

**A Nearly-Forgotten Founder of the
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod:**

**The Life and Work of Pastor and Teacher
Johann Friedrich Buenger**

Daniel Burgess
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The Life and Work of Johann Friedrich Buenger

Buenger in Germany

In the 17th Century, the German church was torn between the pietistic movement, embodied in Jacob Spener and August Hermann Franke, and Rationalism emphasized in the life and writings of Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz and Christian von Wolff. As time went on the movement from pietism and Rationalism was barely perceptible because of the popularizations of Wolff. As Rationalism continued to grow and flourish, pietism and orthodoxy were being kept alive through Bible study clubs and pietistic unions. It was into this swirling current of religious activity that Johann Friedrich Buenger was born.¹

Christians (nee) Reiz gave birth to Johann at Etdorf by Rosswein in the foothills of the Saxon Erz Mountains on January 2, 1810. His father was Jacob Friedrich Buenger, the pastor at Etdorf. The Buengers and Reiz' could trace their families back to the Reformation days, with many pastors serving God's people. In fact, Johann's mother was the daughter of her husband's predecessor at Etdorf: Pastor William Gottlieb Reiz who served for 28 years.² He was one of the few men who remained faithful to the Savior's pure Gospel during the rising popularity of Rationalism. In 1765 he published a communion book titled *Empfindungen des Glaubens vor, bei und nach dem Tische des Herrn*.³ He had originally written this book for himself, but as it became more and more popular among orthodox preachers, he had published up to ten editions.

¹ Kenneth R. Molnar *Johann Friedrich Buenger*, "Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly", vol XXX no. 1, Spring 1957, p. 1.

² C.F.W. Walther "Johann Friedrich Buenger," St. Louis, Missouri: F. Dette. Tr.: Karl W. Keller, 1973, p. 1.

³ Kenneth R. Molnar, p. 1-2.

William Reiz said in the preface to this communion book, “My volumes were intended to be a reminder for me of the unfathomable, immeasurable and indescribable grace of Jesus.”⁴

Johann Friedrich’s father was not a rationalist either, though he had not the staunch sturdiness of faith of his father-in-law. Jacob Friedrich’s father, Andreas Christopher Buenger, had also been a pastor, but with a pietistic leaning. When he retired in 1830 after fifty-four years in the ministry, he came to live in Etdorf, where he died six years later. It was no surprise to find that he had followed the pietistic movement seeing as he was educated in Brandenburg and then at the University of Halle. He gave vent to his pietistic tendencies in the founding and forming of various charitable institutions. A.C. Buenger had an intense devotion to beneficent activities.⁵ This ancestral influence of A.C. Buenger may help to explain Johann’s interest in his later years in establishing and participating in many charitable institutions.

In the village school at Etdorf Johann Friedrich received part of his elementary school education. In a diary, Buenger himself writes that after he attended the village school for a while, he entered a private school taught by a candidate of theology named Gotsch. He was ten years old and began learning the basics of Latin. Not long after entering this school, the Rev. Ernest Hasse, Buenger’s uncle, invited him to stay at his home near Muekenberg. There the pastor tutored him. Buenger relates that since the pastor was busy with three parishes, he was left to fend for himself and certainly did not learn much.⁶

My first teacher upon enrollment in the village was our dear Dr. Goetch [sic]. In the year 1823 my father sent me to the well-known school for the nobility at Meissen [*Fuerstenschule* St. Afran on the Albrechts Heights in Meissen]. Here I stayed for six years until the spring of 1829 when I passed my matriculation examination for the university. All of the teachers at this institution were rationalists. None understood or taught the gospel. Nevertheless, there remained steadfastly within me what I had brought along from my parent’s house the Bible is God’s Word and Jesus Christ is God’s Son. Only this, unfortunately, at this time, did not live in me. Precisely from this university for many years already there had flowed, as from a spring, the poisonous stream of

⁴ C.F.W. Walther, p. 1.

⁵ Kenneth R. Molnar, p. 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

rationalism, of unbelief, of sham enlightenment and the most frightful distortion of Scripture upon all the congregations of Saxony. The preachers whose misfortune it was to be prepared at that time in Leipzig to serve the church proclaimed from their pulpits to the congregations that which their professors had given them as great wisdom. It was almost an impossibility for an orthodox and confessionally prepared candidate to receive a position of royal patronage in the kingdom of Saxony through the unbelieving territorial consistory.⁷

After a quiet year of study from Easter of 1829 until 1830, Buenger joined a group of students and professors who gave themselves over completely to the Pietistic system. By the time Buenger had joined the group many of its founders had left or were leaving the university, with the exception of Brohm, who lived in the same boarding house as he. After 1832, when Brohm left the university, Buenger became a close friend of C.F.W. Walther.⁸

In giving themselves over to Pietism, Buenger and Walther were continually in a brooding fit of despondency. They went so far in trying to prove their faithfulness that they were forced to suspend their studies and return to their homes because their health was so seriously affected. Buenger suffered from what appeared to be an incurable lung ailment and visited Bad Radeberg, a health resort near Dresden. At this time Brohm was also in Dresden, and seeing as Buenger recovered more rapidly than expected, Brohm helped him prepare for his first examination of two (in order to become a candidate for ministry), which he passed in March of 1834. He then declined to take the second examination until 1837 because of his health and his dislike of the doctrine and practice of the state church. During the interim between the examinations, he returned home and tutored his younger brothers and sisters. In 1836, when his father died, and in the following years, he took teaching positions at Pirna and Dresden.⁹

⁷ Quoted in C.F.W. Walther, p. 2.

⁸ Walter O. Forster, "Zion on the Mississippi," St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1953, p. 44.

⁹ *Ibid.*

During the stay in Dresden, Buenger became associated with Martin Stephan, "in whom the young man thought he saw the sole pillar of Lutheranism in Saxony."¹⁰ Stephan was one of the most experienced pastors in Germany who maintained "that the Bible was the fountain of pure doctrine and that the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church were drawn from Scripture."¹¹ It was said of Stephan:

"He indeed preached the Gospel, having experienced its power in his own soul." To him flocked those who desired comfort and advice. He was a man of exceptional talents, captivating address, and great psychological insight. He knew the truth, and in calm and deliberate sermons won the hearts of the educated and the uneducated by the perspicuity and directness of his presentation. . . . But they did not follow him blindly, nor did they adopt his views rashly. We know that Keyl had quite an argument with Stephan on the doctrine regarding civil government, and that Walther [C. F. W.], before opening a certain letter from Stephan, prayed to God to guard him against accepting false advice. They also knew the many insinuations made against him. However, they saw that his doctrinal position was sound, that his spiritual advice had been proved true when the advice of others had failed, and that his judgment of the times, its conditions and tendencies, and of the state of the Church in Germany was beyond cavil.¹²

Already by 1836 a select group around Stephan had begun meetings concerning plans and possibilities for immigration. Buenger, having been convinced that the time for freedom had come, played an active role at these meetings. However, there were some in Germany who condemned immigration as a sin and as an escape at the improper time. What convinced these Lutherans to immigrate to America was the idea of freedom: freedom from the oppression of conscience and freedom to worship God according to his Word.¹³

Stephan gathered together more than 700 people from almost all parts of Germany to undertake this voyage to the new world. Included were 6 pastors, 8 theological candidates, 1

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹¹ Kenneth R. Molnar, p. 6.

¹² Professor Theodore Buenger, W.H.T. Dau, ed., *The Saxon Immigrants of 1839*, found in "Ebenezer," St. Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1922, p. 7.

¹³ Kenneth R. Molnar, p. 6.

school teacher, 3 teacher candidates, 2 physicians, 1 medical student, 1 doctor of laws, 1 attorney, 2 artists, and several people who had been civil servants and merchants.¹⁴

In October, 1838, with five ships having been chartered for the journey, Stephan gave the call for the immigration and many of the Saxon Lutheran immigrants, in small and large groups, went to Bremen to catch their ships. Buenger, under the advice of Stephan, began to make his way from Dresden to Bremen on October 20th at 12:30 p.m. (there is some discrepancy as to the date: some documents say Buenger left Dresden on the 20th, while others state he left on the 29th). Because of passport problems, only 44 were able to make the journey to Bremen at this time.¹⁵

C. F. W. Walther had also made his way to Bremen with 19 of his parishioners.¹⁶ However, his plans for sailing changed slightly at the last minute as a result of a difficulty regarding the Schubert children.¹⁷

Ferdinand and Hermann Walther had decided to take along the orphaned children of their eldest sister, Mrs. Schubert, to the United States. This was done, of course, with the full consent of the children's foster parents and Magistrate Piether of Waldenburg. The children, Marie (15 years old) and Theodor (10 years old), had been under the care of relatives, but legally the guardianship belonged to a Mr. Engel of Waldenburg. The Walther brothers took the first step of transporting the children out of the country, but from Muehlau on they were entrusted to the care of Mrs. Buenger, the mother of Johann Buenger. She then transported the children safely to Bremen.¹⁸

¹⁴ C.F.W. Walther, p. 13.

¹⁵ Kenneth R. Molnar, p. 7.

¹⁶ Theodore Buenger, p. 7.

¹⁷ Walter O. Forster, p. 194.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 194-195.

While the children were in transit, Mr. Engel had forced Magistrate Piether to issue warrants for the arrest of Mrs. Buenger and the return of the children. When Mrs. Buenger then arrived in Bremen, she was promptly arrested, but the children were hidden safely away from the Bremen officials, who half-heartedly went about their duty. The day previous to the arrest, C.F.W. Walther was sailing aboard the *Johann Georg* and was out of the danger of being apprehended.¹⁹

When Johann Buenger arrived in Bremen on November 7, he was surprised to learn that his mother had been jailed and kept in Bremerhaven and that there was no doubt she would remain in custody until she surrendered the children. Otto Hermann Walther, the children's uncle, wrote a letter to his father claiming that he thought the children had set sail on the *Johann Georg*, "or some other ship." In reality, at least part of the time the children were in G.H. Loeber's care and part of the time in the care of O.H. Walther himself. They sailed with O.H. Walther on the *Olbers* on November 18, and three days later a warrant arrived in Bremen for their uncle.²⁰

Martin Stephan ordered Johann Buenger to remain in Germany with his mother. Agnes, Buenger's sister and future wife of O.H. Walther, also stayed behind.²¹ During this time the last of the ships of the Saxon immigration set sail for New Orleans.²²

Buenger, Agnes, and their mother waited in Bremerhaven for the decision of the Saxon court until December 11, 1838. It was then that an attorney named Krause secured Mrs. Buenger's release after considerable pressure had been exerted in many directions, and after the

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 196-197.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

²² Kenneth R. Molnar, p. 7.

officials were convinced that the Schubert children had escaped. Krause was also the lawyer who attended to the accusation levied against Martin Stephan while in Germany.²³

Finally, on December 18, 1838, Mrs. Buenger, her two children, and another immigrant (Mr. Kohtz) sailed on the *Constitution*. They arrived in New York, "the American Zion," on February 18, 1839.²⁴ When Buenger arrived in New York, he noted in his diary: "How the kind God has put to shame my unbelief that I continually doubted whether I too would be fortunate enough to arrive."²⁵

Buenger in New York

With the aid of Mr. Kohtz' ailing English, the Buenger party was able to find its way around New York City.²⁶ They found the most friendly, loyal Lutheran group who had already settled in New York.²⁷ Letters from St. Louis arrived on February 19th—the same day Stephan arrived in St. Louis. The Buenger group was informed that C.F.W. Walther, G.H. Loeber, and their parties were in St. Louis, and Stephan and O.H. Walther were still in New Orleans as of January 30. Buenger reported their arrival in New York in a letter dated February 22.²⁸

The New York congregation, under the leadership of F. Sproede, had immigrated from Prussia in 1836. They conducted "reading services" in a large rented room, and at times had over 100 worshipers.²⁹ Buenger was so moved when he heard the congregation singing "O Holy

²³ *Ibid.*, see note 14.

²⁴ Walter O. Forster, p. 197.

²⁵ C.F.W. Walther, p. 14.

²⁶ Walter O. Forster, p. 405.

²⁷ C.F.W. Walther, p. 14.

²⁸ Walter O. Forster, p. 405.

²⁹ C.F.W. Walther, p. 14.

Trinity" that he could barely keep from crying for joy at the prospect of living in a country where one could preach God's Word freely. He was also very impressed with the unchanged orthodoxy and sincerity of the worshipers.³⁰

Martin Stephan decided that the worshipers in New York should join his group in St. Louis in the spring of 1839. It was then volunteered that Buenger accept the role of leading the congregational worship services at least until the move to Missouri. He humbly declined the invitation noting that he would spend his time educating the children, studying theology and learning English.³¹

In March of 1839, before the move to St. Louis, Buenger visited many of the churches in the area and even succeeded in bringing the captain of the *Constitution*, Captain Volkmann, to accept the Christian faith. Soon after this the New York group received another letter from Stephan encouraging them to come down to St. Louis. However, no financial help was promised and the New York group would have to fend for themselves. It was decided that "those who could not afford to pay for their own transportation would have to wait for better days." Hope was held out to the less fortunate that if funds remained at the end of the journey, they would be forwarded and a second group would soon follow.³²

On April 4, 1839, Sproede and Buenger made inquiries of the local German Immigrant Society. On the basis of the information obtained it was decided to leave on April 22, since the Erie Canal would not be opened until April 20. This intention was carried out, and on the twenty-second, 108 persons began the journey to St. Louis by steamboat. According to one of their number the itinerary was "Bogibsi . . . Albani . . . Utika . . . Rochester . . . Bufalo . . . Clivland . . . Ackron . . . Cinsinati . . . Louiswill" . . . Sproede and his "New Yorkers" arrived at the landing place in Perry County on the forenoon of Friday, May 17, 1839 [sic].³³

³⁰ Kenneth R. Molnar, p. 8.
³¹ C.F.W. Walther, p. 14-15.
³² Kenneth R. Molnar, p. 8-9.
³³ Walter O. Forster, p. 407-408.

Buenger in Perry County

Buenger had barely arrived in Perry County when he heard the disturbing news concerning Martin Stephan and his questionable conduct with two young girls. C.F.W. Walther immediately filled-in Buenger on the state of affairs but did so in the sleeping quarters of a group of about twenty-five to thirty men. The fact that it was done in Latin did not prevent others, such as Johann's brother, Ernst Buenger, from understanding. The results of Walther's method of spreading information were as perfect as he could have planned.³⁴

Two days after the New York congregation arrived, Pentecost Sunday, the entire colony at Perry County was boiling over with curiosity and excitement, prompted by actual knowledge or perceived knowledge of what was happening. Stephan was still permitted to preach on that Sunday, despite the fact that the leaders of the colony had already pronounced judgment. When Pentecost Sunday arrived Stephan ordered everyone to appear at the landing place where he was to preach. "C.F.W. Walther countered by summoning everyone to the other settlement farther inland (Altenburg), where he was to be guest speaker for the day."³⁵

It was reported that all but two or three were brave enough to follow Walther and listen to his message. Walther preached on John 3:20 and when he finished, he rose and said, "Many of you will have been surprised this morning that I preached in spite of the invitation and against the orders of the man who until now has been beloved and respected by us all, but terrible things have happened, which I shall now communicate to you." The events which Walther proceeded to communicate served to make everyone sorrowful, yet everyone believed the assertions.³⁶

³⁴ Walter O. Forster, p. 409.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 410.

Buenger had clung to Stephan in love and near veneration, seeing in him a spiritual father. But upon the dethronement of Martin Stephan, Buenger's hope had not vanished, for his hope was not founded on Stephan, but on the Word of God.³⁷

The immigrants to Perry County were not spared the disasters of disease and the pain of death. Ernst Buenger, now a doctor of medicine, had more work keeping up with the sicknesses than he could handle. Johann Buenger, however, provided the people not only with the Word of God, instruction, encouragement, and comfort, but he with his brothers and sisters went to work establishing a home for the family before winter set in. In a short time the new home stood, comfortably furnished. It served not only the Buenger family, but also served as an asylum for a forsaken orphan boy.³⁸

There is an interesting story concerning the Buenger home which C.F.W. Walther recalls in his biography of Johann Friedrich:

The family of a pastor's widow (The Buengers) comprised of eight people one day had not a single piece of bread to eat and also did not know where to get flour for baking. For behold! Still on that very day an English speaking man with a horse, carrying a sack of flour came. He rode up to the house of the widow and asked whether she needed flour for bread. Naturally she answered "Yes," but at the time she had no money to pay for it. But should he wish to leave the flour, he would soon justly receive payment for it. The man put down the flour and left and never was seen again and despite of every inquiry it could never be learned where he came from and whither he went. "God made provision for this pious family."³⁹

Already in 1839 a group of three pastoral candidates (Brohm, O. Fuerbringer, and J.F. Buenger) succeeded in acquiring a few (four or six) acres of land in the settlement of Perry County and began to provide a place for instruction for basic elementary training. Although they had the help of pastors in the area, especially C.F.W. Walther who was the pastor there in Perry

³⁷ Kenneth R. Molnar, p. 9.

³⁸ C.F.W. Walther, p. 15.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15-16.

County, the three candidates did most of the work in erecting the log cabin which was to become the "college."⁴⁰ Buenger, with his unabashed enthusiasm and dedication to hard work, took the lead, felling trees, building the house and single-handedly digging the well.⁴¹

Seeing as the candidates were not accustomed to manual labor in such extensive quantities, there were considerable setbacks as well as physical discomfort. But they were not deterred, and with help and encouragement from pastors and the local congregations, the building finally opened (after a few months of delays) on December 9, 1839.⁴² The fledgling school had an opening enrollment of eleven students: seven boys and four girls. The girls were taught by Buenger himself.⁴³

As an announcement to the St. Louis area, the following statement (translated into English) as to the purpose of the school was published in the *Anzeiger des Westens*:

We, the undersigned, intend to establish an instruction and training institution which differs from the common elementary schools principally in that it will embrace, outside of (in addition to) the general elementary curriculum (or branches), all branches of the (classical) high school, which are necessary for a true Christian and scientific education, such as: Religion, the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, German, French, and English language; History, Geography, Mathematics, Physics, Natural History, Introduction to Philosophy, Music and Drawing.

In said branches the pupils of our institution shall be sufficiently advanced to enable them, after finishing the entire course, to take up studies at the university.⁴⁴

The esteemed parents who desire to entrust their children to our institution are advised to obtain information regarding the plan and arrangement of the same from Pastor O.H. Walther, No. 14 Poplar St. between First and Second, St. Louis.

Signed by C.F.W. Walther, Ottomar Fuerbringer, Th. Jul. Brohm, and Johann Friedrich Buenger.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Walter O. Forster, p. 457.

⁴¹ Kenneth R. Molnar, p. 10.

⁴² Walter O. Forster, p. 457-458.

⁴³ Kenneth R. Molnar, p. 10.

⁴⁴ According to their conception the high school course was pre-theological. In Germany the theological courses were taken at the university. Therefore, this college at Perry County was not, at first, a theological school.

⁴⁵ A.C. Stellhorn, *What was the Perry County College?* "Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly", vol. XVIII no. 4, January, 1946, p. 101-102.

The eleven children who were enrolled at the opening of the school were anywhere from five to fifteen years of age. At first the school looked more like a kindergarten and elementary school than a college or seminary. Mrs. von Wurmb's home served as the dining hall and dormitory for those students who could not get home for dinner or at night.⁴⁶

Buenger in St. Louis

Buenger's stay in Perry County ended shortly after the school opened in December of 1839. In April of 1840 he received a call to Trinity Congregation in St. Louis and was installed as teacher on August 2. At this time there was no church building (the congregation rented an Episcopalian church) nor any school building (the school was housed in the teacher's apartment—which was shared with the pastor). The school in St. Louis was tended by O.H. Walther, and Buenger's predecessor, candidate C.L. Geyer who accepted a call to Cape Girardeau County, Missouri.⁴⁷

Buenger's first difficulty was discipline. He did not want to punish the students for merely whispering in class, and as a result the children talked throughout the day. On a free Wednesday afternoon he took the opportunity to visit various English schools in the area. He found that strict discipline was the secret behind good instruction. Upon his return he immediately added the ideas he had seen to his own classroom. From then on the children did everything on command, and all was quiet and orderly.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 102-103.

⁴⁷ Kenneth R. Molnar, p. 10.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

During the second year enrollment increased so much that a new quarters were required. There was an average of fifty students (which was the maximum number that space allowed) and when a nearby German school closed, Buenger had up to eighty students. The students would sit in his apartment and spill over onto the steps and walkway leading up to the house. This also coincided with the Episcopalian Church giving notice for the Trinity Congregation to vacate.⁴⁹

The Saxon congregation decided it was time for action. They purchased land on Lombard Street in St. Louis and built their church. On the Second Sunday in Advent in 1842, the new church was dedicated and called Trinity. The church was built with a rather spacious basement which was to be used as the school and could house 150 students. Buenger continued his work with enthusiasm and God blessed him with much success.⁵⁰

Trinity was beginning to grow by leaps and bounds. When it realized, with joy, that it was drawing membership from the entire city of St. Louis, it became evident that, in order to minister effectively to the German Lutherans in the city, a new school was needed. In 1844, in what was then called "St. Louis Gardens" (on the north side of the city), a new school was erected. Theodor Buenger, the younger brother of Johann, was installed as teacher. This school was the foundation of Immanuel Lutheran Church, organized in 1847.⁵¹

In 1844 Johann Friedrich Buenger was called into the holy ministry. The St. Louis congregation called him as their *Hilfsprediger* (assistant preacher) and gave him a salary of 24 dollars per month. He still had the obligations of instructing the upper grades in the school along with another teacher. At the same time, a small country church in St. Louis County on Old Bonhomme Road renounced their German Evangelical pastor and called Buenger to serve them

⁴⁹ C.F.W. Walther, p. 17-18.

⁵⁰ Kenneth R. Molnar, p. 12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

as well. Buenger would ride out on horseback and visit this small church every two weeks, never staying with the same family twice.⁵²

On June 14, 1846, this small congregation was able to build and dedicate a church building, and on October 24, 1847 while the congregation was contemplating calling Buenger to serve them full-time (and he had declared his willingness to remain with them), he received and accepted a call from the newly founded Immanuel Church in St. Louis. In February of that same year the Immanuel District had been organized. Pastor Buenger served this Immanuel Congregation and District faithfully until his death in 1882—a total of 35 years.⁵³

Immanuel Church was not without its hard and trying times. It survived through the Civil War, but on Saturday, December 9, 1865, a fire broke out in the church. Only the bare wall remained of the upstairs, but the basement was in good condition and was used for worship services. Knowing that the days after the War were difficult for everyone, Buenger set out to visit the members and urged them to respond to the urgent need of the church. The people responded readily and new land was purchased.⁵⁴

The new church building was dedicated on March 22, 1868. It had enough seating for 1500 worshipers as well as a four-room school. There was only a membership of 160 persons, yet they assumed the debt of \$105,537. Many members took out personal loans, even against their own homes, to pay for this new building. On top of this debt, the congregation also supported the newly founded Lutheran Hospital (in which Buenger played a key role) and the

⁵² C.F.W. Walther, p. 18.

⁵³ Kenneth R. Molnar, p. 13.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

young people supported needy students as Concordia Seminary (a group of charitable young people which Buenger founded and shepherded).⁵⁵

Included with his preaching and pastoral duties, as well as his watching over of the young people's groups and the Lutheran Hospital, Buenger was also elected as President of the Western District in the young Missouri Synod. It was during this time that he was assigned an aid to help with some of his duties. But this lasted about one year as the young candidate suffered from sunstroke and was thereby dismissed by Buenger.⁵⁶

Throughout his life Buenger read and studied with great enthusiasm. He followed the synodical publications with interest and kept up a faithful study of the Latin language. He even remembered to send C.F.W. Walther a Latin poem every birthday.⁵⁷

If one were to write concerning all of the events in one ordinary man's life, it would fill a multitude of volumes. To describe even a majority of activities and events Johann Friedrich Buenger was involved in, it would take years to write and libraries to hold. He was the entrepreneur of charitable institutions of the mid-1800s. He was a lifelong teacher as well as an avid student of Scripture. He was a pastor who examined every word he spoke and was concerned with sound, scriptural doctrine. He was a husband in which no woman could find fault. In short, he was a faithful servant of God in every aspect of his life.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

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Addendum A

This story is taken from the "Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly," vol. XXII, no. 4, January, 1950. It is entitled *Missouriana*, by Johanna Wind Wiltenburg. It is reproduced here exactly as found. This story serves to give an example of the household of the Buenger family.

Last summer I visited my Aunt Lydia in Chicago. She is the only surviving daughter of the Rev. Johann Friedrich Buenger, one of the founders of the Missouri Synod, and she is a very interesting conversationalist on early synodical history.

I listened to her enthusiastic comments on Synod's current affairs and then asked her:

"Tell me a story about some early Missourians, preferably someone whose descendants I know."

She cocked her head to one side, while her bright expressive eyes took on a musing look.

"I know a story that will interest you," she exclaimed happily, settling herself comfortably in her chair as she began her tale.

"It was about the year 1872 when a young minister living near St. Louis expected his bride from Germany.

"Lutheran girls were scarce in the States in those days, so the young man's parents had looked around carefully among their friends and acquaintances in Germany for a possible wife for their son.

"Finally they agreed on one who they thought would be a perfect mate. They obtained her photograph and sent it to their son in America with the strongest recommendations.

"The longer he looked at the picture of the lovely, sweet-faced girl, supplementing his earnest study by rereading his mother's glowing account of the subject's accomplishments and virtues, the more he became convinced that she was indeed the right girl for him.

"He sent a photograph of himself to Germany, and a correspondence was soon arranged between the young people. After a suitable amount of informative literature had been exchanged

between them, the girl consented to leave her homeland to come to America to become the young minister's bride. . . .

"Word had been received by Papa—who was minister of Immanuel Church in St. Louis—from cousin Stephanus Keyl, the New York immigrant missionary, that the bride had arrived in New York and would be sent to St. Louis by train as soon as she had rested sufficiently from the long ocean voyage.

"Papa immediately notified the prospective bridegroom that he should come to St. Louis to claim his bride, a suggestion which was followed with alacrity by the young man.

"The photograph of the girl was the only means of identification he had. Armed with it, he hopefully went to the depot to await the coming of the New York train. He compared each descending young lady with the picture and finally regretfully decided that she had not come that day.

"Following the same procedure for several days, he came back to our house more dejected each day, when no one even remotely resembling the bride had arrived.

"On the fifth day he had once more resolutely set out for the depot, when Pastor Otto Hanser of Holy Cross Church came to our home with the bride—she had arrived at his house by mistake.

"Setting out for the depot immediately, Papa arrived just in time to see his young friend anxiously comparing the descending train passengers with his picture.

"Jovially slapping the expectant bridegroom on theback, Papa laughingly invited him: 'Come on home, the bride has arrived!' . . .

"The young people viewed each other shyly, and Mama thoughtfully opened up the parlor for them, to give them an opportunity for a little privacy.

"Papa and Mama were happily making plans for a good dinner to celebrate the safe arrival of the bride, whose good looks and charming manner had immediately appealed to them.

"Suddenly there was a great commotion at the front door, and when I ran to open it, eight Buenger relatives from Perry County shouted lusty greetings.

"Papa heartily bade them welcome—he loved unexpected guests, especially when they were his beloved relatives. Mama's friendly greeting was a little more restrained—as the practical housewife she mentally tried to fit the visiting horde into the number of beds our large house possessed.

"The relatives had come to visit the County Fair and planned at the same time to stay a few days—confident of their brother's hospitality. They were not disappointed. There was a great deal of laughter and conversation, and plans were made for a bigger and better dinner.

"While Mama was giving your mother and me orders as to what to buy at the market, Papa came out into the kitchen, and Mama buttonholed him.

"Where will all the guests sleep?' she asked with a slight edge in her voice.

"Where they usually sleep, of course.' Papa looked surprised, it was not like Mama to be sarcastic.

"And what about young H—and his bride?' she quizzed further.

"For a moment Papa's *savoir faire* almost deserted him. Those were not the days when an overflow of guests could be sent to a hotel, and it would have been contrary to Papa's and Mama's concept of hospitality to do so anyway. Yet, no matter how they tried to fit them in, there was simply no extra room for the bride.

"Finally Papa said enthusiastically, 'I know what to do. We'll have the wedding this evening. You cook a fine wedding dinner, and the relatives will be the wedding guests.'

"The radiant young couple, who seemed to find all of their hopes realized in each other, readily consented to the plan. In fact, they seemed so happy that they were quite willing to leave all arrangements to my parents.

"I—then fifteen years old—had eagerly absorbed the rapidly flowering romance. So when Papa turned to me and asked, 'Liddy, would you like to be the bridesmaid?' I was overjoyed. I was sent across the street to ask Teacher Grosse to be the other witness.

"The bride donned her pretty wedding dress, which she had brought from Germany, and they had a lovely and happy wedding."

Aunt Lydia paused and smiled at me. I followed the cue by asking, "Did they live happily ever afterward?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!" my aunt beamed. "They had a large family of children, too."

Again that expectant smile—like the true storyteller Aunt Lydia savors the climax.

"Do I know any of them?" I helped her.

"Of course," my aunt responded triumphantly. "Their oldest daughter was Thekla Hueschen, the wife of the sainted Dr. Karl Kretzmann."

Addendum B

This article is found in the *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, vol. XXIV, no. 2, July 1951, in the section entitled *Historical Sidelights*. This article gives an example as to the caring and thoughtful attitude found in Johann Friedrich Buenger.

The first general appeal on behalf of young men's societies appeared in *Der Lutheraner* June 24, 1851. The Rev. Johann F. Buenger had been requested by Synod to write such an article with the hope that organizations of this type might aid in the support of students for the ministry. A young men's society had been organized for this purpose in St. Louis already in 1848. Shortly before this three boys who had planned to study for the ministry were prevented from doing so because of financial difficulties. A group of young men of Trinity Church undertook their support. Out of this endeavor a young men's society was founded. Pastor Buenger gave directions in this article to other groups who might be induced to organize and undertake this type of work. He proposed the necessary officers and suggested monthly dues of at least ten cents. To keep the interest in this type of work alive among the members of the congregation, he suggested that an evening service be annually set aside to emphasize the importance of youth work. In St. Louis the organization date, May 7, was used for this purpose.

Addendum C

This letter reproduced here is found in the *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, vol. XXVI, no. 1, April 1953 in the *Historical Sidelights* section. It was written by Rev. John J. Trinklein, *em.* and was received by Dr. Theo. Graebner, then editor of *The Lutheran Witness*.

"The *Witness* is enjoyed by one to the full extent and made a 'first' in my reading, that means, of course, what is really in black and white before my vision. Nevertheless, I have a vague longing for incidents of days gone by which would supplement our modern way of thinking to the great benefit of all such as care to give it more than a mere glance, even if such incidents are somewhat lacking in gloss and shine up.

"There is one such incident that always even to this very day fortified me in my missionary inclination. Pastor F. Walther of New Brunswick, MO., told it to me. It occurred when [J.] F. Buenger ordained and installed him there. Pastor F. Walther was the son of Dr. C.F.W. Walther and Pastor Buenger was his uncle. On a Friday Buenger and the candidate, Walther, made their way to the designated locality. There had been no preparatory mission work previous to that day, no formal call, no organization of any description. No Lutheran service had ever been conducted there. The undertaking rested entirely on a letter to Buenger from a nominal Lutheran individual who had put Buenger wise that New Brunswick harbored very hard-headed Germans both Protestant and Catholic and would be willing to have a Lutheran pastor in their midst to furnish the commonwealth with the spiritual ornament of an ordained minister to serve at baptisms, weddings, funerals and the like, also to preach on Sundays.

"Buenger, the very soul of a true missionary, took counsel with young Walther and made their way up the state to the small town that was from now on to be on the map of the young Missouri Synod.

"On Saturday morning he told Walther: 'Now we have to go around and drum up a congregation for you so I can ordain and install you tomorrow as their pastor.' They both went down the Main Street. Buenger buttonholed every passerby that looked to him like a German and remarked: 'You are surely and German and a Lutheran, are you not?' Upon an affirmative answer he introduced Walther with the summary information: 'Here is your young pastor who will ordained and installed tomorrow. Come by all means with your whole family!' Time and place of services were duly indicated, also the request made to bring along as many as they could of their acquaintances.

"One he met who told him that he was a Catholic. Buenger laid both his hands on his shoulders commiserating by remarking: 'Oh you poor fellow! but, nevertheless come to services tomorrow and the ordination of Pastor Walther.' After having so canvassed all points within reach they retired for the night to await the results of Buenger's improvised missionary preliminaries. At the appointed time a fair-sized multitude had found their way to 'church.' Buenger conducted the services by singing altar service, reading the Sunday epistle and gospel before entering the 'pulpit' to preach.

"After the sermon he presented Walther as their new pastor. Two questions he put to the assembly: First, whether they wanted to form a Lutheran congregation, and secondly, whether they would want Walther as their pastor. Both these questions were answered in the affirmative. So Buenger proceeded the rite of ordination and installation with a good conscience. He was correct to a dot even if a little less formal. The good people made good their first and second resolution. Buenger left Walther to attend to all further details of organization and all other matters that are entailed by this step. Buenger went back to St. Louis to attend to other pressing business of his office as president of the Western District at that time one of the four districts into

which the Synod had divided. And he had his hands full as at that time the travels on mud roads into the rural congregations were no picnic. Assistants were few and far between. Buenger had an assistant, but sometimes he would complain about a headache, a consequence of light sunstroke on Saturday and Buenger had to step in anyway. Work was the password of these sturdy Lutheran pioneers."