

THE OTHER FOUR: The German-Born Presidents Who Succeeded Walther

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In the previous issue of the *Quarterly*, as part of our commemoration of the bicentennial of the birth of C. F. W. Walther, we reviewed *At Home in the House of My Fathers*, a collection of English translations of important writings of Walther.¹ This collection of presidential sermons, essays, letters, and addresses also includes selections from the writings of the four German-born presidents of the Missouri Synod who succeeded Walther and carried on his heritage. Each of these men was either a colleague or a student (or both) of Walther. Other than Franz Pieper, these men receive relatively little attention or recognition today, so the Walther bicentennial and the publication of these English translations of some of their writings provide an opportunity for us to recognize them and to encourage our readers to sample their writings in *At Home in the House of My Fathers*. We will consider them in chronological order.

Friedrich Conrad Dietrich Wyneken

Born May 13, 1810, Died May 4, 1876

Second President of the Missouri Synod: 1850–1864

Wyneken was a colleague of Walther who played a key role in the formation of the Missouri Synod even though he was not present at the founding meeting. Wyneken had come to America independently of the Saxon immigrants in 1838. His great contribution to the Missouri Synod was bringing to America many pastors who contributed greatly to the early growth of the Missouri Synod. Wyneken was also a driving force of the synod's mission zeal.

Wyneken had been trained at the universities of Goettingen and Halle, both of which had a rationalistic bent. After graduating, he taught for several years, both privately and at a public high school. During this time he became an "awakened" pietist, driven by missionary zeal, but he was not yet a fully confessional Lutheran.

¹*At Home in the House of My Fathers*, Matthew C. Harrison, translator and compiler. Lutheran Legacy, 2009. 826 pp, hc, \$19.95. Order from LutheranLegacy.org or LOGIA.

Soon after arriving from Germany in Baltimore, Wyneken took over the local Lutheran congregation when the pastor became ill. He then became a traveling missionary for the Pennsylvania Ministerium to scattered German *Protestants*, spreading the gospel through Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan. Fort Wayne, Indiana became his base.

Wyneken was the author of *The Distress of the German Lutherans in North America* (1841), a call to Lutherans in Germany to send pastors to serve scattered Lutheran immigrants on the American frontier. This tract led Pastor Wilhelm Loehe, Neuendettelsau, Bavaria, to seek funds and volunteers for service in America. Men trained by Loehe in response to Wyneken's appeal formed the largest number of founding pastors of the Missouri Synod. Wyneken's missionary experience, method, and plan influenced American Lutheran missions for many years.

It seems that it was on a trip to Germany in 1842 for health reasons and to recruit help for the missions on the American frontier that Wyneken began to move toward a more confessional Lutheranism, which ultimately led him from the milder Eastern Lutheranism to the Missouri Synod.

Wyneken also played an important role in the development of Lutheran pastoral training in America. Wyneken's influence brought Wilhelm Sihler, the founder of the Fort Wayne Seminary, from Germany to America. Wyneken himself is honored as a founding father of the seminary because he began an educational venture in Fort Wayne on which the seminary could later build.

Wyneken held pastorates in Fort Wayne and Adams County, Indiana, before being called back to Baltimore in 1845. Five years later he was called to Trinity Lutheran Church, Saint Louis. His final parish was Trinity Lutheran Church, Cleveland, Ohio, from 1864 to 1875.

In 1850 Wyneken was elected president of the Missouri Synod, replacing Walther. He served in this office for fourteen years. During his years as president Wyneken's talent for organization was put to good use as the rapidly growing synod was reorganized into four districts in 1854. He expressed his joy at the fulfillment of his hopes and dreams for the synod in his 1852 address to the Missouri Synod assembled in Fort Wayne:

With great thanksgiving, our heart must be raised to the Lord anew with each synodical convention which the Lord in His mercy gives us the privilege to experience. For we continue to see His love, grace, and faithfulness even in these last difficult times. It is nothing short of a miracle in my view that, in places where only a few years ago a German Lutheran preacher traversed the vast woodlands and endless prairies, only now and then to visit the

scattered members of his church to serve them with the bread of life, today a synod can gather which numbers more than a hundred preachers, professors, and teachers as workers in the vineyard, a synod which draws into its membership annually more and more congregations who rejoice that also here the light of true doctrine is once more held high to enlighten hearts with the truth. . . . We must certainly praise the Lord who has truly done such great things among us.

In reporting Wyneken's death in *Der Lutheraner* of May 15, 1876, Walther described him as "a highly gifted spirit, a truly evangelical preacher, a pastor experienced in the school of spiritual struggles, a fearless witness of pure truth, an avid warrior for the same, a faithful guardian of the church, a man without deception whose entire being bore the mark of honesty, an opponent of all lies and hypocrisy, a true Nathanael; in short, a true Christian and a faithful servant of the Lord who recognized in humility only his weakness, not his strength. For a multitude of preachers and laity, he was a model; for thousands, he was a spiritual father; for whole areas of America, he was their apostle."

Wyneken may be ranked as the third most important contributor to American Lutheranism after Walther and Muhlenberg. Wyneken is commemorated on the calendar of saints of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on May 4.

How are Wyneken's contributions and character reflected in *House of My Fathers*?

Perhaps the most important writing about Wyneken included in this volume is the 100-page report of the trip which Wyneken made to Germany with Walther in 1851 to try to resolve fellowship relations with the German churches and to restore harmony with Loehe. This document was discussed in the previous installment of this review.

Letters between Wyneken and Walther reflect the trials both men faced, due in part to the heavy physical and emotional burdens they bore (p 171, 174, 423, 478). Walther suffered a breakdown of health in 1860 and Wyneken in 1865 (Franz Pieper later experienced two breakdowns). The letters between the men reflect the love and appreciation they had for each other and their recognition of the truth "we have this treasure in jars of clay."

Perhaps the most interesting letter for WELS readers is Wyneken's 1863 letter to Walther which deals with Wyneken's health problems and battles with depression, but also with disagreement that had arisen between the two men concerning the tone of Walther's polemics (p 423). Wyneken declares that he stands fully for doctrinal rigorous-

ness. Nevertheless, he is concerned that some in the synod go too far in pushing for uniformity in matters not clearly settled in Scripture. He also expresses his concern with the form and manner in which Missouri carried out controversy with opponents. "We demonstrate a level of irritation and touchiness which according to my view is not fitting for us. That was the case earlier with Grabau, and now with Wisconsin, Iowa, etc. . . . I also believe that in our fight (we may and shall give up nothing of the doctrine itself) we too often forget the we could win over sincere people or could better help those who are on their way toward us by proceeding in a friendly manner (which recognizes the good we see developing here and there) to move them to a right point of view." He also expresses concern that some of the younger pastors are too rigorous in pushing their views on others. He freely confesses his own "fault," that is, that his zeal for missions moves him at time to push too hard for synodical projects, but he laments the earlier days when the forefathers of the synod were more eager to spend on the building of churches and schools than on their own houses, whereas now he sees the reverse.

In spite of their occasional disagreements it was the doctrine of justification that brought and kept the two men together. Wyneken says, "The longer and the more I have suffered under my heavy spiritual *Anfechtungen*, the more I have experienced in a practical way the necessity and importance of pure doctrine. Since every doctrine is connected with justification and undergirds it—indeed, proceeds from it as from the center of faith and leads back to it—I have found in this doctrine my only stay in the midst of my difficulties." This centrality of justification is also reflected in the synodical essay, "Justification—Beginning, Middle, and End."

An 1841 sermon reflects some of the weakness of Wyneken's early understanding of the biblical principles of fellowship (p 345). A decade later he was expressing a much stronger view. A priority of Wyneken was to uphold the rights of the priesthood of believers and the right of congregations (p 359, 437). Other synodical essays deal with the importance and difficulty of preserving both doctrinal unity and an evangelical spirit in a rapidly growing church. This brief collection is enough to identify Wyneken as one of the great men of American Lutheranism.

Further Reading

G. E. Hageman, *Friedrich Konrad Dietrich Wyneken*, Vol. 3 in the *Men and Missions Series* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1926).

Threinen, Norman J. "F. C. D. Wyneken: Motivator for the Mission," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 60 (1996) Nos. 1-2.

Heinrich Christian Schwan
Born April 5, 1819, Died May 29, 1905
Third President of the Missouri Synod: 1878-1899

Schwan is best known for the Small Catechism that bore his name and as the first pastor to introduce the Christmas tree into churches in America. As a theologian he is best known for his efforts to guard the church against legalism. All three of these things are related as we will see below.

Heinrich Schwan was born in Horneburg, Hanover, Germany. He attended both the University of Goettingen and the University of Jena before graduating in 1842. He was ordained in Germany on September 13, 1843.

In late 1843 Schwan began work as a missionary in Bahia, Brazil. While in Brazil, he married Emma Matilda Edmunde Blume, the daughter of a German plantation owner, on April 4, 1849. In 1850 he accepted a call to Salem Lutheran Church, Black Jack, Missouri, where he was installed on September 15. In 1852 he was called to Zion Lutheran Church, Cleveland, Ohio. He remained as pastor at Zion for thirty years, until he stepped down and became the assistant pastor.

Schwan is credited with being the first pastor to erect a Christmas tree in an American church sanctuary. To celebrate the couple's first Cleveland Christmas, Schwan went to the nearby forest where he selected and cut down a fine evergreen and brought it back to his church. Together the couple adorned the tree with cookies, colored ribbons, fancy nuts and candles and topped it with a silver star from his childhood. While many in his congregation were pleased, others were shocked, and some newspapers reported the event as idolatrous, heathenish, and nonsensical. But Schwan stood by his actions and left the tree standing. However, shortly thereafter, he gave in and took down his tree, but his wife objected to his yielding to the legalism of the puritan nay-sayers. The following year Schwan again decorated his church with a tree and, to his surprise, found that he was not alone. Within five years Christmas trees were found in churches all over the country. Schwan receives honorable mention in many histories of the Christmas tree in America, and his grave is annually decorated with a Christmas tree.

On a more serious level Schwan served the Missouri Synod and Synodical Conference in numerous positions and as president of the LCMS (1878-1899).

He is best known also in WELS for *Thirty-two Theses against Unevangelical Practice* (1862) and for the synodical catechism published under his supervision in 1896. The theses against unevangelical practice lead off the collection of Schwan's writings in this volume.

Evangelical practice is not that we are lax in preaching the law, but that we treat everything in an evangelical aim and with an evangelical goal. Schwan's catalog of unevangelical practices is still a good check list for pastors to review. While he warns that here and there in the Missouri Synod he sees a more or less unevangelical practice, he also warns that there is only one small step between legalism and antinomian practice (in his synodical address three years later Schwan warns against "broadmindedness"). In his addresses of 1879 and 1881 as the Election Controversy was emerging, Schwan argues for a firm but evangelical application of the scriptural principles of fellowship.

Also included in the collection is Schwan's sermon for Walther's funeral. In an interesting aside, he suggests that perhaps people had shown too little respect for Walther's words which were God's words, and on occasion too much respect for Walther's words which were his own.

Both Wyneken and Schwan warned against the legalism of the Temperance Movement and other forms of the Social Gospel, which attempt to make people pious through the law. They also warn against drunkenness, but see the church's emphasis as being not just on law but on gospel motivation.

Other addresses reflect a concern that the synod was in danger of losing its first love as the first generation was passing. In an address delivered during an economic downturn he warns against using economic distress as an excuse to cover up what is really a loss of first love. To the claim that the synod did not need so many workers in hard times when expansion was hard, he responds, "[In Matthew 9 Jesus does not say] that I should pray for more workers or for many workers, but merely for workers. Thus we should not pray for many workers but pray much for workers. Neither does He mean that we should forever pray under all circumstances for many, many workers. Still less, however, is it His intention that in good times we pray for many, and during hard times pray for few workers. For He Himself will determine how many and which workers He will send" (p 559). Another address, which could be addressed to today's worship wars, warns against both chasing after fads and being too stuck in old ways of doing things. He warned against trying to resolve by constitutions issues that needed to be resolved by Scripture.

Balance and striving always for the scriptural middle was a mark of Schwan's theology and his presidency.

Further Reading

Everette Meier. "The Life and Work of Henry C. Schwan as Pastor and Missionary," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 24 (October 1951):132-39; 24 (January 1952):145-72; 25 (July 1952):72-85; 25 (October 1952):97-121.

Franz August Otto Pieper
Born June 27, 1852, Died June 3, 1931
Fourth President of the Missouri Synod: 1899-1911

Pieper is the best known of "the Other Four" because of the continued use of his dogmatics textbook in many languages around the world and his many other theological writings. The president of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis from the time of C. F. W. Walther's death in 1887 to the time of his own death in 1931, Pieper held the most visible position among orthodox Lutherans around the world during this period. Like Walther he had a strong influence on confessional Lutheran churches around the world.

Franz Pieper was born in Carwitz, Pomerania, Germany. After the death of his father, his mother and her sons immigrated to the U.S. in 1870. His mother was cook at the Wisconsin Synod's Northwestern University in Watertown, Wisconsin. Since Pieper was a seminary student during the decade in which the Wisconsin Synod made use of the Walther-led seminary of the Missouri Synod in St. Louis, Pieper attended there and became a protégé of sorts of Walther. He was ordained as a WELS pastor by Adolf Hoenecke on July 11, 1875 in Centerville, Wisconsin. Pieper served as pastor in Centerville for one year before accepting a call to Manitowoc. On January 2, 1877 he married Minnie Koehn in Sheboygan. He served in Manitowoc until 1878, when he became a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In 1887 he became the seminary's president.

From 1882 to 1899, Pieper served on the Board of Colored Missions for the Synodical Conference. He was the Synod's president from 1899 until 1911.

Pieper is the author of *Christliche Dogmatik* (3 vols., 1917-1924; translated as *Christian Dogmatics*, 1950-1953); and he played a key role in the development of The Brief Statement, the most important doctrinal statement of the Missouri Synod. Writings which are included in *House of My Fathers* are various letters, addresses, and doctrinal treatises. The doctrine of church fellowship was a special concern of Pieper as a result of the divisions within confessional Lutheranism that had arisen during the Election Controversy. His writings on church fellowship will be considered in the forthcoming WLQ article on early Missouri's principles and practices of church fellowship.

Of special interest in this volume is the 1888 essay on "Unity in the Faith" which emphasizes both the duty to help weak brothers and to avoid adherents of false teaching, which the Wisconsin Synod continued to defend in the 1950s and 60s. Of the unity of the Synodical Conference he says, "There is in all circumstances a *necessary* external conviction of internal unity in the faith. Should it occur that

the Wisconsin Synod would, on account of its confession of this or that article of our common most holy faith, be attacked, criticized, even called heretical, then Minnesota and Missouri may not say, 'I don't know the man' (namely Wisconsin). Rather, Minnesota and Missouri must say, 'What Wisconsin teaches, we also teach. Wisconsin's doctrine is our doctrine. We are brothers in the faith with Wisconsin.' Were we not to say this we would commit a serious sin. By denying Wisconsin we would deny the orthodox faith, Christ himself" (p 592).

When President McKinley was assassinated by an anarchist in 1901 Pieper saw the event not simply as an occasion to deplore anarchy but as a call to the nation to repent of the sins afflicting it, including strife between workers and employers, the hold of the lodges on their members, and the increase of abortion.

In a memorial address for Professor A. L. Graebner he praises the office of teacher: "Teachers are among God's gifts to the church. . . . He has instituted in the Church a personal teaching office through which His Word is to have sway. . . . A true teacher must carry out his office in self-denial and unselfishness, knowing he has a divine vocation" (p 618, 619). His early writings on the subject make the later church and ministry controversies difficult to understand.

Pieper was the doctrinal leader of confessional Lutheranism for a generation.

Further Reading

Theodore Graebner. *Dr. Francis Pieper: A Biographical Sketch*. St. Louis: CPH, 1931.

Friedrich Pfothenhauer

Born April 22, 1859, Died October 9, 1939

Fifth President of the Missouri Synod: 1911-1935

Friedrich Pfothenhauer was born April 22, 1859, in Altencelle, Hanover, Germany. He immigrated to the U.S. in 1875. He attended both Concordia College, Fort Wayne, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, before being ordained on November 7, 1880 in Odessa, Minnesota.

After his ordination, Pfothenhauer served as a traveling missionary in the Northwest (that is, Minnesota, the Dakotas, and Montana) for seven years. He married Helene Brauer in Crete, Illinois, on October 10, 1882. In 1887 he accepted a call to Lewiston, Minnesota, and in 1894 he moved to Hamburg, Minnesota, where he served until 1911. In 1935 he returned to the parish ministry as an associate pastor at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Chicago.

From 1891 to 1908 Pfothenhauer served as the president of the Minnesota District. In 1908 he was elected as the first vice-president of the Synod, and three years later he became president. He served for twenty-four years.

Pfotenhauer's evangelical spirit was reflected in the fact that he took the lead in the first publication of Walther's lectures on law and gospel. He sought permission for this first edition in a letter he wrote to Walther on the occasion of the death of Walther's wife. This was five years after he had been Walther's student and two years before Walther's death.

The writings of Pfotenhauer in this volume are mainly district and synodical addresses which reflect his experience as a frontier missionary. His writings are full of encouragement to pastors who labored under very difficult conditions, both in the Northwest where results were quick and abundant (the district grew from 20,000 to 90,000 souls in just over 20 years) and in the mission fields of India where gains were very slow. What was important was that the Word was planted. During the Great Depression when prospects for growth seemed dim, he urged the synod convention to be "restless but supremely at rest" in its zeal to spread the Word.

Pfotenhauer's 1911 synodical address (made necessary by Pieper's second breakdown under the burdens of his dual presidency) summarized Pfotenhauer's focus, "The Business of the Church is Preaching the Gospel."

Pfotenhauer was the last of the German-born presidents of the LCMS, and his presidency, which extended only a few years past the death of Pieper, was the end of an era in more ways than one. He was the last president whose term of office was not yet marked by the drift away from the founding principles and practices of the LCMS which reached its peak during the period when Seminec theology was dominant at the St. Louis Seminary. In some of his final addresses Pfotenhauer expressed his fears of what lay ahead for the synod. His writings are a wonderful call to the proper balance and partnership of doctrine and missions. They serve as a call to repentance and zeal in hard times, whether they be spiritually and economically hard. They still speak powerfully to the church today.

The first five presidents of the Missouri Synod all were, at heart, above all else, pastors (*Seelsorgers*), but of the five, two (Walther and Pieper) served primarily as theologians, and three (Wyneken, Schwan, and Pfotenhauer) served first as missionaries. There was in their mind no tension between devotion to doctrine and devotion to missions. In its early years Missouri had a great balance of the concerns of both disciplines, and this was a great blessing to Lutheranism in America and in the world.

Further Reading

E. A. Mayer, "Dr. Friedrich Pfotenhauer (1859-1939)," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 13 (April 1940):1-22.