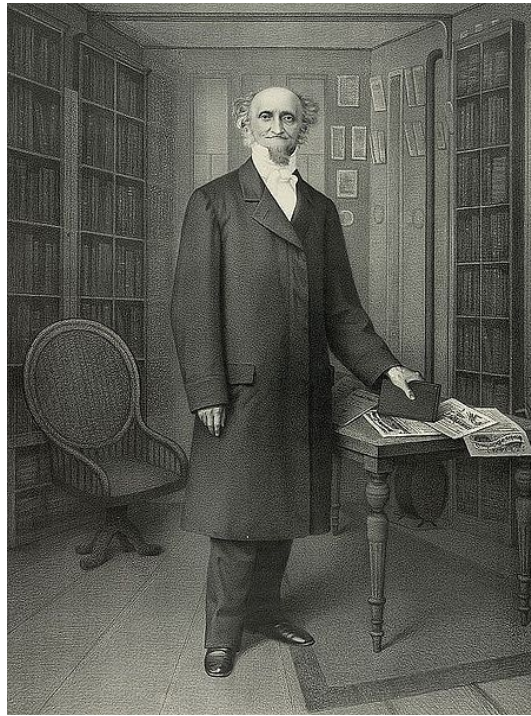


Jesus Thy Blood and Righteousness  
My Beauty Are  
My Glorious Dress



**A Series of Newsletter Articles  
written for the**

**Bicentennial of the Birth of  
Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther  
1811-1887**

**by Pastor Don Hougard  
Benediction Lutheran Church  
Milwaukee, WI**

## January 2011 Newsletter Article – *Biography of CFW Walther*



“Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. (Hebrews 13:7)

2011 is the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther (October 25, 1811 – May 7, 1887) He was the first president of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod and is still the most influential pastor and theologian of our church body. This year I will be dedicating each of my newsletter articles to some aspect of his life and/or teaching. There is still much that Walther has to say to us today, even 200 years after his birth.

CFW Walther was born in the village of Langenchursdorf in a part of Germany known as Saxony. His father and grandfather were pastors in Langenchursdorf, and his great grandfather was also a pastor. His childhood built a foundation of faith in God’s grace and mercy in Jesus Christ. At the age of three his father gave him a three-penny piece for learning this hymn verse:

Jesus, thy blood and righteousness My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
Wherin before my God I’ll stand When I shall reach the heavenly land.<sup>1</sup>

Ferdinand went off to boarding school as a young boy. During that time Rationalism was broadly accepted in the German lands. He was taught that the Bible could not be trusted and that Christianity was nothing more than simple moralistic teachings. He would later recall, “I was eighteen years old when I left the *Gymnasium* (high school), and I had never heard a sentence taken from the Word of God out of a believing mouth. I never had a Bible or a Catechism, but a miserable *Leitfaden* [guide] which only contained morality.”<sup>2</sup>

He wanted to study music, but his father offered him a Thaler (about \$40) a week if he would study theology. The Rationalism taught at the university only intensified. It troubled him so much, that he joined a pietistic student group called the Holy Club. They emphasized that we must go through great personal struggles to be saved. This only led him into more despair, as he wondered if he were truly saved. Regardless of what he tried, he was unable to find a forgiving, loving God.

But then three things happened through which God worked to point Walther to His grace and mercy in Jesus Christ. He often visited the Barthel home in which he was always comforted and directed to the Gospel. Second, he wrote to Pastor Martin Stephan in Dresden who had attracted a large following as a preacher of the Gospel. When the reply from Pastor Stephan came, Walther prayed fervently before opening it that God would not permit him to be further misled. When he finally opened the letter, he later recalled, “When I read his reply, I felt as though I have been translated from hell to heaven. Tears of distress and sorrow were transformed into tears of heavenly joy.” The

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<sup>1</sup>August Suelflow, *Servant of the Word*, (St Louis, Concordia, 2000) page 15

<sup>2</sup>Suelflow, page 19

third experience was that he became sick and had to take a leave of absence from his studies. He returned home and began to read Luther's Works from his father's library.

The false teaching of his day left Walther confused, frustrated, and doubting his own salvation, but God was at work through different situations in his life to point him to the Gospel of God's love through Jesus Christ. He would learn that the Gospel must always predominate in both preaching and teaching as he would later write in the final thesis of his work *Law and Gospel*. Our Lord used these experiences in his early life to enable him to shape the LC-MS into a church body that is grounded in the Scriptures and centered on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **CFW Walther Books**

In this Walther Year, you might want to consider reading the following books. Some are available in the library. Others can be purchased from Concordia or Northwestern Publishing Houses. This is only a small sampling. Concordia Publishing House also carries a number of other books about and by CFW Walther.

#### **Books about CFW Walther**

*Servant of the Word* – The Life and Ministry of CFW Walther by August Suelflow

*Zion on the Mississippi* - The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri

*Government in the Missouri Synod* by Carl S. Munding

#### **Books by CFW Walther**

*Law and Gospel* – How to Read and Apply the Bible

*Church and Ministry* – The Role of Church, Pastor and People

*The True Visible Church and the Form of a Christian Congregation*

*At Home in the House of My Fathers* – Presidential Sermons, Essays, Letters, and Addresses from the Missouri Synod's Great Era of Unity and Growth (by Rev. Matthew C. Harrison)

*Selected Sermons*, translated by Henry J. Eggold

## February Newsletter Article – *The Emigration to America*

Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.” (1 Cor 15:58)



Pastor Martin Stephan

This year is the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CFW Walther’s birth. He was the first president of our Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. In my newsletter articles this year, I am sharing some aspect of his life or teaching. Last month I showed how the experiences of his young life led him to be focused on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This month I would like to look at the issues that led him and thousands of other German Lutherans to emigrate to the United States in the 1800's.

The early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was especially troubling for the Lutheran Church in Germany. Rationalism had infiltrated the clergy. All preaching and teaching had to be reasonable. The Bible was no longer taken seriously. Basic Christian doctrines such as the fall into sin, justification through faith, and the resurrection were denied by many pastors. Sermons were often discourses about current events, science, careless bathing, or the necessity of planting trees.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, there were threats from the government. Many of the princes of the German lands saw no need to have both Reformed and Lutheran Churches, so they combined them into one United church. Pastors were forced to use government approved hymnals, liturgies, and rites.

There was a backlash to all of this by faithful Lutherans. In 1817 Pastor Claus Harms of Hermannsburg issued 95 Theses against the rationalism and unionism of the day and advocated a return to true Lutheran teaching.

In Prussia there were a growing number of people, who became known as “Old Lutherans.” (Altlutheraner) Many of their pastors were imprisoned and harassed by the government for not using the “official” state services. In 1839 about 1,000 of them emigrated to Buffalo, New York and Freistadt (Mequon), Wisconsin.

The city of Dresden in Saxony had such a pastor, named Martin Stephan. His services at St. John’s were filled beyond capacity. People traveled from throughout the region on foot, often leaving home at sunrise in order to get to church on time. His original Bohemian congregation of 30 families felt neglected, now that the congregation had over 1,000 members. Rationalistic pastors and the government became very wary of him and instigated a number of investigations.

Pastor Stephan exerted a strong influence on many of the younger pastors in the area. While he was still a student at Leipzig, CFW was greatly comforted by a letter that Pastor Stephan wrote to him. On January 15, 1837 Walther was called and ordained at the church in Bräunsdorf, not far from Dresden. His first sermon was on Jeremiah 1:6-8 in which the prophet claims that he is only a child. Walther’s sermon had three points: 1) A pastor does not come because of his own will, but because

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<sup>3</sup>Suelflow, *Servant of the Word*, page 43

God is calling him; 2) he does not come with his own wisdom, but with the Word of God; and 3) he does not come with his own ability, but with the assistance of God.<sup>4</sup> Walther would only serve this congregation for two years before he emigrated to America. He struggled with both his superintendent and the school teacher who were rationalists. He contended with many of the same problems that the church struggles with today, church attendance, drunkenness, rudeness, and a high number of children born out of wedlock. He was even taken to court for coming to the aid of a woman who was physically abused by her husband to the point that she was knocked unconscious.

At the same time, both the church and the government were heating up their investigations of Pastor Stephan. Walther was urged to distance himself from Stephan, whose influence was becoming cult-like, but Walther replied, “Shall I forsake a man who, by God’s grace, has saved my soul?” By 1838 several pastors including CFW Walther, and a group of about 800 people, followed Pastor Stephan to emigrate to the new world.

This part of Walther’s life is something that many Christians struggle with. We want to do what is right and godly, but there are so many obstacles. We can feel frustrated. It seems like no good can come of our work for the Lord. Pastor Stephan urged Walther and many of these younger pastors to flee to America with him. Later Walther would confess this as a great sin. He didn’t listen to his own first sermon. He had abandoned the congregation to which God had called him. They thought that they had to come to America to preserve the true church. Walther himself would later call this, “A great error.”<sup>5</sup>

What he would come to learn is that the church has often grown the most both spiritually and in numbers when God’s people are oppressed. On the other hand, when the church is free and unoppressed, Christians often become indifferent and apathetic with regard to their faith. It might seem to us at times as though no good can come of our work for the Lord, but when we trust in Him and share His love with those around us, we can be sure that our labor in the Lord will not be in vain.

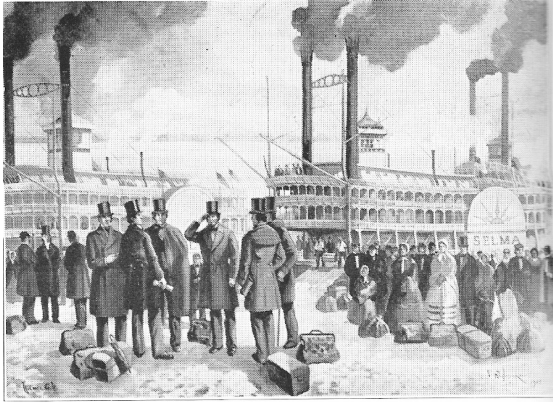
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<sup>4</sup>Suelflow, *Servant of the Word*, page 33

<sup>5</sup>*Selected Sermons*, trans.by Henry Eggold, Sermon for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after the Epiphany, Luke 2:41-54, page 30

## March 2011 Newsletter Article – *Chaos in the Community*

*We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)*



The Saxon's Arrival St. Louis  
(*Zion on the Mississippi*, plate 14)

In last month's article we looked at how Pastor Martin Stephan convinced CFW Walther, several other pastors, and about 800 lay people that the religious conditions were so bad in Germany, that the only option was to emigrate to America.

Stephan was suddenly very eager to emigrate because he was having problems with both the government and his congregation. He was often arrested for conducting meetings which lasted through the night. In October, 1838 his congregation brought charges of immorality, neglect of pastoral duties, and embezzlement.<sup>6</sup> Travel regulations were made for the emigration, which included a provision that Stephan was to be given the

title, "Very Reverend Sir." Any disobedience against his orders would be punished "with severe civil and ecclesiastical penalties." Only pastors were allowed free access to him. Anyone else was not allowed to see him unannounced.<sup>7</sup>

CFW Walther had some difficulty in receiving a release from his call because of allegations with regard to the methods in which he persuaded people to join the emigration, which allegedly involved the breaking up of families. His farewell sermon at Bräunsdorf was so legalistic that some people ran from the church in terror and in tears.<sup>8</sup>

Five ships with the emigrants departed Bremerhaven, Germany in November, 1838. Four of them arrived in New Orleans about 6 weeks later. The *Amalia* was sadly lost at sea. Pastor Stephan traveled on the *Olbers*. While on board, several pastors and leading laymen signed the "Confirmation of Stephan's Investiture" which made Martin Stephan "bishop" over the colony. The group promised childlike, willing obedience with his episcopal ordinances in all things.<sup>9</sup>

The community traveled by river boat to St. Louis and purchased 4,475 acres at \$2.06/acre, south of St. Louis in Perry County, Mo. On April 26, 1839 Pastor Stephan along with the first detachment of immigrants moved to Perry County.

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<sup>6</sup>Walter O. Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, (St. Louis, Concordia 1953), page 183

<sup>7</sup>Suelflow, *Servant of the Word*, page 48

<sup>8</sup>Forster, *Zion on the Mississippi*, pages 178-179

<sup>9</sup>Suelflow, *Servant of the Word*, page 49

On May 5, 1839 Pastor Löber preached a soul-searching sermon at the St. Louis congregation. In response two women, without knowing about the other, each confessed to adultery with Pastor Stephan, who had left his wife and most of his children in Germany. Soon other women came forward, claiming that Stephan attempted to seduce them. The St. Louis clergy decided to send CFW to Perry County to confront Stephan with the allegations. He was probably sent because he was the youngest and most expendable.<sup>10</sup> Stephan was furious that Walther came without his permission. Walther never did convey the allegations, but he began to undermine Stephan's authority. He convinced the people to disobey Stephan's orders. He even held competing services on Sunday mornings. At the end of May the remainder of the community traveled to Perry County. A council of pastors was formed and accused Stephan of false doctrine, mismanagement of the funds, and sexual immorality. Stephan was forced to resign all of his responsibilities and leave the community. On May 31 he was put in a boat with a spade, an ax, and other personal effects and was rowed across the Mississippi into Illinois where he would found and serve several congregations until his death.

For two years the community fell into utter confusion and conflict between a lay group and the pastors. The lay people dismissed all of the pastors and insisted on congregations, which were governed exclusively by the laity. The pastors demanded a structure in which the laity would obey the pastors in all matters. Everyone in the community confessed that it was a sin, that they had followed Stephan and emigrated in the first place. Finally the leader of the lay group, a lawyer named, Franz Adolf Marbach challenged Walther to a debate on the question, "Are we church or not?" It was held in Altenburg on April 15 and 21, 1841. Marbach's position was that the entire colony was guilty of a great moral sin. There was only one thing to do. They should have a solemn public confession of the sin of the whole community and return to Germany where they belonged.<sup>11</sup> He believed that they were a mob, which had ceased to be church. After studying the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions, Walther came up with 8 theses in which he acknowledged that they had sinned, but they still had the Lord Jesus Christ along with His Word and Sacraments, even though these had not been purely taught. He made the point that churches with false teaching are not to be dissolved, but reformed. Basically, he said that they were still church and had the right to call pastors and administer the Sacraments. Walther's arguments won the day. Marbach conceded. The **Altenburg Debate** was a turning point in the history of the LCMS and formed Walther into the new leader of the Saxon group.

This experience has several lessons for us today, such as that we follow Christ not our religious leaders and what the church is. But it also strikes an important topic in today's Christianity. Many Christians look at the forks in the road of their lives with great horror. They believe that they must discern the direction that God wants. If they go in that direction, their lives will be filled with blessing, but if they choose the wrong path, their lives will be ruined. The only way to correct such a great error is to go back and start over again. That was Marbach's position, that they chose the wrong path and must go back to Germany to start over. Walther was able to see that we might make foolish or sinful decisions. Sometimes we simply don't know what God's will is, but God can bless

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<sup>10</sup>Suelflow, *Servant of the Word*, page 50

<sup>11</sup>Carl S. Munding, *Government in the Missouri Synod*, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1947), page 117

any path that we are on when we repent and follow our Savior. It was a sin for them to follow Stephan and leave Germany, but God blessed those people greatly when they came to their senses and followed our Lord. No matter where you have been or how sinful you have been, God can still bless you. Repent and follow Christ from where you are, not where you think that you should start, and Christ will lead you with His forgiveness, blessing, and peace.



## April Newsletter Article – *Rest for a Weary Soul*

“Come to Me all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)



FCD Wynekin

We might think that “burnout” is a modern problem. With all the stresses that we have at home and work, we sometimes get to the point that we have trouble functioning. However, such burnout was something that CFW Walther and many of the founders of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod also experienced. It is almost unimaginable how Walther was able to carry out his many duties. He was the pastor of the largest Lutheran Church in St. Louis, the president of Concordia Seminary, at times president of the synod, the editor of a newspaper called *Der Lutheraner* (the Lutheran) for laypeople, and the editor of a journal called *Lehre und Wehre* for theologians. This was a time of unprecedented growth in the synod and also a time when he had to contend with former friends, who became bitter enemies of the synod.

Walther was also extremely devoted to his family. He had a deep love for his wife Emilie. Both of them were devoted to their children and grandchildren. As was the case with many of the families of that time, only 4 of their 6 children, and only 14 of their 20 grandchildren reached adulthood. He wrote stirring and emotional letters of sympathy to his own children who lost children of their own, directing them to Jesus and reminding them of their eternal home in heaven where they would all be reunited.<sup>12</sup>

There were several times when these stresses began to take a toll of Walther’s health. In January 1860 the concerns about his health were so grave that Synod President Wynekin and Professor Craemer of the Ft. Wayne seminary traveled to St. Louis to encourage Walther to take time off and travel to Germany to gather his strength. His congregation agreed and paid for all of his expenses. As he traveled from St. Louis to New Orleans he wrote an emotional article in *Der Lutheraner* to thank all for their concern and support for his trip.

On March 10 he left New Orleans and sailed to Hamburg where he arrived on May 10. While he was on this ship, he wrote a few hymns. In the area of Key West he wrote a hymn of how Christ hears us when we cry in all the storms of life. He wrote a Good Friday hymn, which praises Christ and calls this a “blessed day, full of salvation.” and on Easter Sunday, April 8, 1860 he wrote a hymn, “Erstanden, erstanden ist Jesus Christ.” None of those hymns were ever in a hymnal until Anna M. Meyer freely translated his Easter hymn for the *Lutheran Witness* in 1937. It was soon included in the *Lutheran Hymnal*.

The verses of this hymn are as follows:

1. He’s risen, he’s risen, Christ Jesus, the Lord;  
Death’s prison he opened, incarnate, true Word.  
Break forth, hosts of heaven, in jubilant song  
While earth, sea, and mountain the praises prolong.

2. The foe was triumphant when on Calvary  
The Lord of creation was nailed to the tree.  
In Satan’s domain his hosts shouted and jeered,  
For Jesus was slain, whom the evil ones feared.

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<sup>12</sup>Suelflow, page 231

3. But short was their triumph, the Savior arose,  
And death, hell, and Satan he vanquished, his foes;  
The conquering Lord lifts his banner on high.  
He lives, yes, he lives, and will nevermore die.

5. Then sing your hosannas and raise your glad voice;  
Proclaim the blest tidings that all may rejoice.  
Laud, honor, and praise to the Lamb that was slain;  
In glory he reigns, yes, and ever shall reign.

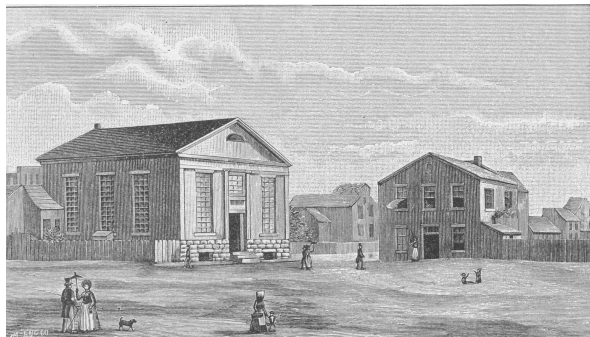
4 Oh, where is your sting, death? We fear you no more;  
Christ rose, and now open is fair Eden's door.  
For all our transgressions his blood does atone;  
Redeemed and forgiven, we now are his own.

There are times when the sins and burdens of this life weigh us down, but it is a blessing when God gives us brothers and sisters in Christ who express their concern. Like Walther, it is good to accept their support. Such people are a gift of God to us. All three hymns that he wrote during the journey express his sure confidence in Christ's love and mercy for Him. When we come to Christ in those days when we are "burned out," He does give us the strength, which only He can give.

After those days of rest, Walther returned to Saint Louis happy and refreshed in both body and soul. May God also grant us the rest and support that each of us need in such days.

## May Newsletter Article – *Chief and Foremost, a Pastor of God’s Flock*

“Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood.” (Acts 20:28)



First Trinity Lutheran Church, 1842

This month, I would like to look at CFW Walther’s work as a pastor. Two months ago, we looked at the Altenburg Debate in which Walther debated with an attorney named Adolf Marbach on the question of whether they were church or a mob. Walther conceded that the emigration was sinful, but that they were still church. Only a few months before this momentous debate, Walther’s brother Otto died on January 21, 1841, leaving a young wife and three month old son. Otto had pastored the Saxons who stayed in St. Louis. On February 8 the congregation

called CFW Walther to be their pastor. On May 2, 1841 he was installed as pastor of the congregation. There were four things that this congregation needed: a name, a building, a constitution, and a hymnal.

With regard to the name, Walther required that the congregation should not be named after a person, that the name should contain a statement of faith, and that it should not be open to mockery. The congregation settled on the name, “Trinity.”<sup>13</sup>

Christ Episcopal Church had graciously allowed the Saxons to use their church basement for their services, but as the congregation grew, it became necessary to build their own church. On December 4, 1842 the new church was dedicated on 3<sup>rd</sup> and Lombard. At that time the congregation had a baptized membership of 343 souls.

In 1843 the congregation approved a constitution, which became a model for all congregations of the LCMS, and even for the constitution of the synod itself. It basically divides the responsibilities of the leadership between elders who oversee the spiritual affairs of the congregation and trustees who oversee the temporal affairs. With regard to voters’ meetings, Walther writes in *The Form of a Christian Congregation*, “Matters of doctrine and conscience are to be resolved unanimously according to God’s Word and the Confession of the church. Adiaphora, however, that is, matters which in God’s Word are neither commanded nor forbidden, are to be decided according to the principles of love and fairness, after a previous deliberation, in Christian order by a majority of votes.”<sup>14</sup> In later years some pastors, including Pastor Grabau of the Buffalo Synod and Pastor Loehe from Germany, would question whether Walther’s congregational structure was influenced by American democracy, but he countered, “We did not pattern the doctrine of our church after the conditions prevailing here, but we established the church according to the doctrine of our church.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>*Law and Gospel*, page xxvi

<sup>14</sup>*Church and Ministry*, page 56.

<sup>15</sup>*Church and Ministry*, page 10

The only hymnals available at that time were those which the people had brought with them from Germany, but the congregation and entire group needed a common hymnal. The voters' assembly on November 10, 1845 determined to print a hymnal, which was first published in 1847. The rights to this hymnal were given to the synod in 1862, and it was printed by CPH until at least the 1960's. We still used this German hymnal in my first congregation in 1996. It is very near and dear to my heart.<sup>16</sup>

Trinity Lutheran Church and the city of St. Louis both continued to grow. Trinity started three daughter congregations, Immanuel, Holy Cross, and Zion. Each one of those congregations remained a part of Trinity until Walther's death. It was called the "Gesamtgemeinde (United Congregation). Walther was also the head pastor of each of those congregations.

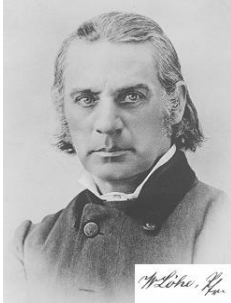
In his theses on the ministry Walther would write, "The pastoral ministry is the highest office in the church and from it stem all other offices in the church." (Thesis 7) He would serve the church in several ways as president, editor of journals, seminary professor, etc, but his greatest love was to preach and teach God's Word to the congregation to which he was called. For him the congregational ministry was the highest calling and the greatest joy.

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<sup>16</sup>*Lebensbild*, page 74

## June Newsletter Article – *The Formation of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod*

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3)



**Wilhelm Löhe**

CFW Walther and the Saxons who settled in the St. Louis area were not the only Lutherans in the United States. In 1748 Pastor Henry Melchior Muhlenberg helped to found the Pennsylvania Ministerium, the first Lutheran synod in the United States. In the years that followed there were many more synods, which often adopted the names of states, such as the New York Ministerium, the Maryland Synod, the Ohio Synod, the Tennessee Synod, and others. Many of these smaller synods were combined into the General Synod in 1820.<sup>17</sup>

Contacts were made between the immigrant Lutherans and the Lutherans, which had been in this country for several generations. However, the General Synod began to shift away from Lutheran teachings. Many of the leaders advocated a new “American Lutheranism,” which was remarkably similar to the Methodist churches. Some accepted the Lutheran Confessions “in so far as” they agreed with the Scriptures, rather than “because” they agreed with the Scriptures. They denied the real presence of the Lord’s body and blood in Holy Communion, did away with any liturgy in the service, and instituted revivalistic practices in their congregations. The situation for Lutherans in the United States was worse than it had been in Germany.

CFW Walther began a publication known as *Der Lutheraner*. (The Lutheran) It’s motto was “God’s Word and Luther’s teaching will never disappear.” Other immigrant Lutherans began to read his publication. They had become disenchanted with the established synods and desired a new synod, that was thoroughly Lutheran.

One of these groups were a number of congregations in the Saginaw Valley of Michigan. Pastor Wilhelm Löhe of Neuendettelsau, Germany had sent 15 people, led by Pastor F.A. Craemer, to evangelize the Native Americans in the area. Eventually hundreds of others followed and established a series of Lutheran settlements near Frankenmuth, Michigan.

At the same time, Pastor Friedrich Wyneken traveled throughout northern Indiana and southern Michigan where there were many new immigrant settlements. He searched for Lutherans and did his best to minister to them. However, the task was much more than one man could handle. He wrote a pamphlet to appeal for Lutheran pastors in America entitled, *The Distress of the German Lutherans in North America*. It moved Pastor Löhe to train pastors, whom he sent to America. In 1843 he sent Pastor Wilhelm Sihler to Ft. Wayne, Indiana. He began a small seminary in his parsonage in 1846 to train more pastors. This became our Fort Wayne seminary.

These men began to meet with the Saxons from Missouri. Several preliminary meetings were held, and a constitution for a new synod was approved. On Sunday April 25, 1847 the “German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States” was formed at First St. Paul’s

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<sup>17</sup>*My Church*, page 38

Church in Chicago. It had 16 congregations, twelve voting pastors, ten advisory pastors, and two ministerial candidates. CFW Walter was elected as the first president.

The LC-MS constitution today still states that the members of the synod (pastors and congregations) accept without reservation:

1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice;
2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God: the three Ecumenical Creeds (the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Athanasian Creed), the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Large Catechism of Luther, the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord.

These Lutherans tirelessly searched for others who shared their Lutheran faith and joyfully united with them, so that they could make a common confession of the faith, work together to train pastors, and share their faith with others. In an era in which many Lutherans sought unity with others by watering down their confession, these men found unity in a common confession of faith, that was anchored in the Scriptures. They even became a great influence on the American synods. These new immigrants became known as the "Old Lutherans" because they would not waver from their Lutheran faith. May God continue to grant us such unity and steadfastness in the faith today.

## July/August Newsletter Article – *The Incredible Growth of the Synod*

*“I believe; therefore I have spoken.” (2 Cor 4:13)*



1883 Concordia Seminary, , St. Louis

As we continue our series on the life and ministry of CFW Walther, this month I would like to focus on the tremendous growth of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod during his lifetime. The LC-MS was formed in Chicago in 1847 with 16 congregations and 22 pastors. Even though most of the congregations from the Saxon Immigration didn't see a need to unite as a synod and didn't join the new synod, Walther was elected as the first president at the age of 35.

The synod grew rapidly in the first 50 years. By 1875 the LC-MS had 107,000 members, 704 congregations, and 518 pastors. We had 600 schools with 35,000 pupils.<sup>18</sup> By 1900 the synod had 728,000 members with 2,147 congregations and 1,581 pastors.<sup>19</sup> However, this growth did not come easily. As we will see next time, there were fierce enemies of both Walther and the synod in those early days. Rev Theo. Merkens, a circuit rider in Iowa, covered 6,622 miles with a horse and wagon in 1872 and preached 169 times that year.<sup>20</sup> There were pastors who served 17, 26, and even 40 preaching stations.<sup>21</sup> When Pastor HC Schwan preached his first sermon at Salem, MO, a group of Unitarian youths were determined to have no Lutheran pastor in the town, so they began to rattle the doors and windows of the church during the entire sermon. Pastor Schwan went out and spoke with the boys, and some of them eventually became regular churchgoers.<sup>22</sup> There are numerous examples of such sacrifices that pastors made to gather congregations at that time.

For this tremendous growth, many pastors were needed. Pastor Sihler had started a seminary in his home in Ft. Wayne, Indiana in 1846. In 1861 that seminary was moved to St. Louis, then to Springfield, Illinois in 1874, and then back to Ft. Wayne in 1975. The Saxons began a log cabin college in 1839 in Altenburg, Missouri. It was moved to St. Louis in 1850. In 1883 20,000 people (including 160 pastors) traveled to St. Louis from throughout the country for a two-day dedication of a new seminary. By that time the St. Louis seminary was the largest protestant seminary in the

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<sup>18</sup>*The Church through the Ages*, page 516

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid*, page 520

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid*, page 515

<sup>21</sup>*My Church*, page 79

<sup>22</sup>*At Home in the House of my Fathers*, page 564

country. Walther preached the dedication sermon at the age of 72.<sup>23</sup> (The current seminary was built in 1926.) In addition to our own seminaries, Pastor Wilhelm Loehe of Neuendettelsau, Germany and Pastor Friedrich Brunn from Steeden, Germany trained pastors for the growing synod and sent them to America.

The LC-MS continued to look for other Lutherans with whom the synod could work. The *Synodical Conference* was formed in 1872 with six other synods, including the Wisconsin Synod. (The conference dissolved in 1963.) This conference worked together in several mission endeavors.

The majority of this growth took place from the German immigration into America. However, the synod also saw the need to reach other cultures. In 1872 a number of English-speaking congregations began an English Synod, which was absorbed into the synod as the English District in 1911. Walther encouraged Pastor William Dallman in this work at the end of his life. (Dallman would later be pastor of Mount Olive in Milwaukee.) The synod also began African-American missions, Jewish missions, and through Walther a mission in Australia.<sup>24</sup>

In a sermon to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the synod Walther stated that this growth did not come because of church bureaucratic planning (kirchenpolitische Pläne), but “I believe, therefore I have spoken,” was the only reason.<sup>25</sup> They were simply sharing God’s Word and Luther’s teaching, and that word worked to bring many people to faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior. The Gospel burned in the hearts of those people. They could not help but desire to share the good news of what God has done for us in His Son Jesus Christ.

The early growth of our synod is still an example for us today. We often think that if we just get the right program or if we make our members feel guilty enough about not sharing the Gospel, then our churches will begin to grow. Walther and the early LC-MS show that growth comes when we rejoice in the Gospel and believe it with our whole heart. When we do, we cannot help but speak of the great things that God has done for us. The growth of the early LC-MS was not easy, but the love of Christ compelled those people to work tirelessly to share the Gospel, and God richly blessed the work of their hands.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>*Servant of the Word*, page 94

<sup>24</sup>*The Lutherans in North America*, page 281

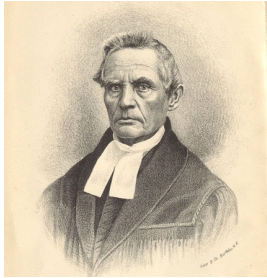
<sup>25</sup>*Brosamen*, page 556

<sup>26</sup>*Homiletical Aids, Sermons, Sermon Studies, Outlines*, vol 2, George Stöckhardt, page



## September Newsletter Article – *How Walther Learned to Deal with His Opponents*

<sup>18</sup>If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. <sup>19</sup>Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. <sup>20</sup>On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:18-21)



Pastor JAA Grabau

As we have seen in our newsletter articles this year CFW Walther grew to be respected and beloved by his parishoners, his students, and fellow colleagues in the ministry. But that did not mean that he didn’t have enemies. Several of them were fierce and vicious. His life also teaches us how to deal with those who oppose us.

When he was younger, he was good at burning bridges. As a young pastor in Germany, Walther was charged with condemning as godless and unchristian all who opposed his teaching and practice.<sup>27</sup> When he preached his farewell sermon, it was so legalistic that some people ran out of the church in terror and tears.<sup>28</sup> When there were allegations against Pastor Stephan shortly after the group arrived in America, Walther was sent to confront him with the charges, but he never did. Instead he did all that he could to antagonize the new “bishop,” including holding competing services. In the end, Walther and the other pastors quickly excommunicated Pastor Stephan and sent him across the Mississippi River to Illinois. It appears as though Walther never had a relationship with any of these people again.

However, the Altenburg Debate changed how he dealt with his opponents. He debated a layman named **Franz Adolf Marbach** on the question of “Are we church or not?” Marbach contended that they had become a mob, and they should repent and return to Germany. The majority of the group agreed with Walther that they were a part of Christ’s church and had the right to call pastors. Marbach was not totally convinced, and he returned to Germany. However, both he and Walther continued to respect and love each other as brothers in Christ. Walther was able to visit Marbach during trips to Germany in 1851 and 1860 and attended Marbach’s funeral. He was very grateful that their differences had been resolved.<sup>29</sup>

Things were always not so happy however. In 1839 Pastor **JAA Grabau** led an immigration of one thousand Pomeranian Lutherans to Buffalo, New York and Freistadt (Mequon), Wisconsin. Although they came to America for the same reasons, controversy soon erupted between the Missouri and Buffalo Synods. Much of it revolved around Trinity Lutheran Church in Freistadt. It began with a “Pastoral Letter” (Hirtenbrief) from Pastor Grabau to the Mo. Synod, which they mildly criticized. Pastor Grabau responded by accusing them of 70 more errors. Things deteriorated further when the people of Freistadt, Kirchhayn (today David Star Lutheran Church), and Milwaukee began to seek pastors from the Missouri Synod because Pastor Krause excommunicated anyone who disagreed

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<sup>27</sup>*Zion on the Mississippi*, page 77

<sup>28</sup>*Zion on the Mississippi*, page 178

<sup>29</sup>*Servant of the Word*, page 211

with him. This only enraged Pastor Grabau further, and he excommunicated all the congregations and pastors that left the Buffalo Synod for Missouri. There are several interesting letters included in the minutes of the 1853 convention from Pastor Grabau and the Missouri Synod's response. Grabau's letters are extremely harsh. The Missouri Synod response is always that they would like to sit down and discuss these matters. Walther wrote his greatest work, *Church and Ministry*, in response to this controversy. Thesis 9 especially pertains to the situation, which states:

- A. To the ministry there is due respect as well and unconditional obedience when the pastor uses God's Word.
- B. The minister must not tyrannize the church. He has no authority to introduce new laws or arbitrarily to establish adiaphora or ceremonies.
- C. The minister has no right to inflict and carry out excommunication without his having first informed the whole congregation.

Another heart-wrenching controversy involved Pastor **Wilhelm Loehe** of Neuendettelsau, Germany. He was instrumental in providing many of the early pastors to the Missouri Synod. He was concerned that Missouri Synod was too "democratic" in its organization. He particularly didn't like it that laymen and clergy are each given a 50-50 voice in synodical gatherings. In response Pastors Walther and Wynekin personally traveled to Germany in 1851 to discuss these matters with Loehe. They were received cordially. Eventually a break did come, but Pastor Loehe said to Pastor Wynekin's son at the end of his life, "Yes, there is friendship between me and your father, which seems to have been forgotten, though."<sup>30</sup>

The most tragic controversy was the **Predestination Controversy** toward the end of Walther's life. Pastor FA Schmidt accused Walther of Calvinism after he gave a paper in which he stated that our election is not due to any action of man. At first Walther tried to keep the controversy among pastors, however a motion at a meeting in Milwaukee in 1881 to refrain from public polemics failed. Pastor Schmidt declared that he was called by God to wage this war. The controversy split the newly formed Synodical Conference. The Ohio and Norwegian synods resigned their membership. Walther's letters of the time show that he did not revel in the controversy. It was painful and made him long for the peace of his eternal life, which would soon come.<sup>31</sup>

Walther's life teaches us how we deal with those who oppose us. Burning bridges is never a good idea. Our ultimate goal is peace and reconciliation. It is a joy when we are reconciled with those who oppose us. Blessings also come through such circumstances. Walther refined his positions during these controversies and wrote some of his greatest works. Opposition makes us take a serious look at our positions and lives and often helps us to refine them in positive ways. There are times when our good will toward our enemies is met by fiercer opposition. At such times we simply commit the situation to God and pray that reconciliation in Christ will soon come.

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<sup>30</sup> Heinrich Christian Wyneken, *A Journal of Travels in Germany 1869-1870*, translated by Erika Bullman Flores (privately printed, 1999), 57. (From a paper by Rev. John Pless, "WILHELM LOEHE AND THE MISSOURI SYNOD: FORGOTTEN PATERNITY OR LIVING LEGACY?" International Loehe Society, Wartburg Theological Seminary 12 July 2005)

<sup>31</sup>D.H. Steffens, Dr. Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1917), pp. 341,350.

## October Newsletter – *Walther’s Deep Love for his Wife and Family*

“Each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”  
(Ephesians 5:33)<sup>32</sup>



Emilie Walther and Children

CFW was a pastor, seminary professor, publisher, and synodical president, but he was also a family man. In his biography, *Servant of the Word*, Dr. August Suelflow writes one of his most lengthy chapters on Walther’s family. He sums up this chapter with these words, “Walther never hesitated to express his deep feelings and love for his children and grandchildren, as well as his profound grief in times of bereavement. His letters clearly demonstrate that in spite of all his responsibilities in teaching, preaching, writing, and speaking, the needs of his family were his first and foremost priority.”<sup>33</sup> This month I would like to share some insights into his deep love for his family.

On August 10, 1841 Walther wrote a letter to Emilie Buenger to ask for her hand in marriage. He was 30 years old, and she was 29. The two of them had known each other in Germany, but had seldom seen each other since the emigration to America. He was living in St. Louis as pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church. She was in the colony in Perry County. In his letter he states, “You know me, my character, my faith, my failing and weaknesses, my outward position; you know that you will find no temporal fortune, no honor before the world, no assured future with me. I can therefore only add my pledge that you will have in me a spouse who will love you dearly and by God’s grace faithfully.” Walther was so bold as to suggest the time and place of the wedding. Her response came a week later, “I was at first a little shocked by the contents of your precious letter– it came so unexpectedly... I believe that with the help of the Holy Spirit I can live with you happily, blessedly, and God-pleasingly in such an intimate union, indissoluble unto death.” CFW Walther’s brother-in-law EGW Keyl (his sister’s husband) performed the wedding on September 21, 1841 in Dresden, MO. There is an amusing story about the dinner. Walther wanted venison and paid a hunter in advance with a box of cigars. The hunter, however, spent the day smoking the entire box of cigars and never fired a shot. So the wedding didn’t include any venison.<sup>34</sup>

The Walthers would never own a home. For the first nine year’s they raised 5 children on the first floor of a flat that Emilie’s mother owned. In 1850 they moved into a living quarters on the first floor of the new seminary (about 750 square feet) It was not until 1870 that they lived in a free standing home.

Their marriage was blessed with 6 children. He described the joy of the birth of their first child, “Magdalena, “It was nothing less than if I had won the grand prize. I would not have given up this

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<sup>32</sup>PHOTO COURTESY OF CONCORDIA HISTORICAL INSTITUTE

<sup>33</sup>Servant of the Word, page 252

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, page 228

treasure for anything in the world. Now when I went out of the house, it seemed to me as if I had a magnet at home that continually drew me homeward.”<sup>35</sup> He had nicknames for many of his children and grandchildren. He wrote loving letters to them on each of their birthdays. He gave his wife a beautiful red dress for her 32<sup>nd</sup> birthday and even wrote a dear poem for the occasion. After his children married and left home for other parts of the country, he exerted a great deal of effort to reunite the family and cherished the times when his grandchildren came for long visits. He wrote to his son-in-law, “How profoundly I am rejoicing to have children about me for a longer period of time...I can hardly describe my great joy. Your concerns about the disturbances are unfounded. Actually I can’t think of anything more sweet and wonderful than the pleasant unrest brought on by our own children and grandchildren.”<sup>36</sup>

Sadly along with the joy and blessing of children, Walther was afflicted with grief over the loss of several children and grandchildren. When I was did my fieldwork at Zion- Friedheim near Ft. Wayne, IN, I noticed that there were several grave stones of children from that era in the church cemetery. The Walther’s were not spared that grief. Only 4 of their 6 children reached adulthood. Their second child, Hermann, died after falling down the basement steps at the age of four. Their youngest child, Christian, died as an infant. Several of his grandchildren died in infancy. He wrote moving letters to his grieving children, such as when he wrote to his oldest daughter when she and her husband lost a son, “My fatherly heart has been torn and my hand writes as my eyes are filled with hot tears. But, because of that, does the Word become untrue: “The Lord has made all things well?”<sup>37</sup>

There were other dangers and disappointments. Walther had to send his family out of the city in 1861 for their safety during the Civil War. His son Constantine needed to borrow money, and still owed his father \$720 when Walther died. There is also an interesting story of when Walther visited his brother-in-law Pastor Friedrich Lochner in Milwaukee in 1873. While the two of them were strolling through downtown Milwaukee, they were physically attacked. Later in the evening Walther asked where he was. When Lochner responded, “In Milwaukee,” Walther asked, “Why am I in Milwaukee?”<sup>38</sup> It took several days to regain his memory.

On Sunday August 23, 1885 our Lord called Walther’s dear wife Emilie from this life. The funeral was held three days later. None of the children were able to attend. He wrote a letter to his son, which ended, “Heavily afflicted, yet yielding humbly to God’s guidance, I am yours.”

This aspect of Walther’s life teaches us the importance of family and the desire to lead our families in a God-pleasing manner. There are many letters between Walther and the member of his family. They are letters of faith in God’s goodness and love in Christ and a desire to submit to God’s will in all things. When we ground our marriages and families on the love and will of our Savior, we will find that God does bless our family life with joy and peace on this earth.

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid, page 243

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, page 254

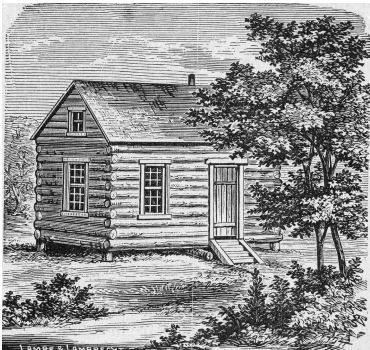
<sup>37</sup>Ibid, page 250

<sup>38</sup>Ibid, page 271

## November 2011 Newsletter Article – *The Blessings of a Lutheran Education*

“Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; guard it well, for it is your life.” (Prov. 4:13)

On April 13, 1839 the following advertisement appeared in the St. Louis newspaper:



Altenburg Log Cabin College

We the undersigned, intend to establish an educational institution which is to differ from the common elementary schools in this, that in addition to the usual elementary subjects, it will also offer such courses of a *Gymnasium* [preparatory school] as are required for a truly Christian and scientific education; these are Religion, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, French, English, History, Elements of Philosophy, Music, and Drawing. Upon completing the work offered in the above-mentioned field, the student is to be sufficiently advanced to qualify for entering a university.”<sup>39</sup>

The ad was signed by CFW Walther and four other pastors. They intended to begin a school which would prepare both boys and girls for a university education. Two things are remarkable about this ad. First, the school was built even before much of the land was cleared and the homes were built. Second, this great university prep school was a simple log cabin in a clearing in the woods about 100 miles south of St. Louis in Perry County, Missouri.

The desire to begin an institution of higher learning right from the start showed CFW Walther’s attitude toward education. It is one of the most important aspects of life. In 1868 he would write in *Der Lutheraner*, “Even if you are leaving [your children] several thousand dollars [as an inheritance], remember that they are poorer after your death than they would be if today for several hundred dollars you provide a good education.”<sup>40</sup>

Walther and the Missouri Synod stressed a solid Lutheran elementary education from the beginning. He would begin a school after he was called to Trinity in St. Louis. It would become a requirement of our congregations, that they had a Lutheran grade school. There are many congregations in which the school predates the church. Lutheran teachers were given great respect in the congregations to which they were called.

But the education did not end with grade school. Walther also envisioned high schools, Lutheran universities, and trade schools. He wrote, “Built on the foundation of the pure Word of God, our boys and young men, with typical thoroughness, can be equipped with the necessary training to become technicians and business men.”<sup>41</sup> It would take several decades for this dream to come true when several Lutheran high schools would be founded in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, (including Milwaukee), the purchase of Valparaiso University in the 1920’s, and the changes brought to many

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<sup>39</sup>*My Church*, page 58

<sup>40</sup>Suelflow, page 72

<sup>41</sup>Suelflow, page 70

of our Concordia Universities to offer secular programs in recent decades.

Toward the end of Walther's life, there was a public campaign against parochial education with the Bennett Law in Wisconsin and similar laws in other states. Wisconsin's Governor Hoard ridiculed the supporters of parochial education by claiming that he was "the better guardian of their children than their parents or pastors." Lutherans actively worked against his reelection, and they won.

Dr. Walther also worked tirelessly to establish the seminaries of the LC-MS. In 1850 the Altenburg school was given to the synod. It was moved to St. Louis where it continued to be both a preparatory school and seminary. In 1846 another seminary was started in the home of Pastor Wilhelm Sihler in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. This seminary was given to the synod in 1847. In 1861 the St. Louis preparatory school was transferred to Ft. Wayne and became Concordia College, and the Ft. Wayne seminary was moved to St. Louis. (These schools would move again at later times.) The seminary curriculum at that time was very strenuous. Dr. Walther did most of his lectures in Latin. The day began at 5:00 AM and ended at 8:45<sup>42</sup> It was the desire of the LC-MS then and yet today, that our pastors are thoroughly trained. In addition to the pastoral seminaries, Concordia Teachers' College was started near Chicago in 1861, and the years shortly after Walther's death saw the birth of several colleges to prepare men for the pastoral ministry and men and women for the teaching ministry. Today these are the 10 colleges and universities of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

Education has been a priority in our church from the time when the immigrants were on ships crossing the Atlantic until this very day. We can be thankful that through the emphasis that Dr. Walther place on education, we Lutherans have been able to contribute to the common welfare of the nation in which God has blessed us.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>*My Church*, page 65

<sup>43</sup>Suelflow, page 69

## December Newsletter Article – *Walther’s Concern for Social Ministry*

“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for Me.” (Mt. 25:40)



Lutheran Hospital, St. Louis, 1908

In this Christmas season we especially remember God’s gift of a Savior to redeem us from our sins, but it is also a time when we give gifts to family, friends, and those in need. CFW Walther also saw the importance of both the preaching of the Gospel and charity in the church. He wrote in his *Pastoral Theology*, “Although the preacher should be concerned above all for the spiritual needs of his congregation, the area of his official duties includes concern for the physical welfare, especially for the necessary needs for this life of the poor, the sick, widows, orphans, the infirm, the needy, those weak with age etc.”<sup>44</sup>

His book, *The Form of a Christian Congregation* has an entire section on how the congregation cares for its members. The pastor and those designated to serve in social ministry are to make sure that the needy are taken care of. The congregation shall also see to it that its members who are sick are not without the necessary help, nursing, and comfort. Finally, a congregation is to see to it that every member, even the poorest, is given a decent, honorable, and Christian burial.<sup>45</sup>

A couple of Walther’s concerns at the time are interesting. He was concerned that many Christians were leaving the churches to join lodges, which promised to take care of the members of their secret societies. He also wrote that a Christian congregation must not appeal to the fact that there are government funds, which Christian taxpayers also support. He goes so far as to write that a Christian congregation should consider it a disgrace when its poor are cared for by a worldly government.<sup>46</sup> He believed wholeheartedly that Christians should not be dependent on the generosity of those who are outside the church, but that Christians should take care of their own.

This desire caused the LC-MS to begin several social ministries, right from the beginning. In 1858 the synod began a hospital in St. Louis. By 1947 there were 19 LC-MS hospitals.<sup>47</sup> In 1867 the first orphanage was opened near St. Louis.<sup>48</sup> In the next decades dozens of Lutheran orphanages were opened throughout the country, including LCFS in Wauwatosa. We have several ministries, which are over a century old in Wisconsin, such as Bethesda in Watertown, which serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities or the Lutheran Home, which serves our aged members. Many of our older congregations have cemeteries. After World War 2 agencies were developed to

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<sup>44</sup>*Pastoral Theology*, page 218

<sup>45</sup>*Form of a Christian Congregation*, page 142ff.

<sup>46</sup>*Pastoral Theology*, page 219

<sup>47</sup>Baepler, Walter A. *A Century of Grace*, page 352

<sup>48</sup>G. Metzger, Denkstein, , *Concordia*, 1922, page 283

bring aid to Europe. The number of social ministries continues to grow with organizations such as A Place of Refuge and the SOS Center in Milwaukee. LCMS World Relief works to bring aid to thousands of suffering people in our country and throughout the world. As a congregation we have also been blessed with ministries to aid those in need with the Christian Concern Fund, clothing bank, food pantry, ESL classes, and Diana's Angels.

The LCMS has a great heritage in coming to the aid of those who are in need. We can thank God that our first president put us on that path right from the beginning, and we pray that God will continue to give us both the resources and desire to share our Lord's love in word and deed.



## January 2012 Newsletter Article – *Called to Glory*

“Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on... they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.” (Rev 14:13)



CFW Walther celebrated his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday on October 25, 1886 with friends and family at his home. At this time his strength was already beginning to wane. Shortly thereafter on November 3 he asked to be relieved of all of his teaching responsibilities. On January 16, 1887 the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his ordination was celebrated. There were services in each of the congregations of the *Gesamtgemeinde*. Students and colleagues came to express their well-wishes. Mr. Carl Gottlob Weise, age 73, even came from Walther’s first congregation in Braeunsdorf, Germany. Pastor Wilhelm Achenbach of Trinity Lutheran Church presented Walther with a special gift from members throughout the LCMS, a leather bag, which contained \$3,000 in gold coins. Walther expressed his thanks with the following words, “It is true that God has taken my miserable person and poor sinner and used me only out of unmerited grace in order to carry out his work. It

would be ingratitude if I wished to deny that God has done great things. To Him and to Him alone give all honor...<sup>49</sup>

In the coming weeks Walther withdrew from all of his activities. During the last days of his life, he slept most of the time. During his waking hours he would often be heard praying a hymn verse that his father taught him when he was three,

Jesus, thy blood and righteousness My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
Wherin before my God I’ll stand When I shall reach the heavenly land.

His children often visited during the last months. On May 6 his pastor and dear friend, George Stoeckhardt conducted a final devotion with the family. He prayed, “Should this night be the last for me in this vale of tears, then lead me, Lord, into heaven with all the elect.” Walther responded, “May God grant this!” Walther died peacefully the next day on Saturday May 7. He reached the age of 75 ½ years.

The synod was meeting in convention in Ft. Wayne when Walther died. They received the message of his death the next day by telegram. The convention ended with the hymn, “From Depths of Woe I cry to Thee,” and they requested that the family delay the funeral until the pastors would be able to attend.

Four funeral services were conducted. The first was an English service at the seminary on May 14. About 600 people attended. The second service was also in the seminary chapel on May 15. Dr. Stoeckhardt preached and emphasized how Walther’s entire life had been a testimony for Christ: in his church, his family, and on his deathbed. Following that service 3,000 people joined in the

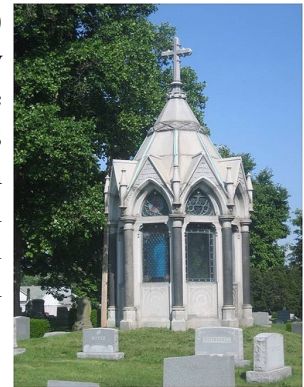
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<sup>49</sup>Most of the information from this article is from Suelflow, pages 270-295

procession when his body was taken from the seminary to Trinity Lutheran Church. Thousands of people came to pay their respects from May 15-17. A St. Louis newspaper commented, “Seldom in the history of St. Louis has a concourse assembled to do honor to the memory of any member of the community...”

The third and largest service was held on Tuesday May 17 at Trinity. 2,000 people attended the service in the church and the streets and alleys surrounding it. Hundreds of pastors attended from throughout the synod, including 250 who came directly from the convention. Synod President Heinrich Schwan delivered the sermon, which ended with these words, “If we trust [God] in this, according to His Word, then the Lord our God will also be gracious to us and prosper the work of our hands among us, Yes, He will prosper the work of our hands . To Him be honor in eternity.”<sup>50</sup> The procession to Concordia Cemetery was 2 miles long with 238 carriages. It was there that Pastor Hanser presided over the committal service.

Five years later the four congregations of the *Gesamtgemeinde* raised \$9,000 to build a mausoleum over Walther’s grave. The mausoleum is built of gray granite with Italian marble and French stained glass. It contains a life-size statue of Walther, posing as a speaker at a convention. In his left hand he is holding the confessions of the Lutheran Church, the *Book of Concord*, which is resting on the Bible. The pedestal of the monument bears the inscription of Romans 3:28, “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” Several times the mausoleum has been renovated, and a permanent fund was recently established for its upkeep.



Shortly before his death, Walther expressed this wish for our beloved synod, “If only our synod will hold on to what it has. God has given us such abundant grace.”<sup>51</sup> God truly blessed our synod through this servant of the Word. May He continue to bless us as we remain in the Scriptural teaching and unity, on which our Lord’s servant CFW Walther built this synod.

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<sup>50</sup>*At Home in the House of My Fathers*, page 540

<sup>51</sup>*Lebensbild*, page 204

## February 2012 Newsletter Article – *The Legacy of CFW Walther*

“You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone.” (Ephesians 2:19-20)



This is my final article on the life of CFW Walther, the first president of our synod. As I wrote these articles, I have learned a lot about the man, and I have grown in my appreciation of his work. I have also learned a lot about him personally and tried to give the articles a personal touch. The Lord used this servant in a way that still blesses His church 200 years after Walther’s birth. In this final article I would like to look at Walther’s legacy to the church. What is it that he has left us?

Ephesians 2:19-20 describes Walther’s legacy well. He took people who were foreigners in a new country, and made them into a fellowship. It was one of the reasons why he began his publication, *Der Lutheraner*, whose motto was “Gottes Wort und Luther’s Lehr vergehet nun und nimmermehr.” (God’s Word and Luther’s teaching shall not pass away now or ever!) Through that publication he found other Lutherans who were scattered throughout the country. Initially, he was able to unite three groups of Lutherans, who came to America from different parts of Germany for various reasons. Those in Michigan had come from southern Germany to evangelize the Native Americans. Several groups stretching from Toledo, Ohio to Chicago came from northern Germany for economic reasons. Those in Missouri had come from southeastern Germany to flee religious persecution. Even though most of his own people in Missouri disagreed with his desire to unite with anyone else, Walther worked tirelessly to bring unity among the Lutherans in this country. When thousands of German immigrants arrived in the coming years, it was the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, which drew in the majority of them. In the latter years of Walther’s life, the synod also became a pioneer in urban and cross cultural Lutheran mission in our country. He laid the ground work, not only for the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, but also for the vast number of partner churches, which we have throughout the whole world today. God used him to create a “synod,” which means “to walk together.” He sparked a world-wide fellowship of believers, which would be grounded in the Scriptures and centered on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

In a sermon to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the synod, Walther remarked that they built a fellowship that was built on these two points: First, the confession **that “the Holy Scriptures in the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm of our faith and life.”**<sup>52</sup> He built a synod that was grounded in the Scriptures. Every teaching of our church is taken directly from the Bible. We continue to believe that every word of the Bible is the inspired Word of God. In the 1970's when the reliability of the Bible was denied by many of our professors at our St. Louis seminary, a house-cleaning was done. Today all of our pastors, teachers, and professors must declare

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<sup>52</sup>CFW Walther, *Brosamen* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1876), page 555.

that they “believe and confess the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice.”<sup>53</sup>

The second point that Walther makes in that sermon is that we “**accept all the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as the pure, unadulterated explanation and exposition of the divine Word.**” We are unashamedly Lutheran! What is central through all of the Lutheran Confessions? It is the teaching that we are justified alone through faith in Jesus Christ. The Lutheran confessions point to Christ as the center of our faith. Walther’s final lecture on Law and Gospel was that the Gospel must always predominate in our preaching.<sup>54</sup> This is something that longed marked the preaching and teaching of the LC-MS, but is being lost today. It is tempting to stress something that we should do in a sermon or Bible class. The emphasis in every Lutheran sermon or class should always be on God’s grace for us in Christ. God’s grace and love in Christ is the message that we love to bring.

Throughout the world today, the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod is known for being a fellowship that is grounded in the Scriptures and centered on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That is the path that Dr. Walther put us on. It is that path which greatly blessed our synod then, and will greatly bless our synod and congregation today also.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor Don Hougard

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<sup>53</sup>*Lutheran Service Book Agenda*, (St. Louis, Concordia, 2006), page 165.

<sup>54</sup>CFW Walther, *Law and Gospel*, trans. Christian Tiews , (St. Louis: Concordia, 2010), page 455 also CFW Walther, *The Proper Distinction of Law and Gospel*, trans WHT Dau, (St. Louis: Concordia, 1928), page 403

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