

VF  
Walther, Carl  
Ferdinand  
Wilhelm

# WALTHER

SESQUICENTENNIAL

1811-1961

## HANDBOOK FOR PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS

Prepared by  
The Walther Sesquicentennial Committee  
of  
The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod  
1961

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
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**THE LUTHERAN CHURCH-MISSOURI SYNOD**  
 510 NORTH OGDENWAY • SAINT LOUIS 1, MISSOURI  
 TELEPHONE: MISSOURI 1-5000

January 31, 1961

To the Congregations of  
 The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

Dear Fellow-Lutherans:

The 1956 Convention of Synod held at St. Paul, Minnesota adopted a special resolution that in the year 1961 our congregations should be encouraged to observe the 150th Anniversary of Dr. C. F. W. Walther's birth. It also resolved that the President of Synod appoint a special committee to prepare for such a celebration.

In our country we annually observe the birth of our first president, the great George Washington. Furthermore, we annually observe the birth of Abraham Lincoln. As Christian citizens we thank God for the gift of these great men. We think of George Washington as the God-given leader to establish our nation. And we think of Abraham Lincoln as the God-given leader in one of the very dark periods of our nation's history. We thank God that He endowed these men with the necessary gifts and with the willingness to place these gifts into the service of our country.

How much more should we as Christians, as members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, thank God for the wonderful gift which He granted our church in its first president, Dr. Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther. Undoubtedly God endowed Dr. Walther with outstanding gifts and talents. He was a truly great theologian and also a remarkable administrator. God provided the opportunities and also the use and development of these gifts. The organization of our Synod in the year 1847 in Chicago based on Holy Writ and the Lutheran Confessions furnishes convincing evidence of the fact that God gave our Church an eminent theologian and extraordinary church worker and an exceptional church leader. It is not our purpose to idolize Dr. Walther. We realize that God gave him to our church. We ought to thank God for this gift. We want to express our gratitude to the Lord for the fact that He endowed him so abundantly. And surely we want this festival to bring home to us that through this man God deepened the loyalty of our Synod to the principles of Holy Writ. We should observe this anniversary with the firm determination to intensify the study of the theological contributions which God gave us through this man. We want the celebration to stimulate the continued interest and study of the special heritage of our church.

The special committee is suggesting that the anniversary of Dr. Walther's birth be observed in connection with Reformation Day, a truly great celebration. Permit me to urge every congregation in Synod to prepare for a celebration of what God has done for us, and for our Synod in our beloved country.

Yours in the cause of Christ, our Savior,

JWB:os

- THE REV. J. W. BURCKHART, D.D.  
PRESIDENT
- THE REV. S. A. HANDEL, D.D.  
FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT
- THE REV. A. P. HERRINGSPRING, D.D.  
SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT
- THE REV. WEL. W. SUTTON, D.D.  
TREASURER
- THE REV. A. C. RICE, D.D.  
SECRETARY



## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

*God has actually given us a place in our new fatherland where He will record His name for us and our children, will come to us, and will bless us. Oh, the exceedingly good God . . . (From a sermon by C. F. W. Walther)*

The theme of his life was *Soli Deo Gloria*, yet the name of Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther has to be recorded in the annals of Lutheranism in the New World as our church's guiding light. The Lord first kindled this flame in the hamlet of Langenchursdorf in Saxony on 25 October 1811.

Although born into a family of several generations of Lutheran ministers, Walther at first had no intention of continuing the tradition. He had been gifted with outstanding musical talents and early wrote, "I feel that I was born for nothing but music."

When he completed his training in the Schneeberg *Gymnasium* at the age of 18, Walther became interested in the biography of Jean Frederic Oberlin, a consecrated Lutheran minister to the people of Alsace. Encouraged further by both his father and his brother, Otto Hermann, he decided to enter the University of Leipzig in October 1829 for the purpose of studying theology.

Although Rationalism held sway at the university, Walther was led to join several other students, who later were to work closely with him in the Missouri Synod, in a type of religious discussion group. Soon, however, Walther began to become "severely afflicted spiritually." Serious doubts and conflicts, fostered by the "legalistically gloomy Christianity" of the group's leader Candidate Kuehn, began to trouble him. Reassurance and strength was found in the family of F. W. Barthel where, says Walther, "[I] found my spiritual parents . . . who now, spiritually and bodily, cared for me as for a son."

## of C. F. W. Walther

Walther also sought the advice of the Rev. Martin Stephan of Dresden. Stephan's letters of assurance, pointing to the promises of the Gospel, caused Walther to term him "a man who, by God's grace, saved my soul."

His studies at the university were interrupted for one semester due to illness. It was at this time that he began a close study of Luther's works. Walther graduated from Leipzig in 1833 and became a private tutor while waiting the two-year interim between examinations which would permit him to become a full-fledged candidate of theology.

Walther's first call was to the spiritually neglected people of Braeunsdorf in Saxony. His insistence on the Lutheran Confessions and practice was met with opposition and persecution by rationalistic officers of the State Church. Finally, in 1838, Walther responded to a call by Martin Stephan for emigration.

In November of that year he sailed for America aboard the *Johann Georg* and arrived in St. Louis in February, together with about 700 other immigrants.

Some of the immigrants, led by their pastor, Walther's brother Otto Hermann, remained in St. Louis to organize the mother church of our Synod in St. Louis. The majority, Walther included, left for their colony site in Perry County, Mo.

Walther was placed in charge of the parishes at Dresden and Johannesburg. The Saxon colonists found themselves faced with many new problems — disease, starvation, inadequate housing, and depleting funds. Amidst all of this they were forced to depose their leader Martin Stephan. To Walther fell the lot of restoring the hope and confidence of the new settlers.

Despite the sufferings of the immigrants during this first year, they made plans for the founding of an institution of



higher learning in the New World. In December 1839 the log-cabin college at Altenburg was opened.

The stability of the Saxon Lutherans gained greatly in April 1841 when Walther successfully engaged Dr. Adolph Marbach, a lawyer, in public debate at the log-cabin college. The disputation was concerned with the question of the church. Was the colony really a Christian church, or simply a sect whose pastors were not truly called or able to perform valid official acts? Through Walther's masterful presentation the immigrants gained certainty that they were a church and not a sect.

Following the death of his older brother, Otto Hermann, Walther succeeded him in the pastorate of the St. Louis congregation (1841), soon to receive the appellation "Trinity."

Shortly after he had been established in his pastorate at Trinity, Walther married Emilie Buenger, sister of Walther's student friend, J. F. Buenger and of O. H. Walther's wife, Agnes. The union was blessed with six children: Christine Magdalene; Hermann Christoph; twin boys, Konstantin and Ferdinand Gerhard; Emma Julie; and Christian Friedrich.

In 1844 he began, with the financial backing of his congregation, the publication of a paper, *Der Lutheraner*, which served as a witness to Lutherans in various sections of the country. A theological monthly, *Lehre und Wehre*, was founded several years later (1855).

Walther was ready to join American Lutherans in a truly confessional synodical organization. Their efforts saw fruition in the establishment of the Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States in 1847. Walther was elected its first President, serving until 1850 and again from 1864 to 1878.

In 1849 Walther was elected professor of theology at

Concordia Seminary, which had been moved from Perry County to St. Louis. However, he retained his position as chief pastor of the congregation, which in time expanded into the *Gesamtgemeinde* — the four St. Louis churches, Trinity, Immanuel, Holy Cross, and Zion, which formed one joint congregation — until his death.

Walther worked indefatigably in his positions as professor of theology and leader of Synod, firmly grounding the church on the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. In partial recognition for his efforts on the behalf of Lutheranism, the Joint Synod of Ohio, through Capital University, conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity (1878).

Recognizing the obligations placed upon him by his position of leadership, Walther waged three great battles in defense of sound Lutheranism — with the Rev. A. A. Grabau over the doctrine of the church and the ministry; with the Rev. Wm. Loehe over the ministerial office, millennialism, and the binding force of the Lutheran Confessions; and with the Iowa Synod and the Joint Synod of Ohio on the doctrine of election and predestination.

The last of these controversies brought on a partial disruption of the Synodical Conference of North America, of which he had been the first president when it was organized (1872).

Despite failing health Walther worked tirelessly during the final months of his sojourn on earth, epitomizing the words of his final essay before the Western District Convention: "Now may the dear God help that we may not only be glad to belong to such a church, but that we may also give Him all glory by our faith, profession, life, suffering, and death!" His ministry and life ended a few months later, on 7 May 1887.



Front cover of the program for the dedication of the "new" Concordia Seminary, 11 June, 1850. Dr. Walther had accepted the call to become theological professor the previous year.

The first edition of *Der Lutheraner*, published 7 September, 1844. The periodical, edited by Dr. Walther, began as a church paper and is still published.



H. C. SCHWAN  
1878-1899

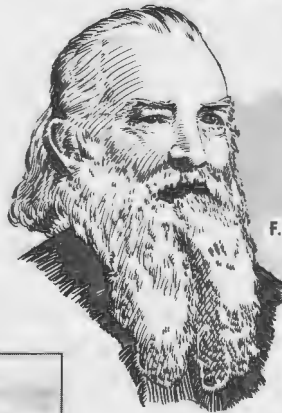


FRANCIS PIEPER  
1899-1911



F. PFOTENHAUER  
1911-1935

THE PRESIDENTS OF SYNOD



F. C. D. WYNEKEN  
1850-1864



C. F. W. WALTHER  
1847-1849, 1864-1878



J. W. BEHNKEN 1935-



Trinity Lutheran Church, the first to be built in St. Louis, laid its cornerstone 22 June, 1842.



Replica of the first log-cabin college and seminary built by the Saxon immigrants in Perry County, Missouri, and dedicated 9 December, 1839.

Kirchen-Gefang-Buch

für

Evangelisch-Lutherische

Gemeinden

ungeänderter Augsburgischer Confession

darin

des seligen D. Martin Luthers und anderer geistlichen Lehren gedächtnisliche Kirchen-Lieder enthalten sind.

Neu-Druck:

Gedruckt bei der Druckerei bei G. F. Schwan.

In Auftrag der deutschen evang.-luth. Synode u. U. G. in St. Louis, Mo. 1847.

Frontispiece of the first Catechism issued by the Missouri Synod in 1858.



## Walther's Chief Writings

THE VOICE OF OUR CHURCH ON THE QUESTION OF THE CHURCH AND THE MINISTRY (*Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt* — 1852).\*

THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH THE TRUE VISIBLE CHURCH OF GOD ON EARTH (*Die Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche die wahre sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden* — 1867).\*

THE CORRECT FORM OF AN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CONGREGATION INDEPENDENT OF THE STATE (*Die rechte Gestalt einer vom Staate, unabhangigen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Ortsgemeinde* — 1863).\*

AMERICAN LUTHERAN GOSPEL POSTIL: SERMONS ON THE GOSPEL PERICOPES OF THE SUNDAYS AND CHIEF FESTIVALS OF THE CHURCH YEAR (*Amerikanisch-Lutherische Evangelien Postille: Predigten uber die evangelischen Perikopen der Sonntage und Hauptfeste des Kirchenjahrs* — 1870). Translation available only in mimeographed form.

AMERICAN LUTHERAN EPISTLE POSTIL: SERMONS ON MOST OF THE EPISTLE PERICOPES OF THE CHURCH YEAR AND ON FREE TEXTS (*Amerikanisch-Lutherische Epistel Postille: Predigten uber die meisten epistolischen Perikopen des Kirchenjahrs u. freie Texte* — 1882). Translation available only in mimeographed form.

LUTHERAN PIECES: SERMONS AND ADDRESSES (*Lutherische Brosamen: Predigten und Reden, seit 1847 theils in Pamphletform, theils in Zeitschriften erschienen, in einem Sammelband aufs Neue dargeboten* — 1876). Not translated.

COMPENDIUM OF POSITIVE THEOLOGY (*Compendium Theologiae Positivae*). By John Baier, edited by C. F. W. Walther in 1874. Not translated.

THE PROPER DISTINCTION BETWEEN LAW AND GOSPEL (*Die rechte Unterscheidung von Gesetz und Evangelium* — 1885). Translated by W. H. T. Dau. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1929.)

AMERICAN LUTHERAN PASTORAL THEOLOGY (*Amerikanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie* — 1872). Not translated.

THE HEART AND CORE OF THE FORMULA OF CONCORD (*Der Concordienformel Kern und Stern* — 1877). Not translated.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE LATE HONORABLE PASTOR JOHN F. BUENGER (*Kurzer Lebenslauf des weiland ehrwurdigen Pastor Joh. Friedr. Buenger* — 1882). Not translated.

\* These three works were partially translated in *Walther and the Church* by Wm. Dallmann, W. H. T. Dau, and Theo. Engelder. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938.)



The New "Old Trinity" Lutheran Church, St. Louis.

## Suggestions to Congregations

1. The highlight of the observance of the sesquicentennial of the birth of Dr. C. F. W. Walther by the congregation may well be a children's service on the 29th of October. In this service Reformation Day will also be observed.

This suggestion is made because Dr. Walther's birthday (the 25th of October) falls so close to Reformation Day. The Board of Parish Education prepared a special order of service, *Our Greatest Heritage*, for use by congregations who wish to follow this suggestion.

2. A filmstrip on the life of Dr. Walther, "Walther, Wisdom and God's Word," has been prepared by the Audio-Visual Aids Committee of Synod. This filmstrip may be used in the meetings of organizations and groups within the congregation. It is usable also in parish and Sunday schools. Kindly order from CPH.



3. The October 1961 issue of *Advance* will carry a topic study on Dr. C. F. W. Walther. Pastors and discussion leaders may wish to supplement this material from the resources listed on later pages of this manual.

4. Does your local public library contain books on The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod? If not, can they be supplied by a group within the congregation? Such works as *The Abiding Word*, *The Lutheran Cyclopedia*, publications in connection with the centennial, or a subscription to the *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* will be welcomed by librarians.

5. Community newspapers, local radio stations, and TV interviews can provide publicity outlets, particularly when this material is given a local slant.

6. Displays, featuring the growth of the Missouri Synod since 1847, can be an attractive project, particularly for youth groups. Graphs and maps lend themselves well to this purpose.

7. Outlines have been prepared for Bible institutes by the Board of Parish Education. These outlines, as well as the outlines prepared for dissemination by the Lutheran Laymen's League, will provide guides for discussions and seminars.

8. Since Concordia Historical Institute is the department of archives and history for Synod, the congregation can aid the work of the Institute by furnishing it with records and materials. Correspondence with the Director is invited. Institutional memberships are available to congregations or some group within the congregation.

9. Perhaps groups within the congregation may want to visit St. Louis and Perry County, Mo. Centers of interest such as Concordia Seminary, Concordia Publishing House, the Lutheran Building, Trinity, Holy Cross, Dr. Walther's grave in Concordia Cemetery, Concordia Historical Institute, the replica of the log cabin at Altenburg, and the pioneer home at Frohna will be of great interest to such groups.

10. Congregations may find these suggestions helpful. They may develop other plans for a God-pleasing observance of the sesquicentennial of Dr. Walther's birth, such as observances by groups of congregations. Reports of all observances will be welcome. Thanksgiving and praise belong to our Lord for all of His many blessings to the church.

## WALTHER

As youth he entered into reason's school,  
Where human thought and wisdom had the rule;  
But God, who gave the keen and brilliant mind,  
His intellect to Christ, the Truth, confined.

His life was earnest, honest to the core;  
Yet humbly would he oft his sins deplore;  
Before both God and man he did confess:  
Christ's merit saves and not man's righteousness.

He taught with tongue, with printed page and  
pen,  
That God by grace in Christ saves sinful men;  
That to the local church, the power is given  
To use the means of grace and keys of heaven.

Whenever error threatened Zion's hill,  
He stood, not seeking praise, not fearing ill,  
And, wielding but the Word's two-edged sword,  
Contended for the honor of his Lord.

He fought the good, the valiant fight of faith,  
Like Paul and Luther, loyal unto death.  
Life-crowned he stands before his Father's face,  
Saved not by works, through faith, alone by  
grace.

**Arthur T. Bonnett**

*Published in the Lutheran Witness,  
XXX (26 October 1911), 169, for  
the centennial of Walther's birth,  
1911.*



## Walther and His Times

Three short biographies have appeared in English about Dr. C. F. W. Walther. One appeared in 1899, written by C. L. Janzow. It had the title *Life of Rev. Prof. C. F. W. Walther, D. D.*, and was published by the American Lutheran Publicity Board of Pittsburgh for the English Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri and Other States. Only 64 pages in length, it gives a popularized sketch of Walther's life.

The biography by D. H. Steffens is much longer, 401 pages in length. This book, *Doctor Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther*, was published in 1917 by the Lutheran Publication Society of Philadelphia. The author did not use primary source materials in compiling his work. The German biography by Martin Guenther, *Dr. C. F. W. Walther*, which appeared in serial form in *Der Lutheraner* shortly after Walther's death, was published in 1890. It was based on a personal acquaintance with Dr. Walther and an intimate knowledge of his writings. It is, nevertheless, uncritical and laudatory. Janzow and Steffens both followed Guenther. Steffens also made use of a German history of the Missouri Synod (by Hochstetter) which had appeared during Walther's lifetime as well as a few other secondary authorities.

Written in a much better style and based on a wider acquaintance with the original sources is W. G. Polack's *The Story of C. F. W. Walther*, which appeared first in 1935 and in a revised edition in 1947 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House). This 167-page book is still the best biography of Walther, although it too is by no means definitive.

Two volumes of Dr. Walther's letters were edited by Ludwig E. Fuerbringer — *Briefe von C. F. W. Walther an seine Freunde, Synodalgenossen und Familienglieder* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1915, 1916). Letters from the years 1841 to 1865 are found in the first volume; from 1865 to 1871, in the second. They are in German; the letters are not always given verbatim and complete. They give, however, a firsthand picture of Walther during the 25 years of his earlier activities.

The account by J. L. Gruber, *Erinnerungen an Professor*

*C. F. W. Walther und seine Zeit* (Burlington, Iowa: Lutheran Literary Board, 1930) is 139 pages in length. The author's bias against Walther sometimes leads him to a distorted use of his facts. It must be used with great care.

*Zion on the Mississippi*, by Walter O. Forster (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), concentrates on the Saxon immigration and the early settlement in Perry County, Mo. It is the outcome of the author's research for his doctoral thesis. This is the work of a competent historian who was careful not to permit favorable predilections to color his findings. Carl S. Munding's *Government in the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947) was also a doctoral dissertation. It is extremely well written, although heavily documented with footnotes. It deserves to be better known and more widely disseminated than it has been, since it is an excellent piece of scholarship.

The history of the Missouri Synod prepared in 1947 by the late Dr. W. A. Baepler, *A Century of Grace*, now out of print, is very useful. It goes beyond the activities of Dr. Walther, of course, but these activities can be seen against the larger background of the Synod and its subsequent history.

*Walther and the Church* is an abridgment of three of Dr. Walther's writings, as noted in the bibliography of his works in this manual. It also contains three essays about Walther. Dr. W. H. T. Dau wrote a sympathetic appraisal of him. Dr. Theo. Engelder contributed the most significant essay, "Walther a Christian Theologian," a penetrating study. Dr. Wm. Dallmann's "Walther's Respect for the Congregation" is written in the author's characteristic pungent vein.

Manuscripts of Walther's sermons and letters, still unpublished, as well as notes of his lectures, are in the Concordia Historical Institute. A complete critical edition of all of his writings, English translations of significant portions of these writings, and a definitive biography of this great leader of American Lutherans ought to be published. Will the centennial of his death in 1987 see these tasks accomplished?





# The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod

## **Officers when The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod was organized in 1847:**

C. F. W. Walther, President  
W. Sihler, Ph. D., Vice-President  
F. W. Husmann, Secretary  
F. W. Bartel, Treasurer

## **Officers in 1961:**

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Oliver R. Harms, D. D., First Vice-President  
R. P. Wiederaenders, D. D., Second Vice-President  
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