reply to the announcement of a "Verteidiger der christlichen Kirche" from Pennsylvania to unite in the battle against free thought (*Freigeisterei*) and infidelity, an appeal to the like-minded to ally themselves for the sake of light and truth to unitedly stem the tide of clerical pretension and nonsense.¹¹

This controversy doubtlessly had a polarizing effect on the existing, mostly loose-knit congregations and the religiously aware in general.¹² At that time the *Anzeiger des Westens* was, after all, the only regional German-American newspaper and as such a powerful communicator. At the same time, however, the controversy was indicative of the strong sentiment prevailing among German-American pioneers hostile to any ecclesiastical organization remotely resembling the state churches in the German principalities, perceived by many as despicable means of coercion and domination. A quotation from the report of a Lutheran missionary from Pennsylvania, Henry Haverstick, who had visited numerous German settlements in Illinois and Missouri in 1835-36, submitted in English, exemplifies this fact:

I had frequent opportunities in St. Clair county [IL] to observe how strong is the prejudice, how deep-rooted is the distrust, evinced by very many German emigrants in reference to gospel-ministry in general. Accustomed in their native land to a union of church and state, and hence accustomed to regard the ministry as an essential part of that system of oppression under which they groaned . . . they too often retain their ancient prejudices. . . . I was often compelled to hear their expressions of concern about ecclesiastical bondage, and even to bear the smart of insinuations against the purity of motive on the part of those, who were sending missionaries to the west. Very many could not or would not believe that our missionary operations were dictated by the pure spirit of gospel charity; on the contrary they boldly expressed their belief that some plan had been devised to bind the people through such an agency with ecclesiastical fetters.¹³

This antisynodal sentiment was accompanied by a rather subliminal fear of a monarchic restitution in the United States comparable to that in France, due to the existence of a "slaveholder aristocracy" and certain weaknesses of the republican system. A restitution which might be aided by synods, generally perceived as favoring the conditions of the Old World, including those of a church-supervised school education. Haverstick, who also discovered "scoffers at religion" in the "Duden Settlement," had already disapprovingly stated in his report that the "spirit of revolutions, fostered by rank infidelity, had compelled not a few of them to fly to this western land." He also voiced his concern about the refusal of German-Americans in St. Clair County, Illinois, to subject the education of their children to any ecclesiastical control.¹⁴ The reply of the "Verteidiger der christlichen Kirche" defames the "enemies of positive religion" as "Demagogen," entirely in the spirit of Metternich and German princely authorities. An equally anti-democratic spirit is exhibited, for example, in the depiction of ecclesiastical conditions in the United States given a few years later by a representative of the "Kirchenverein des Westens," Karl L. Daubert, in a lecture held in Hamburg, Germany. In this lecture he rejects the unrestricted freedom of the press, disparages rationalists at random as Jacobins and radicals, deplors the involvement of laymen in the formation of new congrega-

tions, and blames the prevalence of indifference in church matters on the separation of state and church. This unexpected sentiment of a synodal emissary of the American republic caused an unsuspecting Hamburg journalist to write a highly critical article about this lecture which was reprinted by the *Anzeiger des Westens* without the usual editorial comment. In regard to Daubert's views on the separation of state and church he caustically remarks: "It is exactly this separation of state and church, so tremendously contrasting with the patriarchal and police state of the present, which does not suit Mr. Daubert."¹⁵

Thus the politico-religious conflicts surfacing in the second half of the 1830s derived their dynamics and intransigency from the oppressive conditions in Germany (where the state churches were ultimately governed by princes): as an immense desire to be spared from any synodal or even ecclesiastical tutelage and bondage, as expressed in a sizeable number of rationalist, free-religious or at least presbyterally organized, independent congregations among the frontier communities and settlements, as well as in individual "indifference" towards churches or any compulsory religious practice. The following passage from a letter written to a friend in Germany in 1843 by a former Catholic who had settled as a farmer with other members of the Gießen Emigration Society in St. Charles County, Missouri, might illustrate the latter attitude:

. . . for some people it would in many a respect be awkward in regard to religion; the old ladies in Velmede [Westphalia] would certainly make the sign of the cross upon themselves and consecrate themselves if they heard that I never go to church, eat meat three times a day during lent, that my children are not even baptized, etc.; and still I intend to end up in the same heaven as those who diligently observe all this priestcraft [*Pfaffenmachwerk*]; I for my part live this way like the ancient patriarchs and pray in the great book of nature, live, as always, upright and honestly and do not care much about the fairy-tale of original sin. . . .¹⁶

In addition, no restraints whatsoever existed for former ministers like Friedrich Münch or his brother Georg. As one main reason, besides the political, Münch gave for his founding of the Gießen Emigration Society (together with Follenius) and his subsequent emigration the increasing contradiction between his position as pastor, preaching according to the principles of rational Christianity (*vernünftiges Christentum*), and the official neo-orthodox stand of his superiors who distinctly enough warned Münch's flock of his infidelity. He preferred to be a freely elected "teacher of religion" rather than a "decreed, hypocritical priest."¹⁷ At the onset of the controversies, Münch had already served as rationalist "teacher of religion" in his own free congregation at Dutzow, Missouri, about which he states in a contribution to the *Deutsche Schnellpost* of New York in 1851:

Perhaps the oldest of such [free] congregations in America is the one founded by myself and several like-minded many years ago here in the

free West, which now consists to a greater extent of such members who, through our endeavor, were wrenched from the fetters of the old orthodoxy.¹⁸

At the same time he had preached in several communities, both German-American and Anglo-American, in his area, a fact which not only heightened his awareness of the religious needs on the frontier which he directed towards rationalism, but it also accelerated the process of polarization in this area, in which some congregations chose him as a preacher or, in one instance, a larger faction decided to join his congregation in Dutzow.¹⁹ He refused, however, to exclusively take over a parish and remained true to his ideal of an independent Latin farmer for the rest of his life.²⁰

The second phase of religious and theological controversy among German-Americans on the Missouri frontier began with the founding of an Evangelical synod in October 1840, the *German Evangelical Church Conference of the West* (*Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchenverein des Westens*). This controversy lasted for several years and led ultimately to the founding of a veritable rationalist organization. The name "Kirchenverein" or "Church Conference," avoiding any synodal connotation, was clearly a concession to the antisynodal and, to a lesser degree, anti-ecclesiastical sentiments among a remarkable number of German-Americans in the West.²¹ In December 1841, more than a year after its founding, Münch revealed the existence of this synod in their midst in an article he wrote for the *Anzeiger des Westens* under the pseudonym "Photophilos" (Friend of Light). He voices his deep concerns about the religious and political consequences of the formation of a synod in the West which, according to his understanding, threatened the spiritual freedom and independence of that region, so far spared from any "priestly assumption."²² He is particularly worried about the articles of the statutes demanding educational control, implying coercive supervision over schools which members of the "Kirchenverein" had already tried to implement; and also about the article on the Old and New Testaments, in which they, as the word of God, are declared the sole guideline of belief and of all ministerial endeavors. As if, maintains Münch, the books called Bible represented a consistent system of dogmata from which a coherent creed of and for all could be deduced. To state that the entire Bible were the word of God is, in Münch's eyes, sheer madness. How could one confuse the most imperfect beginnings of religious ideas (in which the Mosaic God is concerned about the mode of the weaving of a robe or the clipping of a beard) with the most perfect state of development (in which Christ taught to revere God in spirit and truth)! He asks the "Kirchenverein" whether they really believed that the "Welt- und Lebensansicht," the philosophy of our times, were compatible with that which is partially expressed in documents of such old times. Is not the attempt made here to return to medieval subservience and obscurity?

In a series of poignantly polemic articles a "Friend of Pure Christianity" and a "Compatriot," both pseudonyms of Paul Follenius, came

to the aid of Münch.²³ In one of these articles, published in the *Anzeiger* in early 1842, he analyzes the statutes and criticizes in particular the exclusion of fundamental rights of the laymen, the co-optation clause which reserved the right to accept clerical members, to examine and ordain candidates, and to control the finances, to pastors alone. He resents the fact that the seven founding pastors ("Synodal-Herren") were trying to assume any tutelage in their area modelled after the distorted Christianity in Europe:

Did we escape the European misery, did we choose the freest land on earth as our home in order to voluntarily bow ourselves here under the most disgraceful servile yoke which human ignorance and malice can devise, namely the yoke which is not imposed upon the body but upon the noblest part of the human being, his reason and his religious belief?²⁴

The main concern behind this pungent condemnation was evidently that the forming of a synod would be an incipient step towards an encroachment of spiritual and political liberties, which finally would lead to a new all-encompassing and thought-stifling authoritarianism, the putting to an end of all individual and societal progress. This rather gloomy assessment determined the dispute into the following year. Especially the reminder that it was the unholy alliance between the dynastic state and the church which prevented any human progress in Germany, caused an enormous turmoil in the young communities and their independent-minded congregations. In addition, an anonymous "Observer on the Femme Osage" warned against tolerating the intrusion of "depraved pietistic rabble trimmed at German missionary factories and Eastern synodal schools" into the innermidst of families. And he reminded the participants in this heated controversy that Münch had already emphasized, in his reply to Büttner's account in early 1837, the necessity to unite the forces of the friends of enlightenment and reason to "build a strong dam against the machinations of the darklings [*Finsterlinge*] and hypocrites."²⁵

The year 1843 saw tumultuous events in many congregations of the area, in particular the dismissal and more or less forced removal of Philipp Jacob Heyer, one of the seven charter members of the "Kirchenverein des Westens" from his parish near St. Charles, Missouri. The incidents surrounding the dismissal of Heyer, contemptuously referred to in this controversy as the "president of the St. Charles Synod" (i.e., the "Kirchenverein") and his ensuing unsuccessful libel suit against the editors of the *Anzeiger des Westens*, Wilhelm Weber, and the *Antipfaff*, the watchmaker Heinrich Koch, were extensively covered in the *Anzeiger* and other papers for almost a year.²⁶ In the same year, Eduard Mühl moved the semi-monthly *Licht-Freund*, founded in Cincinnati in 1840, to Hermann where the first Missouri issue appeared in August 1843, the last presumably in May 1851.²⁷ Not only was the title of this journal programmatic, it also alluded to the movement of the "Lichtfreunde" in Germany, a movement closely watched by German-American rationalists. Although the *Licht-Freund* basically preserved its non-regional

character, it developed within a short period of time into an important communicator and organizer for the rationalist cause in the area, and for years remained one of the few religiously oriented papers in German in the region, along with Heinrich Koch's anticlerical and "anti-Latin" *Antipfaff* (1842-45), the organ of the strictly orthodox Saxon Lutherans, *Der Lutheraner*, which commenced publication in late 1844, and Georg Scho's short-lived German-Catholic *Der Freisinnige* (1846-47), all of which were published in St. Louis.²⁸

It was in particular the sound contributions, reflecting a thorough familiarity with past and present German Bible scholarship, from the pen of Münch who became coeditor in 1846, which helped the *Licht-Freund* attain the highest standard of all rationalist periodicals of the time period and let Münch emerge as the leading theologian of German-American religious liberalism whose writings conspicuously contrasted with, for instance, Samuel Ludvigh's loud and more or less simplistic *écrasez l'infame* line exhibited in his *Die Fackel* and his lectures.²⁹ In addition to essays in the area of contemporary Bible criticism, the *Licht-Freund* published a series of articles on comparative history of non-Christian religions, critical contributions on denominational orthodoxy, on obscurantism and mysticism, American sects, extracts from David Friedrich Strauß's *Das Leben Jesu*, polemic articles about Ludvigh and his *Fackel*, documentary contributions about German-Catholicism ("Deutschkatholizismus") and, last but not least, on popery.

The first Missouri issue contained an introductory article by its editor, Mühl, in which he proposed the founding of an association of the "Friends of Light" in order to further the cause of enlightenment and edification according to the spirit and insight of modern times. Münch immediately responded to this proposal and supported it.³⁰ Follenius followed suit and published an elaborate essay on the necessity, character and structure of such a prospective organization, which also included the suggestion to utilize the *Licht-Freund* as its organ. This essay is one of the most interesting documents of the consolidating frontier rationalism.³¹ As the rationalist creed can solely be based on the spiritual and intellectual self-determination of the individual, which thus makes him superior to any restrictive "positive religion," any union of rationalists has to be founded on grounds of a higher *natural law*. Although a synod is a perfectly legal enterprise according to positive law, its "unlawfulness" (*Widerrechtlichkeit*) is sufficiently exposed by the fundamental fact that it abrogates the innate and inalienable right of religious self-determination based on insight and decision of oneself. Therefore any union of the religiously free must not be similar to the synodal type of organization, as Mühl, the editor of the *Licht-Freund*, had suggested, it has to be completely *dissimilar* in order to let its enlightening and thus emancipating potential fully and freely evolve. A synod-like union would inevitably lead to self-perpetuation and exclusivity with their alienating and anti-emancipative effects which would tend to turn the members into a servile following. Above all, such a rationalist association has to be a "medium" of instruction and continuous education for its members in order to achieve and secure

their spiritual superiority which solely guarantees victory over delusion and the "tricks of the darklings." An association based upon the free, non-coercive unity in striving would, last not least, provide for the exchange of views and for a vivid spiritual life not possible in dispersion.

The central tenet of such an association is education, closely associated with the teleologically oriented concept of historical progress. Follenius defines the role of the educated in reference to the counterideal to the German scholar, Benjamin Franklin: he unselfishly dedicated all his endeavors to the people, to his fellow-men—an aspect he already delineated a decade earlier. In developing the concept for the colony of a rejuvenated Germany west of the Mississippi, he stated in a letter that it would be the educational task of the learned class to serve the masses to overcome their disgust at religion decreed by the state which has nothing to offer, neither to heart nor mind, by restituting the true "religion of Christ" (*Christusreligion*).³² Although the references to church history and the alliance of throne and altar in the Old World dominate approach and organizational suggestions in this essay, Follenius also evaluates the situation in the United States which he perceives as one of half-liberation: the people are politically free, but in regard to religion still in slave-shackles.³³

Follenius's elaboration paved the way for the founding of the rationalist association of the counties of St. Charles, Warren, and Franklin, in east Missouri. In April 1844, thirty-eight charter members, "Friends of Religious Enlightenment," gathered in Augusta on the Missouri and passed resolutions which served as a program. A majority voted for the name *Verein vernunftgläubiger Christen* and elected a standing committee as executive between the regular meetings, one committee member each for the three county subdivisions of the "Verein."³⁴ Eduard Mühl, editor of the *Licht-Freund*, attended the third meeting in October to announce the founding of a fourth group in Hermann, Gasconade County, and expressed their wish that "the friends of religious enlightenment might associate in other areas as well . . . to combat the grasshopper army of the darklings." They also presented resolutions which included statements against all titles as contradicting the republican spirit, against the aristocratic pretension of the "priest guild," a warning of the synods, and a commendation of the *Anzeiger des Westens* of St. Louis for its stand against the "Eastern synods."³⁵

The program of the "Verein" which was first presented to the public in the *Licht-Freund* three weeks later, explicitly states that this association was not to form another religious sect, but that its efforts were rather directed at sectarianism and that it was opposed to all hostilities and all branding as heretics which it perceived to be the very result of sectarianism. As main principles it was agreed upon:

- that for man as a rational being nothing can be considered as truth that contradicts the laws of rational thinking; and that educated reason (*Vernunft*), insuperable in itself, shall be the judge over everything offered as teaching or dogmata;

- the belief in a Supreme Being, as creator, steward and preserver of the universe; the hope of an *immortal life* for the soul; the conviction that only through incessant striving for morality (*Sittlichkeit*) and spiritual perfection human destination can be achieved. And that these principles are the essence of all religion and the only incontestable religious teachings;
- that in the *original* and *unadulterated* Christianity these teachings are expressed in a convincing manner, and in the utmost accordance with educated reason;
- that the *forms* in which Christianity was partially introduced, do not concern its essence. The *additions*, through which irrationality (*Mißverstand*) and superstition distorted Christianity, contradict the original spirit of its teachings. And the admixture of everything specifically miraculous has to be attributed to a mode of conception incompatible with the state of education of our times.³⁶

The program reflects, to a certain degree, not only the apprehension of a possible synodal encroachment upon the communal life in the West, but also an uneasiness about the wave of revivalism and obscurantistic sectarianism which had already swept, in the wake of the economic crisis of the late 1830s and early 1840s, into the Western regions, an occurrence perceived as a fundamental negation of spiritual liberty and a threat to the progress achieved in modern times. As in Germany, religion could turn again into an encumbrance in the course of development towards a general realization of the free individual, the subjective freedom from any institutional fixation and lifeless religious traditions. On the other hand, the unearthed genuine Christianity, purified from the distortions of past eras and solely based on reason, provides for the spiritually independent and ethical-minded of modern times. Thus only genuine Christianity, from its beginnings free of tribal and national narrowness and limitations, and as such virtually a *universal* religion, is able to achieve the necessary congruity of individual thinking and acting to the solely legitimate *political* form of enlightenment, republicanism.³⁷

The year 1844 was also the year of torrential rains and immense floodings of the Missouri and the Mississippi which affected the health and economy of the entire region. The membership of the "Verein" grew gradually after these events.³⁸ A sizeable number of the members had an academic background and belonged to the category of the so-called Latin farmers, as Friedrich and Georg Münch, or were country physicians as Drs. Ruge, Engel, Ludwig, and Morgner. The other known members were craftsmen, farmers, and merchants. The former professor David Wilhelm Göbel was a part-time farmer, teacher, geodesist, and also continued his astronomical research, whereas Arnold Krekel, who had just begun his law studies, would become a noted politician and circuit judge.³⁹ Initially the meetings were predominantly educational and centered around lectures on religious subjects, most of them given by Friedrich Münch. There was, however, a more traditionally oriented faction within the "Verein" which was in favor of something more "solemn" than purely educational lectures. In March 1845 a majority voted for services with prayer, singing, and sermon, and

selected the Union Church in Augusta as future site of these services to precede the regular meetings. For the subsequent services, Münch agreed on preparing sermons or, in his words, lectures; with this term he avoided any association with ecclesiastical traditions which he abhorred.

From the outset of the "Verein," Münch was its preeminent intellectual figure, his theological and political acumen providing for an untiring guidance for the lesser educated. From his lectures on Bible criticism and the refutation of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures evolved a series of articles published in the *Licht-Freund*, which he expanded to two booklets published in 1845 and 1847 under the title *Ueber Religion und Christenthum*, the first of which was read by Münch in its entirety at a meeting of the "Verein."⁴⁰ The second booklet, much more elaborate and more clearly structured than the first, is devised as a critical guide through the central dogmata of orthodox Christianity, Catholic as well as Protestant, and intended to overcome the miraculous and supernatural elements and implications of these dogmata in order to reinstate, through "sensible scrutiny" and "reasonable deliberation," the "natural truths" and to reveal the universal spiritual and ethical ideals set forth by the *human model (Musterbild)* of Christ. In mid-1846 a German-Catholic congregation, a union of Catholics and Protestants led by Georg Scho, came into being in neighboring St. Louis, stating in a public address that "a religion based on reason [*Vernunft*] is the best companion of man on his path through life from the cradle to the grave."⁴¹ Evidently a reflex of the emergence of German-Catholicism in Europe and the United States, this second booklet also contains a section in which Münch specifically addresses Catholics, cautiously inviting them to join in a common effort to scrutinize inherited traditions in order to gradually regain, in full accordance with educated reason, the genuine and simple word of the founder of Christianity.

In the fall of 1846 Münch also contacted the radical Unitarian preacher Theodore Parker of Massachusetts, a friend of the late Charles Follen, to ask for help in finding an Eastern publisher for his book *A Treatise on Religion and Christianity*, Münch's only publication written in English. He composed it in 1845, after his previous attempts had failed to establish cooperative ties with William Greenleaf Eliot, minister of the Unitarian congregation of St. Louis, in jointly writing and publishing enlightening pamphlets.⁴² The "Verein" had already expressed its intention to encourage Anglo-Americans to join its ranks and Münch tried, beyond that, to provide a forum for winning over those who could not overcome the language barrier. To Parker he wrote:

Time demands that the friends of rational christianity, of whom there are thousands among my countrymen in this land, should *unite* as one *party* (not as one *sect*) regardless of the differences of language, in order to form one strong phalanx against the pretensions of the so-called orthodox churches. Our common aim is to establish what you call *absolute Religion* (universal, rational, or natural religion).⁴³

In the same context Münch made a futile attempt to cooperate with the *Herald of Religious Liberty* of St. Louis, a pluralistic Protestant weekly. Although it reprinted European articles on the development of German-Catholicism and Johannes Ronge's activities in particular, it was nevertheless opposed to rationalism and refused to publish an article on German rationalism by Münch. And he repeatedly, but unsuccessfully, proposed to Parker the publication of a religious periodical in English "devoted to the principles of Rational Christianity . . .—another *Friend of Light*."⁴⁴ His treatise was published in Boston in 1847 and expressly addresses an American audience, as it contains two introductory chapters on (German) rationalism, numerous references to the Universalist and Unitarian denominations as well as a critical examination of Universalist theology. Münch includes the credo of "genuine German Rationalism" in ten condensed "fundamental articles," two of which implicitly aim at the traditional (including contemporary Universalist) notions of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures and the miraculous:

8. Our holy books are to be interpreted according to the same rules applied to other remnants of antiquity.

9. All conceptions of *supernatural* events and performances are to be attributed to a deficiency of clear-sightedness in the observer, narrator, and believer, in taking the extraordinary for the miraculous.⁴⁵

In a similar vein Münch expressed his disappointment about the fact that his friend Charles Follen had become a Unitarian minister, especially that he did "not rid himself and his church of all remaining notions of *supernaturalness*."⁴⁶ And as the late Paul Follenius in his essay on a prospective association of rationalists, Münch includes in his treatise a warning of the perils of the lack of religious enlightenment for the continuance of the American republic:

The thread, by which human genius is fettered, is now Religious Prejudice In vain this people boast [sic] of their republican institutions and of being the freest nation on earth Yes, I see that thin thread gradually strengthen and become an iron chain, to shackle the spirit of this nation in such a manner as to render the blessings of their political independence illusory, and transfer the rich fruits of all their struggles into the hands of a—SELFISH PRIESTHOOD.⁴⁷

This political warning, which Münch had already outlined in a stump speech he held in English for the Democratic Party during the presidential campaign of 1840, developed into a leitmotif widely shared by liberal and radical pre-1848 immigrants which came to bear in their engagement in the Free Soil and early emancipation movements.⁴⁸ In regard to religious prejudice, however, Münch gives a much more lenient assessment a few years later when he states that the "free spirit of the West" manifests itself, for instance, in the fact that at least half of the Anglo-Americans there belong to the "big church," that is they neither belong to any confession nor participate in any religious practices, and esteem anybody who is righteous and hardworking whereas

the grossest religious stultification is upheld by those educated in Europe.⁴⁹

Based on the evaluation in his treatise, Münch and others also tried in 1846 to petition the state legislature to drop or modify some clauses of the strict Missouri Sabbath law banning all "worldly" activities on Sunday dear to German-Americans. A law which, according to Münch's detailed analysis, infringed upon the constitutionally guaranteed separation of church and state, which was an undue and partial attempt to decree religious conduct and a serious encroachment on the citizen's right to religious and spiritual self-determination. The St. Charles paper *Missouri Patriot* apparently characterized this petition as "Dutch Rationalists' and Infidels' boast" which prompted an indignant reply by Münch. In the same direction goes a sermon delivered before a German-American rationalist congregation "on the day of fasting, humiliation and prayer, set apart by President Taylor" in 1849. The impropriety of this act greatly incensed Münch as "being contradictory to the advanced spirit of the age, and particularly to all purer notions of the Supreme Being."⁵⁰

One of the highlights in the history of the "Verein" occurred in 1848 when the news of the March Revolution broke. Since the beginning of the dissenter movement in Germany, consisting mainly of the Protestant *Lichtfreunde* (Friends of Light) and the *Deutschkatholiken*, virtually all German-American papers had reported extensively about the spreading of this movement, particularly since the exhibition of the so-called Holy Robe (of Christ) in Trier in 1844, which caused a massive rupture within the Roman Catholic Church in Germany.⁵¹ At their annual meeting in April 1848, the "Lichtfreunde" (this is the name the members of the "Verein" now apparently preferred) agreed on a declaration in which they stated, for instance, that they believed "the work of rejuvenation only half-done if not all the fetters which so far encumbered the civil life, the unworthy fetters of the spirit, superstition and coercion, are broken forever." And they encouraged their brothers in Germany "to do away with obsolete dogmata, forms, and sect names arbitrarily forced upon them, and to remove everything that remained from the times of spiritual repression and to unite into a community of spiritually free men on the basis of reason and brotherly love."⁵²

The "Lichtfreunde" reconvened in July of 1848 to debate an appeal to the German people, authored by Münch, which specifically addressed the question of how to secure religious and spiritual freedom. "The combination of church and state power has ever been the ruin of the European nations" is one of the major points Münch makes, quoting the articles in the Missouri constitution concerning the separation of church and state. The ecclesiastical institutions should not be destroyed, emphasizes Münch, but it is the duty of the revolutionists to take away the material as well as spiritual pressures under which the entire people had suffered for too long a time. And he admonishes them to free the education of the youth from ecclesiastical limitations: "priests, dogmata, creedal confessions, and the teachings of sects have no business in school." The "enthusiastic religion," the "original, pure, simple, rea-

sonable teaching of Christ," must be given back to the people, replacing the obsolete dogmata and empty ceremonies which stem from a dark age which modern man should have outgrown. He also appeals to the "Friends of Light," German-Catholics, and Rationalists (*Vernunftgläubige*) to overcome fragmentation and to present in unison the "banner of spiritual freedom" to the people. This address was accepted by the assembled and sent to a daily in Frankfurt, the seat of the German National Assembly, in order to make heard what the "Lichtfreunde" in the "primeval forests of Missouri, on the border of the civilized world" had to give as support and advice.⁵³

This is also the last extant document of the "Verein." A missionary report from 1853, written by a member of the "Kirchenverein," states that the church in Augusta still had to be shared with the Rationalists.⁵⁴ It is, however, safe to assume that the "Verein vernunftgläubiger Christen" and its activities gradually subsided in the early 1850s. Münch continued to serve his free congregation in Dutzow, but he in particular was increasingly absorbed by his political activities and his writing and became a sought-after contributor to papers and periodicals (notably Eichthal's *Deutsche Schnellpost*, Heinzen's *Janus*, Esselen's *Atlantis*, Butz's *Deutsch-Amerikanische Monatshefte*, and the *Deutsche Auswanderer-Zeitung* of Bremen) as well as one of the noted German-American representatives of the Republican Party. He gradually devoted an increasing share of his time and efforts to immigration matters and agricultural and viticultural problems in order to improve and expand, as reformer strongly opposed to urban agglomeration, family-based farming and to eliminate slave-based agricultural ventures in Missouri.

He did remain, however, an ardent advocate of rationalism and continued to contribute to rationalist and free-religious journals like *Der Protestant* or, later, *Der Reformator*, as well as to the Reform Judaist *Die Wahrheit*.⁵⁵ He visited Ludwig Feuerbach, whose anthropology of religion was, in principle, congruous with Münch's rationalism, in Germany in 1859 and helped to propagate his *Theogonie* with a review for Dilthey's *Familienblätter* of New York.⁵⁶ He was particularly disconcerted about the growing influence of mechanistic materialism after the appearance of Ludwig Büchner's epochal *Kraft und Stoff* in 1855, and participated with numerous articles in the debate on materialism, which was led as pugnaciously as the simultaneous controversies ensuing the rise of the Republican Party. In 1871, he summed up his contributions to this debate in his book *Materialismus und Dualismus*, an assessment of the sensual as opposed to the spiritual view of life, in which he gave his support to unlimited scientific research until the boundaries of human perception be reached. He raised his objection, however, to the attempts of modern materialism to efface the necessary distinction between philosophy, the "science of the why and where-from" and life sciences to which the contents of the self-conscious ego are not accessible.⁵⁷

On this basis Münch contributed to the vivid discussions enveloping Büchner's well-publicized and successful lecture tour through the United States with a broadside of articles in the *Mississippi-Blätter* in which he defended free will and spirituality against biological determin-

ism, and in which he tried, for instance, to prove that Darwin's theory of evolution merely removes the *history* of creation, but that it is inconceivable without the assumption of a *causa efficiens*. And when Büchner, the German champion of materialism, evolutionary theory, free thought, and the emancipation of women, made his stop in St. Louis in the spring of 1873, Münch left his rural retreat in Warren County a last time to participate in the public debate about materialism versus idealism.⁵⁸

In the same year, in the introduction to his *Fünf Reden über Religion, Aberglauben und vernünftiges Menschenthum*, he encouraged the founding of associations to utilize this volume in order "to turn the great masses from misguided tools of folly into spiritually free men."⁵⁹ Not accepting the distinct formation of a dichotomous "Weltbild," he continued his efforts to bring rationalism and modern natural sciences, which had long outgrown the philosophy of nature, into harmony by devising a unique monistic cosmology in which the eternal "principle of life" of the universe, the spirit, is conceived as an immaterial ether filling the empty spaces between the atoms, representing the eternal material substance.⁶⁰ Thus, until his final years, Münch remained unbendingly true to his rationalist principles.

St. Louis, Missouri

Notes

¹ *Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America and a Stay of Several Years Along the Missouri (During the Years 1824, '25, '26, and 1827)*, ed. J. W. Goodrich et al. (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1980). First German edition: Elberfeld, 1829. Büttner gives an account of his visit to the "Duden Settlement" and his encounter with Follenius and Münch in his *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-Amerika. Mein Aufenthalt und meine Reisen in denselben vom Jahre 1834 bis 1841*, 2 vols. (Hamburg, 1844), 1:180-91. As to Büttner's biography, cf. *Lexikon der hamburgischen Schriftsteller* (Hamburg, 1851), 465-67.

² The earliest account of the "Duden Settlement" in Warren County, Missouri, is given by Gustav Körner in "Ausflug in das Missourithal," which appeared anonymously from 25 February through 1 March 1834 in J. G. Cotta's *Das Ausland* (Munich). He made this trip in October and November 1833, after he had settled near Belleville, IL. Remnants of the Gießen Emigration Society, mostly Hessians and Altenburgers, settled in the vicinity of Duden's farm in late summer of 1834.

³ In addition to the publications mentioned later, Münch wrote *Geisteslehre für die heranreifende Jugend, zum Gebrauche für höhere Lehranstalten: Ein Buch für Lehrer und Schüler und alle Freunde des freien Denkens* (St. Louis, MO: Conrad Witter, 1872).

⁴ This campaign tour made banner headlines not only in the German-American but also in the Anglo-American press; cf., e.g., "Monster Mass Meeting of German Republicans," *New York Daily Times* [i.e., *New York Times*], 8 Oct. 1856.

⁵ The threat to hand Münch over to "Judge Lynch" voiced by a group of Southern sympathizers, among them two German-Americans, in January 1861 at a gathering in Marthasville, MO, was also reported by the Eastern press; cf. *Belletristisches Journal* (New York), 25 Jan. 1861.

⁶ Sketches of Follenius's and Münch's lives are contained in Friedrich Münch, *Gesammelte Schriften* (St. Louis, MO: Conrad Witter, 1902), 92-106 and 107-25. They first appeared in Münch's *Erinnerungen aus Deutschlands trübster Zeit: Dargestellt in den Lebensbildern von Karl Follen, Paul Follen und Friedrich Münch* (St. Louis, MO, and Neustadt

a. d. H., Germany, 1873). There Münch erroneously gives the end of 1819 as the date of his theological examinations with which he completed his studies.

⁷ Büttner attended the conference May 1836. Extracts of his second missionary report appeared in *Verhandlungen der West-Pennsylvanischen Classical-Synode der Hochdeutschen Reformirten Kirche in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-America* (Grünsburg [i.e., Greensburg], PA: J. S. Steck, 1836), 25–28. His remarks about “Münnich,” i.e., Münch, are on p. 26.—In later years Münch himself contributed to a great deal of confusion in giving an erroneous account of his controversy with Büttner. In a draft from Feb. 1878 entitled “Dr. Büttner” (Illinois Historical Survey, University of Illinois Library, Urbana) Münch not only gives 1834 instead of fall 1835 as date of the visit, he also states that Büttner had published in an article in the *Anzeiger des Westens* an “entire mess of bitter accusations” to which he, Münch, had replied in the same paper. Münch, however, in his reply (*Anz. d. W.*, 25 March 1837) expressly refers to Büttner’s second missionary report contained in the proceedings mentioned above, in which he airs his disappointment, but no accusations. Heinrich Armin Rattermann included an edited version of Münch’s draft in his essay “Friedrich Münch: Der Nestor der deutschamerikanischen Geistespieniere” which first appeared in *Der Deutsche Pionier* 14, and later in Rattermann’s *Gesammelte Ausgewählte Werke* (Cincinnati: Selbstverlag des Verfassers, 1906–14), vol. 11, *Deutsch-Amerikanisches Biographikon* [. . .] (part 2) 149–90 (on Büttner, 168–70), in which he freely mixes fact with fiction. Neither did Büttner hunt Münch up to urge him “to return to the service of dogmatism” nor did a “newpaper feud” (*Zeitungskrieg*) concerning religious subjects take place. Also Rattermann’s characterization of Büttner’s account of his encounter with Münch in *Die Vereinigten Staaten*, 185–87, as malicious is unfounded. William G. Bek, in his liberal adaptation of Rattermann’s essay, “The Followers of Duden” (17th article), *Missouri Historical Review* 19 (Oct. 1924): 114–29, confuses matters even further when he mixes up the newspaper controversy between Münch and Büttner in two German emigration papers decades later with the religious exchange of 1836–37. In addition, Büttner was not a Lutheran, as Münch stated, but a Reformed ordained missionary preacher and a protagonist of the union of Reformed and Lutherans who urged the West Pennsylvanian Classis, then in favor of such a union, to establish parishes in the West as a preemptive measure against the spreading of orthodox church bodies. It seems that Münch confused Büttner with Haverstick, a Lutheran missionary, who visited the “Duden Settlement” about three months after him. Haverstick’s report indicates that he was ill-prepared for an encounter with “scoffers at religion.” He met Büttner in St. Louis in 1835 and attests to his liberal views; cf. H[enry] Haverstick, “Missionary Report,” *Minutes of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Pennsylvania* (Easton, PA, 1836), 33.

⁸ *Anzeiger d. W.*, 25 March 1837.

⁹ Cf. in this context the repudiation of Haverstick’s (quoted as Haberstick) missionary report by an anonymous rationalist from St. Clair County, IL, published in the *Anz. d. W.*, 12 Nov. 1836, in which religious self-determination is defended along a similar line. It might have inspired Münch’s reply to Büttner.

¹⁰ The first article appeared 27 May 1837, a reprint of which in the *Adler des Westens*, Pittsburgh, came to the attention of “Ein Vertheidiger der christlichen Kirche aus Pennsylvanien,” who wrote a reply for the *Freiheitsfreund*, Chambersburg, PA, reprinted in the *Anz. d. W.*, 15 July 1837. The “Farmer in the Bonhomme Bottom,” in turn, published a second “epistle” in the *Anz. d. W.*, 29 July, assuming that the West and East Pennsylvanian Classes or “West and East Gothic Synods” were behind the article in the *Freiheitsfreund*. The “Farmer in the Bonhomme Bottom” was definitely not a “simple farmer” as he suggests in his two “epistles,” but most likely Follenius’s friend Ernst Karl Angelrodt, a noted liberal from Thuringia who was, as the brothers Roebing, a member of the Muehlhausen Emigration Society. He had settled in the Bonhomme Bottom close to the Missouri River in 1832. Cf. G. Körner’s account of his visit there in his “Ausflug in das Missourithal” and also his *Das deutsche Element in den Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika, 1818–1848* (Cincinnati, 1880), 307–8. This assumption is also supported by the facts that Angelrodt, like Follenius, attacked the plebeian anticlerical Heinrich Koch (cf. *Anz. d. W.*, 3 Sept. 1842), and that he, as Prussian consul in St. Louis, submitted a highly unfavorable report in 1853 about the seminary of the “Kirchenverein des Westens” near Marthasville, MO, about to be expanded with royal Prussian support. He described the seminary as a disreputable “Winkelschule” led by questionable characters like an ex-Jesuit and a

"bankrott gewordener Kleinkrämer." Cf. Carl E. Schneider, *The German Church on the American Frontier* (St. Louis, MO: Eden Publishing House, 1939), 308.

¹¹ "Ein Wort in Bezug auf den Streit zwischen dem Farmer im Bonhomme Bottom und den Pennsylvanischen Theologen," *Anz. d. W.*, 9 Sept. 1837.

¹² Although the polarization within the frontier congregations reached its peak after the founding of the "Kirchenverein des Westens" in 1840, there were instances like that in the Offenburg Congregation, Femme Osage, St. Charles County, served by Hermann Garlichs, a pietistic pastor of Bremen, where already the attempt to include a provision in the rule of the church to join a synod in the future created an enormous resistance and hostility among the parishioners towards their pastor. Cf. *Erinnerung an den Ehrwürdigen Hermann Garlichs* (New York: 1865), 33-34.

¹³ Haverstick, "Missionary Report," 32. His orthography is retained.

¹⁴ Haverstick, "Missionary Report," 34, 31, 32. Garlichs's diary and the account of his life equally breathe an anti-democratic spirit, cf., e.g., *Erinnerung*, 47-49; the statutes of the "Kirchenverein des Westens" called for ecclesiastical supervision of schools as well. And still in 1856, Münch deplores the support the depraved "aristocratic" slaveholding system was receiving from the German-American *Pfaffenblätter*; cf. "Missouri und Frémont," *Anz. d. W.*, 18 Sept. 1856.

¹⁵ *Anz. d. W.*, 15 July 1843; the original article appeared in the *Hamburger Literarische und Kritische Blätter*. Daubert was on a fund-raising trip through Germany for his congregation in Louisville, KY. J. G. Büttner, who had returned to Germany in 1841 and completely readjusted to the conditions there, supported Daubert in his contemptuous depiction of the freedom of the press in the U.S.

¹⁶ Letter from Franz C. Hillenkamp to schoolmaster Lorenz Schulte in Velmede, Germany, dated St. Charles, 4 May 1843. Hillenkamp (1801-69) was very likely a teacher prior to his emigration. Letter in possession of Georg Hartmann, Marburg, Germany.

¹⁷ "Die Gießener Auswanderungsgesellschaft," *Der deutsche Auswanderer* 1 (1847): col. 548. In this context Münch also mentions that rationalist theology was still being taught at the state university in Gießen, whereas at the same time, for instance, an orthodox catechism and gowns for clergy were introduced. He also refers to the upheavals which shook the German churches in the 1840s, sufficiently demonstrating that he was not alone with his feeling of uneasiness.

¹⁸ *Deutsche Schnellpost* (daily edition), 31 July 1851. With this contribution Münch entered into the ongoing factional dispute in the Freie Gemeinde of New York.

¹⁹ One sermon in English in Münch's handwriting, probably from 1837, is preserved at the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis. Over the years, Münch served several independent congregations in Warren and St. Charles counties, MO, among them Charrette Township, Marthasville, Femme Osage, and Dutzow, apparently on an irregular basis and partially competing with Garlichs of Femme Osage, like Münch originally a "follower" of Duden. Since Münch, however, was disinclined to take over any parish, it seems that some alternation among rationalist and pietistic preachers took place. Regional antagonisms must also be taken into account. The Low German-speaking Reformed from the former "Grafschaft Tecklenburg," northwest Germany, felt more at ease with Garlichs of Bremen, whereas the liberal-minded "Altenburgers" of central Germany seem to have joined Münch's congregation. Garlichs mentions in his diary, quoted in *Erinnerung*, 34, that a faction of his congregation joined Münch's congregation in Dutzow; cf. also Schneider, *The German Church*, 136. No account from Münch himself exists for these years, roughly 1837-46. In his brief autobiography he included, on the advice of Theodore Parker, in his *A Treatise on Religion and Christianity* (Boston, 1847), IV, as well as in his "Die Gießener Auswanderungsgesellschaft," col. 564, he states that he preaches in one or two rationalist congregations founded by him and his brother Georg. In an editorial note in *Der deutsche Auswanderer* 1 (1847): col. 676, it is stated that both brothers were "rationalist preachers" of two congregations. Cf. also the marriage records of Warren County, MO, of this time period, referring to F. Münch as minister of the German congregations on Lake and Charrette Creeks, to G. Münch as minister of the German congregation "up the hill."

²⁰ Cf. Münch's "Kritik der 'Sagengeschichte einer deutschen Auswanderungsgesellschaft,'" *Der Deutsche Pionier* 1 (1869-70): 190, and also Schneider, *The German Church* 120, note 32. Schneider, exceedingly biased in favor of the "Kirchenverein des Westens," follows the innuendos Garlichs had expressed in his reply to Münch, *Anz. d.*

W., 18 June 1842, in which he indirectly accused Münch of pursuing selfish interests, i.e., trying to take over his parish. Münch, in turn, repudiated this accusation, emphasizing that he so far had provided for his livelihood with his own hands and that he would do so in the future; *Anz. d. W.*, 20 Aug. 1842. Garlichs actually left Femme Osage in 1846, after he had exhausted his source of income in Germany, since he felt that his congregation was not able to provide him with sufficient means; cf. *Erinnerung*, 37-39. He subsequently became a Lutheran minister in Brooklyn, NY.

²¹ The "Kirchenverein" chose this English translation of its name. About the "Kirchenverein" in general, cf. Schneider's *The German Church*. As to the antisynodal tendencies, cf. also *Erinnerung*, 32-36, and John W. Flucke's purely hagiographic *Evangelical Pioneers* (St. Louis and Chicago: Eden Publishing House, 1936), 58. Missionary reports of members and associates of the "Kirchenverein" in eastern Missouri to the American Home Missionary Society written in the early 1850s still deplore this fact and the prevalence of "infidelity" in entire German settlements. Cf. the reports of H. C. Werth, 1 July 1853, and Friedrich Birkner, 18 March 1853. Original reports at Amistad Research Center, Tulane University, New Orleans; Schneider's typed transcripts at Eden Theological Seminary, Webster Groves, MO, are inexact.

²² "Eine deutsche Synode im Westen der Vereinigten Staaten," *Anz. d. W.*, 18 Dec. 1841. The statutes consisted of 17 articles passed by seven charter members on 4 May 1841. Among them Garlichs and Philipp Heyer, pastor of the Friedenskirche near St. Charles. Münch revealed his pseudonyms, "Photophilos" and "Ein Unparteiischer," in the *Anz. d. W.*, 20 Aug. 1842.

²³ "Ein Freund des ächten, von Pfaffen unverfälschten, Christenthums," *Anz. d. W.*, 12 March, 23 April 1842. Later he switched to "Euer Landsmann," *Anz. d. W.*, 20 Aug. 1842, referring to his previous articles. As Münch, Follenius tried to avoid any personal bickerings by using various pseudonyms.

²⁴ *Anz. d. W.*, 12 March 1842.

²⁵ This "Beobachter an der Femme Osage," St. Charles County, dealt mainly with the moral wrongdoings of Heyer; *Anz. d. W.*, 21 Jan. 1843. The "Observer" was possibly Julius Mallinckrodt, subsequently a charter member of the "Verein vernunftgläubiger Christen."

²⁶ Cf. also *Erinnerung*, 41-43, and Schneider's *The German Church*, 121-26, 135-36, and also 129, note 48.

²⁷ No. 1 of vol. 4, the first Hermann issue, appeared on 23 Aug. 1843. About Mühl, cf. Siegmar Muehl's recent essay "Eduard Mühl: 1800-1854 . . ." *Missouri Historical Review* 81 (1986): 18-36. The *Licht-Freund* did not, however, cease publication upon completion of its fifth volume (21 May 1845) as stated by Muehl and others. S. Ludvigh's *Die Fackel* 4 (15 June 1850): 160, contains an article about the issue of 20 May of the *Licht-Freund* (probably the last issue of vol. 10), and a survey in the *Anz. d. W.* (weekly), 29 Feb. 1851 [i.e., 1 March], "Der Stand der deutschen Zeitungspressen in den Ver. Staaten," still lists it as a rationalist bi-weekly. No issues, however, after May 1845 are extant. Five polemic articles in *Der Lutheraner*, six in *Die Fackel*, and a reprinted article in the *Anz. d. W.*, 8 Oct. 1847, which all appeared after the alleged demise of the *Licht-Freund*, allow at least a partial reconstruction of its content.

²⁸ The "Kirchenverein" did not start its *Der Friedensbote* until 1850. *Der Freisinnige* appeared from Nov. 1846 through May 1847 (cf. *Anz. d. W.*, 20 May 1847), published by L. F. Volland, former publisher of *Der Missouri Demokrat*, St. Louis. As to Scho's connection with the German-Catholic congregation, see below. Ironically, *Der Lutheraner* was printed by the pro-rationalist *Anz. d. W.* for several years.

²⁹ Several statements by Münch suggest that he became coeditor in 1846 (i.e., vol. 7, or possibly even vol. 6 [1845-46]); cf., e.g., his "Die Gießener Auswanderungsgesellschaft," col. 564, and his letter to Theodore Parker, 23 Sept. 1846, in which he states, "Latterly, I became the co-editor of a German religious paper, the 'Lichtfreund' . . ." Massachusetts Hist. Society, Boston. In 1844-45 Münch criticized Ludvigh, then speaker of the Rationalist Association in New York, in a series of articles in the *Licht-Freund*, apparently contributing to his dismissal; cf. *Licht-Freund*, 7 May 1845, and *Die Fackel* 5 (1851): 223, Ludvigh's final statement on his dismissal. The last exchange in this controversy took place in 1850.

³⁰ "Verein der Lichtfreunde," *Licht-Freund*, 25 Oct. 1843. In it Münch also refers to the similar proposal he made in the *Anz. d. W.*, 9 Sept. 1837.

³¹ "Religiose Vereine betreffend," signed P. F., 8 and 29 Nov. 1843. It includes also some legal aspects Münch illuminated in his intervention in the dispute between the "Farmer in the Bonhomme Bottom" and the Pennsylvania synods, *Anz. d. W.*, 9 Sept. 1837. His next and last contribution before his death appeared under the same title on 7 Feb. 1844. In it he deals with several other contributions concerning the founding of a rationalist association.

³² Letter to an anonymous friend, 23 Feb. 1833, probably the wife of the Privy Councillor Isaac Friedrich Müller, a physician of Hesse-Homburg, later a leading member of the Gießen Emigration Society who, however, did not emigrate. Sammlung Adam, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin.

³³ His organizational principles closely resemble those of the dissenter movement in Germany. Cf. Jörn Brederlow, "Lichtfreunde" und "Freie Gemeinden": *Religiöser Protest und Freiheitsbewegung im Vormärz und in der Revolution von 1848/49* (München and Wien: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1976), and Friedrich W. Graf, *Die Politisierung des religiösen Bewußtseins: Die bürgerlichen Religionsparteien im deutschen Vormärz: Das Beispiel des Deutsch-katholizismus* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1978).

³⁴ Münch published an account of the founding meeting on 9 April in the *Licht-Freund*, 1 May 1844, including the resolutions passed by the charter members and the original name proposal, "Verein der Vernunftgläubigen," changed by a majority to "Verein vernunftgläubiger Christen." Münch included a revised version of the "program" in his *Ueber Religion und Christenthum*, Zweites Heft (Hermann, 1847), 50-51, but again used the originally proposed name, adding "Rationalisten" in parentheses. In the last extant minutes, from 30 April 1848, the name "Lichtfreunde" is used. The first standing committee consisted of Arnold Kregel, St. Charles County, Dr. Carl Ruge, Franklin County, and Friedrich Münch, Warren County. The minutes are held by the Mo. Hist. Soc., St. Louis.

³⁵ A report of this meeting and the resolutions of the Hermann group appeared in the *Licht-Freund*, 6 Nov. 1844; cf. also the minutes of the "Verein" for 26 Oct. Cf. also the ads for rationalist publications in the *Anz. d. W.*, 11 Dec. 1841, and later, including the *Licht-Freund* and the fourth edition of Strauß's *Das Leben Jesu*. The *Anz. d. W.*, 27 Apr. 1843, and later, contained a recommendation of Mühl and his *Licht-Freund* by its editor, Wilhelm Weber.

³⁶ Based on Münch's article in the *Licht-Freund*, 1 May 1844.

³⁷ Münch first developed this aspect in his previously mentioned article in the *Anz. d. W.*, 9 Sept. 1837.

³⁸ The meetings scheduled for August 1844 had to be cancelled since most members were sick; cf. *Licht-Freund*, 9 Oct. Follenius also fell victim to the feverish illnesses following the flood. He died on 3 Oct., after he had returned to his farm from St. Louis. The minutes of 30 March 1845 mention that 11 new members signed up, bringing the membership to about 50. The meetings, however, were open to the public.

³⁹ Göbel, one of the leaders (*Vorsteher*) of the Gießen Emigration Society, became a leading member of the "Patriotischer Verein" in St. Louis, founded at the end of 1846. *The History of St. Charles, Montgomery and Warren Counties, Missouri* (St. Louis, 1885; repr. St. Louis: Paul V. Cochrane, 1969), 105, devotes two paragraphs to A. Kregels "peculiar," i.e., rationalist, views. Dr. C. Ruge was also the author of a brief universal history, *Kurze Uebersicht der Weltgeschichte* (St. Louis, 1873).

⁴⁰ On 30 March 1845; cf. minutes of this meeting. Both booklets were printed at Mühl and Strehly's *Licht-Freund* press in Hermann, MO. Their full title is *Ueber Religion und Christenthum: Eine Aufforderung zu besonnener Prüfung, an die Deutschen in Nordamerika*, "Heft 1," 1845, "Heft 2," 1847. The second booklet was financed by the "Verein." Münch remarks in his autobiography (*Gesammelte Schriften*, 120-21) that several free congregations, which existed for a long time, were formed as a consequence of the publication of these booklets. Pastor Otto Fürbringer's "Der Rationalismus und die Bibel," a voluminous repudiation from the orthodox side, appeared in *Der Lutheraner*, 6 Sept.-15 Nov. 1845.

⁴¹ "Aufruf der freien deutschen katholischen, d.i. allgemeinen Kirche in St. Louis," *Die Deutsche Tribüne*, 5 Aug. 1846. As the *Licht-Freund*, this congregation used the words of Paul, "Prüfet Alles und das Gute behaltet," as its motto. The names of the 16 charter members and of its preacher, Georg Scho[berlechner], are given in this public address.

⁴² Münch's letter is dated Marthasville, MO, 23 Sept. 1846 (cf. note 29). An abridged version of Parker's reply, dated West Roxbury, 12 Oct. 1846, is contained in Octavius Brooks Frothingham, *Theodore Parker: A Biography* (Boston, 1874), 255–56. Münch states in his second letter to Parker, 12 Nov. 1846, that Charles Follen had recommended W. G. Eliot to him, but Münch "found his views rather too narrow" and felt that Eliot seemed disinclined to continue the intercourse. The full title of Münch's book is *A Treatise on Religion and Christianity, Orthodoxy and Rationalism: An Appeal to the Common-Sense of All who Like Truth Better than Error* (Boston: B. H. Greene, 1847).

⁴³ Cf. the revised version of the "program" in Münch's *Ueber Religion und Christenthum* (1847), 51. The citation is from Münch's letter, 12 Nov. 1846; Münch's emphasis. Mass. Hist. Soc., Boston.

⁴⁴ *Herald of Religious Liberty*, vols. 1–4, 1844–48. Quoting from its liberal prospectus, Münch states in a sarcastic note in this *Treatise*, 33, that the chapter titled "Rationalism" was originally written for this journal.—Münch's proposal is made in his letters from 12 Nov. 1846 and 29 Dec. 1847; Münch's emphasis. Mass. Hist. Soc., Boston.

⁴⁵ *A Treatise*, 38–39.

⁴⁶ Letter to Parker, 23 Sept. 1846; Münch's emphasis. Similarly in his "Das Leben von Dr. Karl Follen," *Gesammelte Schriften*, 70. Cf. also his correspondence in Heinzen's *New Yorker Deutsche Zeitung*, 9 Oct. 1851.

⁴⁷ *A Treatise*, 87; Münch's emphasis.

⁴⁸ Münch's speech, dated 1 Aug. 1840, was probably held in Warren County, MO. Manuscript at Mo. Hist. Soc., St. Louis.

⁴⁹ Correspondence, *Deutsche Schnellpost* (daily edition), 1 Aug. 1851.

⁵⁰ This petition, written by Münch, appeared in English and German in the *Anz. d. W.*, 24 Oct. 1846, signed by Münch and "like-minded friends." Münch's draft as well as the manuscript of his reply to the *Missouri Patriot* are held by the Mo. Hist. Soc., St. Louis. Münch's sermon is mentioned in his letter to Parker, 18 Aug. 1849 (Mass. Hist. Soc., Boston); it is not clear whether he refers to his own congregation at Dutzow or possibly to the "Verein."

⁵¹ In vol. 5 of the *Licht-Freund*, the last extant, six articles appeared between Nov. 1844 and May 1845 on the events following this exhibition, the last of which, a letter from Germany, characterized German-Catholicism as "a German national revolution" (21 May 1845). Even *Der Lutheraner* felt necessitated to publish a critical article about this subject (24 Jan. 1846), based on an article in the *Deutsche Schnellpost*.

⁵² The minutes of 30 April 1848 mention only the passing of this declaration, which is contained in Münch's manuscript, "Aufforderung an das teutsche Volk." Two slightly varying manuscripts are held by the Mo. Hist. Soc., St. Louis.

⁵³ One manuscript contains the addition in Münch's handwriting "Für die Oberpost-amtszeitung in Frank[furt] / andere teutsche Blätter sind um Abdruck ersucht." It is signed by Fr. Münch, D. Göbel, Dr. Ludwig, Dr. Engel, and H. Schaaf.

⁵⁴ George Maul's missionary report to the American Home Missionary Society, dated Augusta [MO], 22 March 1853 (Amistad Research Center, New Orleans). Surprisingly Münch does not mention the existence of the "Verein" as such or any of its activities in his autobiography.

⁵⁵ The short-lived weekly "paper for thinking Christians," *Der Protestant*, edited by the rationalist preacher Dr. Ernst Hugo Krebs in St. Louis, appeared probably from Jan. to May 1859 (i.e., vol. 1, no. 17). In Karl J. R. Arndt and May E. Olson, *German-American Newspapers and Periodicals, 1732–1955: History and Bibliography* (Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer, 1961), 267, it is erroneously listed as organ of the "Altlutheraner." The polemic articles in *Der Lutheraner* are, ironically, the only source which provides some information about the character of this weekly; cf. vol. 15, nos. 9–19. Münch's book *Fünf Reden über Religion, Aberglauben und vernünftiges Menschenthum: An die Deutschen in Nordamerika* (Bremen: Karl Tannen, and St. Louis: C. Witter, 1875) was first serialized in the monthly *Der Reformator*, edited by C. Lohmann in Detroit and Adrian, MI, 1872–73(?). Cf. Münch's brief article "Fünf Reden von Fr. Münch," *Der Deutsche Pionier* 5 (1873–74): 257–58. *Die Wahrheit*, was edited by the rabbi Dr. Solomon Hirsch Sonneschein in St. Louis in 1871. He suspended its publication upon completion of its first volume due to lack of support.

⁵⁶ Cf. his letter to L. Feuerbach, dated Marthasville, MO, 30 March 1860, in which he mentions his review and the attention it had received. An abridged version of the letter

appears in *Ausgewählte Briefe von und an Ludwig Feuerbach*, ed. Wilhelm Bolin, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Verlag von Otto Wigand, 1904), 2:242; original in Universitäts-Bibliothek München. No issues of vol. 3 (1859-60) of the *Familienblätter für die Vereinigten Staaten*, edited by Dr. med. Karl Dilthey, seem to be extant.

⁵⁷ *Die sinnliche und geistige Lebensansicht, oder Materialismus und Dualismus, beleuchtet vom Standpunkte der heutigen Wissenschaft: Ein Buch für denkende Leser* (Philadelphia: F. W. Thomas & Söhne, 1871). Münch refers to it in a contribution to the *Mississippi-Blätter* (Sunday supplement of the *Westliche Post*, St. Louis), 16 Feb. 1873, "Idealismus vs. Materialismus," continued as "Friedrich Münch" on 23 Feb.

⁵⁸ Münch's articles appeared from 16 Feb. through March 1873.

⁵⁹ P. vii. The introduction is from Jan. 1871.

⁶⁰ Cf. "Der Urstoff und das Lebensprinzip des Weltalls," *Deutsch-Amerikanische Monatshefte* 1 (1864): 3-9; and also "Ist der Weltraum leer?" *Der Amerikanische Agriculturist* (New York) 29 (1870): 345. With his contributions (1865-82) to this monthly, Münch reached a considerable audience. Although Münch does not mention the Berlin physicist Philipp Spiller (1800-1879) in these essays, it seems that he is indebted to Spiller's teachings. Münch, in "Monismus und Dualismus," *Gesammelte Schriften*, 283-85, states that he corresponded with him, and also, in a letter to H. A. Rattermann, 28 Apr. 1875 (Ill. Hist. Survey, University of Illinois Library, Urbana), that his "Naturphilosophie" was close to Spiller's. This interest of Münch, the Kantian, might have been sparked by the Kant-Laplace hypothesis and Diderot's atomism. Cf. also "Der Weltäther als Gott und Weltseele," about Spiller's theory, *Mississippi-Blätter*, 6 Apr. 1873, presumably by E. Preetorius.

