

CARL FERDINAND WILHELM WALTHER

Lutheran Theologian

BORN: **OCTOBER 25, 1811** Langenchursdorf, Saxony, Germany

DIED: **MAY 7, 1887** St. Louis, Missouri

C.F.W. WALTHER PROVIDED THEOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP TO THE MISSOURI SYNOD through the first four decades of its history. As president and professor of the St. Louis seminary, through frequent lectures at conventions and conferences and by numerous publications, Walther gave shape to beliefs and attitudes that characterize the Synod even today. First among them was a scriptural basis for everything the Church teaches. Second was his conviction that the Lutheran Confessions were a true and faithful expression of what the Bible taught. For Walther, being a Lutheran meant being a true Christian. For many years, he lectured on the theme, “The Doctrine of the Lutheran Church Alone Gives All Glory to God.”

But what was it that the Bible and therefore the Confessions taught? For Walther, the center of everything was the Gospel of God’s free grace on account of the saving work of Jesus Christ received by people through faith alone. But did people need to be saved? Certainly. That was the message of the Law. So the proclamation of Law and Gospel was the purpose of preaching, and Walther’s Friday evening lectures to his students on how to do that correctly remain a classic expression of his theology.

Virtually all of Walther’s theological works addressed issues of significance for his times. One of the most important was the doctrine of the Church. There was no official church in the United States as in the old country. But God’s Word and Sacraments were here, so believers were here. For Walther, that meant the Church was here, commissioned by God to do the work of the Church, including calling pastors.

Walther also taught that Christians, organized in congregations, had an obligation to work together when

they could do so in good conscience. In America, this meant seeking out fellow Lutherans and uniting with them in organizations like synods and conferences. But many Lutherans in America, as in the Germany that Walther had left, were not willing to follow the Scriptures and the Confessions faithfully — in deeds as well as words. So agreement in doctrine and practice was essential before churches preached the Word together or members communed together.

Standing for God’s Word the way Walther did sometimes led to controversy, and toward the end of his life there occurred one of the worst. It dealt with predestination which Walther understood as the guarantee of the salvation that God truly offers to all. We bring nothing to God, not even our faith. God saves us because He loves us in Jesus Christ — and always has!

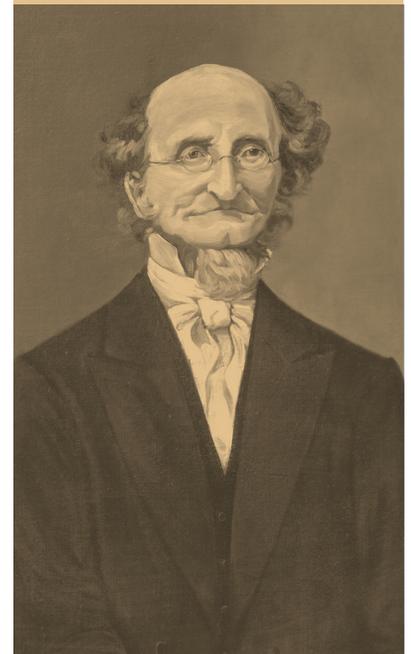
For more information about the 175th anniversary of the LCMS, visit lcms.org/175.

DISCOVER MORE

Arthur H. Drevlow, John M. Drickamer and Glenn E. Reichwald, eds., *C. F. W. Walther: the American Luther* (Mankato, Minn.: Walther Press, 1987).

Thomas Manteufel and Robert Kolb, eds., *Soli Deo Gloria: Essays on C. F. W. Walther* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000).

Christoph Barnbrock et al., eds., *C. F. W. Walther, Churchman and Theologian* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011).



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ONLY JESUS
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– 175 YEARS –



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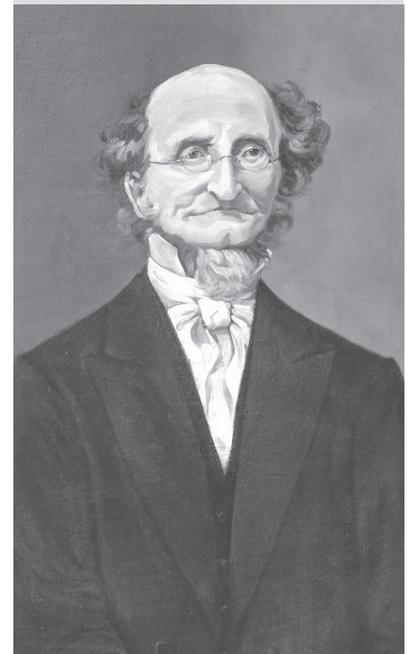
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