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**JOHANN FRIEDRICH BUENGER, THE FOUNDER OF
LUTHERAN CHARITIES**

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of one of these my brethren ye have done it unto me."¹ Today the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod maintains a large number of charitable institutions in a wide and varied field. Though other Lutheran groups preceded the Missouri Synod in America, these bodies were not always active in beneficent organizations. The institutions of charity in the St. Louis area are the first attempts at distinctly Lutheran and even Protestant welfare west of the Mississippi River.

That the Saxon immigrants were concerned for the helpless is evidenced by a paragraph in their code for traveling regulations, which sets up a system of caring for the sick. This was followed by a more systematic method instituted by O. H. Walther, one of the original Saxon immigrants, in a draft called Krankenkasse. It actually remained for Johann Friedrich Buenger to set up an association that was the foundation of the first organized charity work in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

Whether any Lutheran charities would have been organized as early as 1858 in the Missouri Synod, except for Buenger's

¹Matthew 25:40.

activity cannot be determined. There were earlier sporadic and confined attempts of Christians to meet the needs of friends and relatives in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, but these never developed into an organized endeavor. It was not until 1858 that an association was organized to form a Lutheran hospital. This was under the leadership and guidance of J. F. Buenger. It was ten years later that the needs of the homeless were incorporated into the hospital association. These origins, though inauspicious, were the beginnings of organized Lutheran charity in St. Louis. How intimate Buenger's activities were in these organizations can only be concluded by his leadership in the welfare organization and a series of annual reports found in Der Lutheraner.²

The influences in the life of Buenger that stimulated his activities in the eleemosynary field will be treated in this study. For this purpose pertinent material is drawn from C. F. W. Walther's Kurzer Lebenslauf des Weiland Ehrwuerdigen Pastor Johann Friedrich Buenger, bringing to light particularly the early influences in his life.³

²Der Lutheraner, An Official publication of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. (St. Louis: Druckerei des Lutherischen Concordia - Verlag) XVI-XXXVIII.

³C. F. W. Walther, Kurzer Lebenslauf des Weiland Ehrwuerdigen Pastor Johann Friedrich Buenger (St. Louis: Verlag von F. Dette, 1882) A reprint from Der Lutheraner XXXVIII, 41.

C. F. W. Walther's biography of Buenger is the primary source material on the life of Buenger. Other sources add interesting details to his life, which enhance the narrative, but are not complete developments of his biography. Der Lutheraner, volume XXXVIII, bears a consecutive account of Buenger's life story, but since Walther's Lebenslauf is more readily accessible to the reader, it is used as the source. In addition the official proceedings of the Western District were consulted for material during the years that Buenger served as president of the Western District.⁴ These did not add substantially to the narrative and only served to substantiate the statistics. Unfortunately, much of the early source material was destroyed by fire.

The scope of this study is limited to the actual years of J. F. Buenger's life. The purpose is to determine Buenger's early relation to the founding of Lutheran charities. The history of the charitable institutions is developed insofar as Buenger was the primary factor in their origin and development. Additional materials are presented only to give a more complete picture of the institutions and is not intended to be an exhaustive part of this study.

⁴Verhandlungen des Westlichen Districts der Deutschen Evangelisch Lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio, u. a. Staaten. (St. Louis: Druck von A. Wiebusch u. sohn.) 1865-1874.

CHAPTER II

EARLY LIFE AND INFLUENCE

During the course of the seventeenth century Germany gave birth to two theological systems that it was neither able to control nor assimilate. The pietistic movement, as embodied in Jacob Spener and August Hermann Francke, with its peculiar accents on emotional and ascetic Christianity paved the way for the rationalism that was to follow. Rationalism reared its head in the formulations of Gottfried Leibniz and the popularizations of Christian Wolff. The transition from late orthodoxy to early rationalism was barely perceptible.¹ It was because of the preparation and popularizations of Wolff that rationalism was finally able to control the hearts and minds of the people of Germany. The reader is not to suppose that this was complete in every case, for throughout the century a flicker of pietism and orthodoxy was kept alive through the persistent, though not overwhelming efforts of university Bible clubs, study groups, and pietistic unions. Into this seething cauldron of antithetical Christianity, rationalistic gymnastics, and pietistic experience Johann Friedrich Buenger was born.

¹J. Pelikan, From Luther to Kierkegaard (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 83.

The influence these systems of theology had upon him will be shown in the course of this study.

In the village of Etzdorf, a few miles to the south of Rosswein, in Saxony, Jacob Friedrich Buenger's wife, Christiane, gave birth to Johann Friedrich Buenger on January 2, 1810. Almost from this unostentatious beginning it seemed inevitable that Johann would be a pastor, for his geneology enumerates a long list of clergymen on both his maternal and paternal side dating back to the Reformation in Germany. His grandfather on his mother's side, Reverend Wilhelm Gottlieb Reiz was one of the few witnesses who remained faithful to the Saviour and His pure Gospel at the time of rising rationalism. As far back as 1765, he had published a communion book titled "Empfindungen des Glaubens vor, bei und nach dem Tische des Herrn."²

In 1830, the grandfather, Pastor Johann Andreas Buenger, retired from his pastorate in Schoenbach after fifty-four years in the ministry. He then came to live in Etzdorf, and there died six years later. Johann Friedrich would therefore have had an opportunity to discuss religious matters with a pastor who was definitely not a rationalist. In his younger

²C. F. W. Walther, Kurzer Lebenslauf des Weiland Ehrwuerdigen Pastors Johann Friedrich Buenger Treuverdienten Pastors der evangl.-Lutherischen Immanuel-Gemeinde zu St. Louis, Missouri, nebst bei seinem feierlichen Begraebniss gehaltenen Reden (St. Louis: Verlag von F. Dette, 1882), p. 3.

days he had been subject to the very strongly pietistic leanings of his father Andreas Christopher.³ The possibility of Johann Andreas influencing our Johann Friedrich in these formative years must not be overlooked.

Great grandfather Andreas Christopher Buenger was born September 20, 1715, at Schoenbeck in the Priegnitz in north-central Germany. His preparatory schooling was acquired principally at the Gymnasium in Brandenburg and his academic training at the University of Halle.

During his early life Andreas Christopher Buenger was intimately connected with pietism and the institutions of Francke at Halle. At the age of twenty-four he was appointed teacher at the Koenigliche Paedagogium in Halle. In 1743 he was appointed assistant principal of the school. It was during this period, 1740 to 1746, that A. C. Buenger shows the extent to which he came under the influence of pietism. An extreme example of the pietistic influence can be noted in his diary:

On the 23rd day of July my dear Luedecke formed the bold resolution to dedicate himself body and soul to the living God, and therefore, in order to evidence his sincere intention, the evening of that same day he went up into the classroom together with other kindred souls, and there all of them bent their knees and asked God for a new heart. Oh God, give it to him and make him

³Johann Andreas Buenger's "Predigtabrissen", which Walther mentions on page 7 of Lebenslauf are in the possession of Theo. Buenger of Chicago. According to him, the Predigtabrissen would pass muster in the Missouri Synod today, except for mention of Tugend, etc.

your child that they and we may be blessed now and eternally. I went into the classroom with those of our dear students seeking God, a large number of whom we assembled at the time, and first I joined them in singing, then in praying on our knees, and then again in singing. . . . Finally our dear Westerhagen began to pray that our dear Lord might indeed grant him His grace and bestow his gentle, tranquil Spirit upon them; so that each one of them after returning to his room might be convinced that the Lord had graciously heard him and might always let His good Spirit be effective in him. For his part he could indeed take on oath and say: In the Lord have I righteousness and strength. Thereupon they dispersed joyfully, etc., and it was after half past twelve at night. I have never heard such prayer. The name of the Lord be praised thousand times thousand times to all eternity. May He carry on this work to the glorious end of complete victory. Amen.⁴

This is notable because of the emphasis pietism plays in the ancestral line. So, not only did J. F. Buenger come under the influence in his family, but as will be shown later on, in his university career also. The importance of the influence of pietism upon young Buenger is seen by the results it evoked in a similar bent. August Hermann Francke of pietistic fame evidenced his religious leanings in the founding and forming of charitable institutions. Great-grandfather, A. C. Buenger gave vent to his beliefs by an intense devotion to beneficent activities. These are evidenced in excerpts from his diary;

Every sickroom was to him sacred as a temple of God, for the sickrooms were for him workshops for the heavens and repaid his zeal for Christ most splendidly. . . . he took care of the suffering families that were lying about so pitifully as sheep without a shepherd. He, for a time, the only "soul curate", visited in the fore and afternoon his sick fellow Christians, some

⁴"An Extreme Example of Pietism," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XIX, 23 ff.

days in unbelievable numbers. This was not for him some selfish thing but it was for him a necessity; it was not daring, but it was a firm trusting upon the almighty, a trusting in God, something that had to be done. At times he had to go into house which no other person dared to go into. Terrible scenes he saw, when six or more persons were together in rooms and chambers. . . . taking the Lord's Supper out of his hands and receiving the last blessing.⁵

That J. F. Buenger was under the ancestral influence of this relative and resultant pietism is a tolerable opinion. This in turn may explain young Buenger's later interest and activities in eleemosynary endeavors.

In the little village of Etzdorf, which is a few miles to the south of the city of Rosswein between the cities of Leipzig and Dresden, young Buenger spent his early childhood. It was in the village school that he received part of his elementary school training, and while living at home with his parents his father also directed him into the elements of his education.

Buenger himself writes that after he attended the village school he entered a private school held by a Candidate of Theology whose name was Gotsch. Since this school was only a quarter of an hour from Etzdorf, he enrolled when he was ten years old, and there learned the rudiments of the Latin language.⁶ Actually this was a very meager formal education

⁵Theodore Buenger D.D., "Johann Friedrich Buenger, Founder of Lutheran Charities and Inner Mission Work in the Synodical Conference." Proceedings of Thirty-Eighth Annual Convention, Associated Lutheran Charities, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1939. pp. 24. ff.

⁶Walther, op. cit., p. 8.

that young Fritz was exposed to so far.

It was not long after that his uncle, the Reverend Ernst Hasse, who had no children of his own, invited him to stay at his home near Mueckenberg. There the Pastor tutored him. Buenger relates that because Pastor Hasse was so busy with his three parishes, he certainly did not learn very much, especially since he had to study on his own, and as yet the urge to study was not yet awakened in him.

In 1823 at the age of thirteen young Johann enrolled in the renowned Fuerstenschule St. Afran on the Albrechts heights in Meissen, which has as its motto Horace's exhortation: Aude Sapere, "Dare to be wise."⁷ Perhaps because of his poor foundation, he made a poor showing on his entrance examination, and hence was put on scholastic probation for a year. Fortunately a strict Obergeselle by the name of Ehrenstein, was in charge who forced him and three or four others to study.

As a result the following year he was taken off scholastic probation. For six years, until he reached the age of nineteen, Johann Friedrich studied at this institution, then early in the year 1829 he took his entrance examination for Leipzig University.

The Fuerstenschule had a faculty of ten professors and four assistant professors. In addition there was a penmanship teacher, a choirmaster, an art teacher, and one who

⁷Theodore Buenger, op. cit., p. 25.

would teach the French language, and even a teacher of the dancing art! But there was a great darkness over the whole school, for none understood nor taught the Gospel of Jesus Christ, since they were all rationalists. But Buenger remained firm in the Gospel he had learned in his parents' home.⁸

It was Easter of the year 1829 when young Busenger entered the University of Leipzig. As the Gymnasium was blanketed by a morass of rationalism, so the university by this time was completely given over to the concept of reason over revelation.

Some of the most famous professors of theology in the university were A. Hahn, F. W. Lindner, J. A. H. Tittmann, K. W. Thiele, and others. Of these the only one that the students could receive evangelical instruction from was F. W. Lindner of whom we shall hear more later.⁹

It was fortunate that at the university Buenger came into contact with a group of enlightened students. They formed a student organization that met for Bible study and prayer, a sort of "Holy Club." It was founded as an offshoot of the Leipzig Mission Society in 1820 and was just being revived through the efforts of an older candidate of theology named Kuehn and Prof. Friedrich W. Lindner, secretary of the

⁸Walther, op. cit., p. 9.

⁹Walther, op. cit., p. 10.

Mission Society, who lectured to the group on the Gospels.¹⁰
 Other members of this group were O. H. Walther, O. Fuerbringer,
 T. Brohm, E. G. W. Keyl, and later C. F. W. Walther.¹¹

W. G. Polack in his book, The Story of C. F. W. Walther sets forth a translation of C. F. W. Walther's Kurze Lebenslauf des Buenger on this matter of the "Holy Club."

This little group of spiritually awakened students met on certain days each week for common prayer and for the purpose of reading the Scriptures for their spiritual edification, and of discussing, and exchanging views on, the one thing needful. . . Naturally these believers, who had withdrawn from the world, had to bear much scorn and contempt. They were called mystics, pietists, sanctimonious fellows, obscurantists, bigots, and other names even less flattering. Rated by some as contemptible hypocrites or pitied as unfortunate, deluded religious enthusiasts, they were cast out by the unbelieving world, and to some extent even by their own kinsfolk. They, however, filled with an inner joy in their God and Saviour, and all those who remained faithful ever afterwards looked back upon this time of their first love as the most blessed period of their lives. . . At first there was in this circle no discussion of the doctrinal differences among the various churches, although the faith which had been kindled in their hearts through the study of the Bible was none other than the Lutheran faith. In the course of time a change came about. . . Candidate Kuehn, who had come to a full assurance of faith only after long and severe anguish and conflicts, under unspeakable terrors of the Law, now endeavored to lead the little group in the same path over which God had led him. He tried to convince us that our Christianity could never rest upon a firm foundation until we too had experienced the keenest sorrow for sin and the very terrors of hell in bitter struggles of repentance. The result was a general change from an evangelically joyful to a legalistically

¹⁰R. D. Owen, "The Old Lutherans Come," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XX, 26.

¹¹W. G. Polack, The Story of C. F. W. Walther (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947) p. 13.

gloomy Christianity.¹²

Buenger in the early part of his university career was quiet and withdrawn. In these days he pursued his studies steadfastly. After he was introduced into the study group, not only did he give his body and soul to his Lord and Savior, but he also came into great trouble with his conscience, as did others of his fellow believers. He tortured himself day and night to achieve the highest degree of repentance, without achieving that after which he pursued.¹³

After those who experienced a spiritual reawakening in the year 1829 left the university, Buenger drew closer to Candidate Brohm with whom he lived.¹⁴ After Brohm left Leipzig, Buenger became more closely associated with C. F. W. Walther. Of the entire university group, these two experienced the most violent reactions to their already abnormal religiosity. Neither of the two exerted a wholesome influence on the other.¹⁵

It was while at the university that Buenger and Walther came into contact with a family that was to have much influence upon them. This occurred in the pious home of F. W.

¹²Polack, op. cit., pp. 14 ff.

¹³Walther, op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁵W. O. Forster, Zion on the Mississippi (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 44.

Barthel, where they were always comforted with evangelical assurances.¹⁶ Soon after this Buenger left his university studies "as a candidate of death." While at the university Buenger gave himself over to the extreme rigors of the new asceticism. As a result of the poor diet and spiritual exercises he contracted a lung ailment which needed medical attention.¹⁷

Buenger returned to his parental home ill and suffering physically and mentally in Easter of the year 1833.¹⁸ In August of 1833 he submitted himself to a cure, at which time he went to the resort Radeberg about three hours distant from Dresden. Here he recuperated so rapidly that he was soon able to join his former companion Brohm in Dresden and prepare himself for his first theological examination.

In the close companionship and consolation of Brohm, J. F. Buenger threw himself into his studies with great eagerness and apparently with the best success. As a result his rationalistic examiners could do nothing but give him on the ground of his examination the pro licentia con-
ciorandi, with the grade good. This was in March of the year 1834.¹⁹

¹⁶C. F. W. Walther, op. cit., p. 19.

¹⁷W. C. Forster, op. cit., p. 44.

¹⁸Der Lutheraner, XXXVIII, 57.

¹⁹Walther, op. cit., p. 20.

It was necessary to allow two years to intervene between the first and the second examination, and so it was in the beginning of the year 1837 that Buenger applied for the second examination. During the intervening years he persistently put off this examination, partly because of his ailment and partly because of his serious spiritual scruples. Finally he decided to put himself into the hands of God and take the examination.²⁰

On the last examination Buenger came into conflict with the examiners. The praesidium of the State Church knew of his conscience conflicts and perceived his fundamental training in dogmatic systems. As a result the faculty gave him the grade "sufficient."

Between his first and second examination at the university Buenger busied himself in his parental home teaching his brothers and sisters. His father died in 1836, and as a result the family was forced to move from the parsonage within a year. As a means of support young Buenger obtained a teaching position as a tutor, first in Pirna and later in Dresden.²¹

During these interim years Buenger came under the influence of one of the most experienced pastors in Germany. This man was Martin Stephan considered to be one of the witnesses of the old pure doctrine of the Saxon State Church.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 21 ff.

Stephan was born at Stramburg in Maehren, on August 13, 1777, and later came into prominence as pastor of St. John's Church in Dresden.²²

Stephan was contacted by C. F. W. Walther by means of a letter. It was Stephan who came to the rescue and pulled the Candidatenverein from the quicksands of subjective emotionalism and spiritual disputation into which Kuehn led them, and placed them on the solid ground of God's Word.²³

In the ensuing years Stephan was maligned for his doctrine and personal life. Slanderous cases were brought against him in court for the manner in which he conducted his personal life. Still others attacked his doctrine, claiming that he taught and preached contrary to the accepted teachings. Regardless of the many attacks upon the life and teachings of Stephan, Buenger and others associated themselves with this spirit of orthodoxy. Stephan himself maintained that the Bible was the fountain of pure doctrine and that the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church were drawn from scripture.²⁴

Buenger himself saw that Stephan did not leave a good impression in deeds and life, and would not have followed

²²Ibid., p. 22.

²³R. D. Owen "The Old Lutherans Come," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XX, 3.

²⁴Polack, op. cit., p. 23.

him in the emigration, except that he was convinced of the imminent necessity of all true Christians to emigrate for their soul's salvation.²⁵

This is brought out by a conversation with his sister, Agnes. She was not yet convinced of necessity of emigration. She held a good working position and did not want to leave her home. When she asked her brother if she could stay, he replied, "If you want to go down with this country like Sodom and Gomorrah, then stay."²⁶ This conversation shows how strongly he felt about the emigration movement.

A series of events occurred in Germany which brought talk of the intended emigration to a more practical possibility. It started with the abrogation of the emigration law, by order of the King in 1837. After this the Reverend J. A. Grabau and his congregation at Erfurt left Germany for America. This and similar actions by other congregations strengthened the Saxons in their resolutions to leave Germany.²⁷

Already in the year 1836 a series of meetings in a select group around Stephan had taken place. Buenger was included in this group, which discussed plans and possibilities

²⁵Walther, op. cit., pp. 30 ff.

²⁶L. Fuerbringer, Eighty Eventful Years (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), p. 208.

²⁷Walther, op. cit., p. 40.

for emigration.²⁸

It was due to this series of events in Germany and the resultant meetings that Buenger was convinced the hour of freedom was here. There were many in Germany who condemned the way and means of emigration as a sin, and as an escape at the improper time. Nevertheless, Buenger was convinced that the opportunity and necessity demanded immediate action. He was continuously strengthened in his opinion, for that which drew him to America was freedom from the oppression of his conscience and freedom to worship God according to His Word.²⁹

²⁸Forster, op. cit., pp. 96 ff.

²⁹Walther, op. cit., pp. 40 ff.

CHAPTER III

THE EMIGRATION

When Stephan gave the call for the emigration in the year 1838, Buenger was among the group to respond for the German exodus. It was in October of the year 1838 that many of the Saxon Lutheran emigrants, in both large and small groups, went to Bremen from which port they wished to embark for America.¹

Johann Friedrich Buenger began the trip from Dresden to Bremen on the advice of Martin Stephan. J. F. Buenger's diary relates a few of the incidents of the short journey. The group left Dresden on October 20, 1838, at 12:30 P. M. Only forty-four persons were able to leave, because of difficulties in obtaining a passport. Nevertheless, all the members of the movement were happy that their hour of freedom began. On the journey Sunday worship services were held, but with the least possible commotion.²

On arrival in Bremerhaven on November 7, 1838, young Johann Friedrich Buenger was overjoyed to meet his loved ones

¹C. F. W. Walther, Kurzer Lebenslauf des Weiland Ehrwuerdigen Pastor Johann Friedrich Buenger. (St. Louis: Verlag von F. Dette, 1882), p. 42. (The Saxon group consisted of 700 souls from all parts of Germany. Included 6 Pastors, 8 Pastor-Candidates, 1 Teacher, 3 Candidate-Teachers, 2 Painters, and many former civil servants and merchants. The greatest part of the emigrants was made up of professional men and farmers.)

²Ibid., pp. 43 ff.

again. This joyous reunion of the Buenger family was tempered with bad news that once more forced the family to be separated. Buenger's mother, Mrs. Christiane Buenger was falsely accused and arrested for kidnapping the niece and nephew of C. F. W. Walther.³ This necessitated Johann F. Buenger remaining behind with his mother when the last two ships of the Saxon emigration set sail on November 17.⁴

Young Buenger, Agnes, his sister, and his mother waited in Bremerhaven until the early part of December for the decision of the Saxon Court. Then one morning while they were holding their morning devotions a knock came at the door.

³C. S. Mundinger, Government in the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 112 ff. (C. S. Mundinger adds a few details to this escapade. "C. F. W. Walther had been a party to the kidnapping of his niece and nephew, Theodore Schubert and Marie Schubert. With the consent of their grandparents, Pastor and Mrs. G. H. Walther, and the connivance of Magistrate Piehter, C. F. W. Walther had removed these two orphans from the home in Waldenburg, where they were staying. He had taken them as far as the Saxon border city of Muehlau. There he had turned them over to Widow Buenger, who thereupon brought them to Bremen. In the meantime the guardian of these children a certain Mr. Engel in Waldenburg, brought pressure to bear on Magistrate Piehter in Waldenburg and criticized him bitterly for the loose way in which he handled the case. At Engel's insistence a warrant of arrest and extradition papers were gotten out for the two Walther brothers and Mrs. Buenger. . . . Mrs. Buenger. . . was arrested on November 4, 1838, and held until December 11, 1838, when a certain attorney by the name of Krause, who was attending to the business of the Stephanites after they had left Dresden, succeeded in securing her release, so that, together with her daughter, Agnes. . . and her son, J. F. Buenger, candidate of theology, she traveled to St. Louis via New York to meet her other six children, who had travelled on ahead with Stephan."

⁴Walther, op. cit., p. 49.

Widow Buenger under the impression that someone would take her into custody, fled to an adjoining room where she thought she would be safe. The one who knocked brought the written order for her release. When Mrs. Buenger was informed she fell to her knees praising God in thankfulness.

J. F. Buenger, his mother, and his sister, immediately began preparations for the trip to New York, America. Finally on December 21, 1838 they secured passage on the ship Constitution, and set sail in the name of the Lord.

Although their trip was undertaken during the hazards of midwinter, the voyage was completed February 18, 1839. When Buenger saw the shoreline of the new country he states that his joy was comparable to the happiness that Columbus experienced when he saw the islands of the Americas.⁵

⁵Ibid., pp. 55 ff.

CHAPTER IV

NEW YORK AND THE MOVE TO MISSOURI

It was to the great relief of Buenger, his family and the company of emigrants that a congregation in New York greeted them with a friendly reception.¹ With the aid of Kohtz, who accompanied them on the Constitution, they were able to find the New York congregation, which was under the leadership of F. Sproede. This congregation emigrated already in 1836. Before leaving, they were adopted into the Stephan group, and so became the American outpost of Stephan in the United States. It was expected that this New York congregation would move to Missouri as soon as conditions allowed. Forster reports that Buenger's comment on arrival in the United States was, "Nothing, nothing but trade. One can notice that he is in America." Communication soon arrived from the St. Louis group. Buenger then replied to Stephan concerning his arrival, in a letter on February 22.²

On Sunday, February 24, when Buenger attended his first church service in the new country he was happily surprised by

¹C. F. W. Walther, Kurzer Lebenslauf des Weiland Ehrwuerdigen Pastor Johann Friedrich Buenger (St. Louis: Verlag von F. Dette, 1882), p. 50.

²W. O. Forster, Zion On The Mississippi (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 405.

the singing of the hymn "Oh Holy Trinity." He says that he could hardly keep from crying, to be in a country where one could serve His Word freely. Buenger was impressed by the sincerity in prayer and song of these hundred members at morning worship service.³

Originally the intention of the New York congregation was to join the Saxon Lutheran emigration, and settle with them in America. But because of the absence of definite instructions from Stephan and the Saxon group, the question came up whether to actually stay in New York or move on to Missouri. In this connection Buenger wrote another letter to Stephan on March 2. Since no answer was immediately forthcoming, Buenger spent his time in the study of theology and the English language. While in New York Buenger visited many churches and was able to bring Captain Volkmann of the vessel "Constitution" into Christianity.

A letter was received from Stephan in the middle of March encouraging the New York group to join the Saxons in Missouri. However, no financial help was promised from the Saxons, and it appeared the New York contingent would have to shift for itself. On March 25, a committee was elected to administer the affairs of the group. This committee consisted of F. Sproede, C. Koerner, Geisel, J. Fisher, Motz, and J. F. Buenger.

³Walther op. cit., p. 51.

The New York group, convinced that it was futile to wait for any financial aid from St. Louis, decided that those who should not pay for their own transportation should wait for a more favorable time. Hope was held out to those left behind that if there were funds available at the end of the journey they would be forwarded, and a second group could soon follow.⁴

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 open 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. . . Akron. . . Cinsinati. . . Louis-will". . . the "New Yorkers" arrived at the landing place in Perry County on the forenoon of Friday, May 17, 1839.⁵

Hardly did Buenger touch the ground of his new home when he experienced one of the greater disappointments of his whole life. He held to Stephan in truly filial love and veneration, seeing in him his spiritual father and counselor, and now he heard that meanwhile things happened which for the sake of God's name and of the salvation of many souls, made it necessary to depose Stephan and to remove him from the congregation which followed him like a second Moses from their

⁴Forster, *op. cit.*, pp. 406 ff. (The above is a summarization of the information Forster has set down.)

⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 407 ff.

native land to this foreign country.

However, not all hopes of Buenger disappeared, since Stephan's person was not the sole ground of his hope, but the Word of God and God's grace in Christ. Buenger did not despair in the tragic news, but continued steadfastly in his faith in God.⁶ It was at this time that Buenger was brought up to date on the events that transpired in his absence by his good friend, C. F. W. Walther.⁷

⁶Walther, op. cit., p. 53.

⁷Forster, op. cit., p. 409.

CHAPTER V

PERRY COUNTY ACTIVITIES

Now, as the oldest son, J. F. Buenger assumed the responsibility for the welfare of the numerous Buenger family. Although their home was small, and there was need for daily bread, this family was satisfied and thankful. Oftentimes as it happened the family helped out in the settlement whenever the settlers were overtaken in sickness, even to the extent of their material possessions. Dr. Ernest Buenger the younger brother of Johann Friedrich, was especially helpful in this hour of need in caring for the sick.

At this time in the life of J. F. Buenger he began to show the qualities of unflagging energy and foresight that stayed with him through his ceaseless activity in behalf of others. For even now the theological candidates T. Brohm, O. Fuerbringer, and J. F. Buenger considered it their duty to provide for the education of the future teachers and ministers of the settlement, though the present supply of teachers and preachers would continue to serve the need for years to come. To this end the candidates and Walther acquired six acres of land for the establishment of the intended school. It was with the full knowledge of the pastors in Perry County that they then embarked upon their endeavor, with aid from the members of the congregation, and no small

amount of privation to themselves. Even from the congregation in St. Louis, served by O. H. Walther, they received a small amount of money to help with the school, although the main brunt of the labor was shouldered by the candidates. Here again it was Buenger who went ahead in cutting the trees, building the house, clearing the ground, and even digging the well by himself.¹

The Reverend G. H. Loeber in a letter to Saxony, dated September 30, 1839, describes the conditions at this time:

Opposite our house many families live together in a much larger shack of flimsy build, called 'camp'. In this camp we also have our common services and give the most necessary schooling until our almost completed college. . . and the church and school of each congregation will be ready.²

One may imagine the surprise of the citizens of St. Louis, when they noticed the following article in a late summer edition of the Anzeiger des Westens after reading only a month previously of their hardship and privation:

We, the undersigned, intend to establish an institution of instruction and education, which distinguishes itself from ordinary elementary schools especially by this, that it comprises, besides the ordinary branches, all the Gymnasium branches necessary to a true Christian

¹C. F. W. Walther, Kurzer Lebenslauf des Weiland Ehrwuerdigen Joh. Friedr. Buenger (St. Louis: Verlag von F. Dette, 1882), pp. 55 ff.

²W. G. Polack, Fathers and Founders (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938), p. 28.

and scientific education, as: Religion, the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, French, and English languages; history; geography; mathematics; physics; and natural history; elementary Philosophy; music; and drawing. The pupils of our institution to be so far advanced in the above named studies that they, after absolving a complete course of study, shall be qualified for university studies. The esteemed parents who may wish to place their children with our institution are requested to make inquiries regarding it's plan and arrangements of Pastor O. H. Walther in St. Louis, Poplar Street, No. 14, between First and Second streets. Instructions are to begin, God willing, on the first of October of this year.

The settlement of the German Lutherans in Perry County, near the Obrazo, August 13, 1839. (signed) C. Ferdinand Walther, Ottomar Fuerbringer, Th. Jul. Brohm, Joh. Fr. Buenger.³

It was not long afterwards that a little log cabin stood in the wilderness to be used for pedagogical purposes. On December 9, 1839, the little school was opened for instruction with an enrollment of eleven pupils. There were seven boys and four girls. The girls were taught by Buenger alone.⁴ The first class consisted of the following pupils with their respective ages: F. J. Biltz-14 $\frac{1}{2}$, J. W. Mueller-14, H. Buenger-15, Liddy Buenger-12, Theobald von Wurmb-7, C. H. Loeber-10, Theodore Schubert-10, Columbus Price (no age given), Maria von Wurmb-9, Sarah von Wurmb-5,⁵ and Martha Loeber.⁶

³Polack, op. cit., pp. 32 ff.

⁴Walther, op. cit., p. 57.

⁵G. W. Herrling, "Concordia College-Altenburg, St. Louis, Fort Wayne," Lutheran Witness, XXVI, 448.

⁶W. O. Forster, Zion on the Mississippi (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 503.

The institution was founded to meet the felt need of Christian education for the young. Obviously, from the age representation, it was not a "college", but really a Lutheran elementary and high school, which endeavored to prepare its pupils for a higher education.⁷

In the years following Candidate Buenger and Pastor C. F. W. Walther followed calls to the St. Louis congregation, while Candidates T. Brohm and O. Fuerbringer remained at the institution. After Fuerbringer left, Brohm and Loeber continued alone from 1840 - 1843. Then Brohm received a call to New York and Loeber continued with the help of Pastor Keyl for a half year. Finally Candidate Goenner was called in 1843 to fill the vacant position at the school.

⁷K. Kretzmann, "The Log Cabin in Perry County", Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XIX, 152.

CHAPTER VI

TEACHING ACTIVITY IN ST. LOUIS

According to the minutes of Trinity congregation, St. Louis, it was April 27, 1840, that J. F. Buenger was called to the St. Louis Congregation, and on August 2, that he was installed as teacher.¹ The St. Louis school was founded by Pastor O. H. Walther and Candidate C. L. Geyer, Buenger's predecessor who received a call to the congregation in Cape Girardeau County, Missouri.²

At this time the St. Louis congregation had neither proper school facilities nor a church building. Classes were held in a home on Poplar Street, between First and Second Streets. This building served at the same time as a home for the pastor and the teacher. Under the guidance of Buenger the elementary school became very well accepted in the community. Not only did the Lutherans send their children to this school, but those of other confessions also. Another German school, which was supported by the German radicals in St. Louis disbanded about this time, and many of the students enrolled in the Saxon Lutheran elementary school. As a result the school which had room for only fifty pupils,

¹K. Kretzmann, "The Log Cabin in Perry County", Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XIX, 152 ff.

²A. C. Stellhorn, "Carl Ludwig Meyer", Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XII, 7.

suddenly was increased with an attendance of over eighty students. Conditions became so crowded that many of the pupils were forced to sit on the staircase and even out on the porch.

The subjects taught in this school, as described by C. F. W. Walther, were Bible History, Catechism, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, general knowledge, and a little of the English language. The greatest need was for suitable text books. The A B C book which Buenger used was printed in St. Louis in the office of the Anzeiger des Westens. It contained a short German grammar. For religious instruction Luther's Small Catechism was used. The children of the members of the Saxon congregation were expected to study the Catechism. Hymns which were memorized were copied by hand, since a sufficient amount of hymnals were not available. Later on a friend sent a crate of hymnals which were soon introduced. These were printed in Frankfort on the Main under the title, Kernels of Spiritual Hymns. In the beginning as a reading book, only the New Testament was used, but later on Buenger was able to acquire some of the best tracts of the American Tract Society at a reasonable price.³

Discipline at first caused Teacher Buenger a great amount of trouble. He did not want to punish his pupils for merely whispering in class, as a result the children talked to their

³C. F. W. Walther, Kurzer Lebenslauf des Weiland Ehrwuerdigen Pastor Johann Friedrich Buenger (St. Louis: Verlag von Dette, 1882) pp. 57 ff.

hearts' content. Buenger, however, took the opportunity of a free Wednesday afternoon to visit the various English schools in the area. His visits revealed that the secret behind good instruction was strict discipline and order. He returned to his own classroom and immediately incorporated these newfound ideas into his own pedagogic principles. From this time forth the children in his class did everything on command, and order and quietness were henceforth the rule.

The salary of Candidate Buenger at this time was fifteen dollars per month, which was partly paid through the dues of the Lutheran school children at five cents per week, and partly through collections at the church door. In addition to this, the children whose parents were not members of the congregation paid a monthly fee of fifty cents. Buenger received this tuition in addition to his regular salary. When his salary was increased to twenty-five dollars a month, the tuition was then placed in the church treasury.

During the second year of the Saxon school enrollment increased so much that it became necessary to find larger quarters. New quarters were found on Poplar Street, between Third and Fourth Street, one block from the former location.⁴

Early in the year 1841, Teacher Buenger was considered as a possible candidate pastor for the St. Louis parish. C. S.

⁴Ibid., p. 60.

Mundinger relates the incidents in Government in the Missouri Synod as follows:

In the meeting of January 11, 1841, it was reported that Pastor O. H. Walther was very sick. A resolution was adopted to ask Candidate J. F. Buenger to preach a sermon of his own making in the Sunday afternoon service and to read a printed sermon in the Sunday morning service. Pastor Walther died January 21, 1841. . . . It was furthermore stipulated at this meeting that Candidates of Theology Buenger and Schieferdecker were to alternate in preaching sermons of their own making in the afternoon service every other Sunday and to read a sermon out of the book of Catechism Sermons by Arndt in the early morning service. . . . In the meeting of February 1, 1841, it was decided to begin the process of calling a new pastor. . . . the elders were ready on the spot with six candidates - three ministers: G. H. Loeber, C. F. W. Walther, and O. Fuerbringer; three candidates of theology: J. F. Buenger, G. Schieferdecker, and T. J. Brohm.⁵

Of this group Pastor C. F. W. Walther received the majority of the votes. Though Buenger himself was not called as pastor to the St. Louis congregation, he remained as teacher and once more enjoyed the close companionship of his friend C. F. W. Walther.

While the school labored with its growing pains the Saxon congregation held their worship services in the Episcopalian Church of St. Louis. Now they were notified that this favor was to be terminated. Spurred to action, the Lutherans began the building of their own church plant. Land was purchased on Lombard Street, a church built, and on the second Sunday in Advent, 1842, it was dedicated and called

⁵C. S. Mundinger, Government in the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 126 ff.

Trinity. The spacious basement was used for the school, which had increased to a high enrollment of one hundred and fifty pupils. Johann Buenger continued his work with great zeal and joy, and was blessed with evident success.

The Saxon congregation, which now drew its membership from the entire city of St. Louis, became impressed with its duty to do mission work among the other Germans of the city. For this purpose another school was erected in December of 1844 in the northern part of the city, in what was called "St. Louis Gardens". This was located on the corner of Wasch and Eighth streets. Theodore Buenger, the younger brother of Johann, was installed as teacher of this school.⁶ On December 14, 1844, C. F. W. Walther made the following announcement in Der Lutheraner:

A new school has been opened by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, U. A. C., St. Louis, Missouri in the northern part of the city on Seventh Street between Wasch and Eighth Streets. . . . This move had become necessary since so many members of the church had moved to this locality.

This north St. Louis school was the foundation of Immanuel Lutheran Church which was later organized in 1847.⁷

⁶Walther, op. cit., p. 61.

⁷E. J. Wolf, The Lutherans in America (New York: J. A. Hill and Co., 1889), p. 418.

CHAPTER VII

CANDIDATE OF THEOLOGY

In the year 1844, Johann Friedrich Buenger was called into the Holy Ministry. The St. Louis congregation called him as Hilfsprediger, with a monthly salary of twenty-four dollars, and as the teacher for the upper grades.¹

At this time a congregation in St. Louis County, on Old Bonhomme Road, which was served by the Unierter, or Evangelical Pastor Nollau, extended to Buenger an invitation to deliver a trial sermon on March 10, 1844. He accepted the invitation but as a result of his strict confessionalism, was rejected by the congregation. Twenty-one members of the congregation left the mother church and on June 9 organized a strictly Lutheran congregation. On August 11, 1844 Pastor Buenger officially took charge of the small group in the new parish. While his call permitted him to live in St. Louis and continue in his teaching capacity at the Trinity congregation, it stipulated that he serve the new congregation by conducting church services every other Sunday and by catechising the children on those Sundays when Holy Communion would

¹C. F. W. Walther, Kurzer Lebenslauf des Weiland Ehrwuerdigen Pastor Johann Friedrich Buenger (St. Louis: Verlag von Dette, 1882), p. 61.

not be celebrated.² In order to facilitate Buenger's transportation, the congregation furnished him with a horse which was left tied in front of Trinity school every Friday afternoon. As soon as school was dismissed on Friday afternoon, Buenger would mount his horse and trot out to his congregation in the county. For the purpose of becoming better acquainted with the families of his congregation he never stayed two weekends in the same home, unless he was compelled to do so. On Saturdays he held school for the children, and on Sunday during the Christenlehre he quizzed on the days teaching. For the parents it was always a great joy to hear their children answer questions quickly and eagerly. Before Buenger left the children, he always gave them a new assignment, which they were to learn diligently before his return. God blessed his work in this way. Soon the small congregation was able to build and to dedicate a small church on June 14, 1846.³ In the morning service Pastor Buenger himself preached, basing his sermon on Genesis 28:10-17, and taking as his theme, "Our Little Church, a House of God and a Gate of Heaven." Then in 1847, while the members were contemplating calling him as their resident pastor and he declared his willingness to stay in their midst, he received and accepted a call from

²A. Horn, Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Ninetieth Anniversary, Olivette Village, St. Louis County, Missouri, 1834-1934, pp. 3 ff.

³Walther, op. cit., p. 62.

the newly founded Immanuel Church in St. Louis on October 24.

As we look back through the minutes of the Immanuel Olivette congregation we notice that Buenger's name continues to be mentioned through the years. Even when president of the Western District he counselled and aided the church in the calling of the new pastor. His successor at Olivette, J. A. F. W. Mueller, one of the first graduates of the log cabin seminary, was installed by Buenger on November 7, 1847.⁴

⁴Horn, op. cit., pp. 4 ff.

The first building provided seating capacity for 700 people. The cost of the church including the lot, was \$5,500; after and outfit \$200. . . . Under the vigorous leadership of Pastor Buenger, the church grew and expanded by the grace of God. The simplicity and deep spirituality and devotion to the Savior's cause by Pastor Buenger became a broad appeal for parishioners. Church attendance was excellent. . . . The two pastors preached in both churches. The two districts, however, were considered one congregation. . . . Later on the pastors of Trinity, Kansas, Holy Cross, and Zion exchanged pulpits. . . . In 1850 Buenger resolved to organize another district farther north and released 35 members to this district, and helped to build its church. Zion Church grew out of this forward movement. . . . Then ten years previous, Pastor Buenger had organized the

J. H. W. Welther, Barner Levensdorf des Willard Evangelical Pastor Johann Friedrich Buenger. (St. Louis: Verlag von Wiese, 1898), p. 51.

CHAPTER VIII

IMMANUEL, ST. LOUIS

As early as 1844, the germ for Immanuel Lutheran Church was planted with the founding of the school in North St. Louis. The action was necessary, since many of Trinity's members had moved into the area. By February of 1847 the Immanuel District was organized, and in the fall of the same year, Buenger was called as shepherd. He had sole care of the pastoral duties, but in so far as preaching was concerned he exchanged pulpits with other members of the various districts, as was the common practice at that time. The new Immanuel Church was dedicated February 27, 1848 on the south corner of Eleventh Street and Franklin Avenue.¹

The first building provided seating capacity for 700 people. The cost of the church including the lot, was \$6,642; altar and pulpit \$320. . . Under the vigorous leadership of Pastor Buenger, the church grew and expanded by the grace of God. The simplicity and deep sincerity and devotion to the Savior's cause by Pastor Buenger became a byword among his parishioners. Church attendance was excellent. . . The two pastors preached in both churches. The two districts, however, were considered one congregation. . . Later on the pastors of Trinity, Immanuel, Holy Cross, and Zion exchanged pulpits. . . . In 1859 Immanuel resolved to organize another district farther north and released 35 members to this district, and helped to build it's church. Zion Church grew out of this forward movement. . . . Then ten years previously, Pastor Buenger had organized the

¹C. F. W. Walther, Kurzer Lebenslauf des Weiland Ehrwuerdigen Pastor Johann Friedrich Buenger. (St. Louis: Verlag von Dette, 1882), p. 63.

Bethlehem Church in the New Bremen Territory.²

These were the formative years for Pastor Buenger. He served the Immanuel congregation faithfully until the time of his death for 35 years. It was only while he was president of the Western District, and then only for a short period of time in 1865, that he received aid for the discharging of his pastoral duties.³ His life was fraught with tragedy. The Immanuel congregation witnessed not only the joy and greatness of their pastor, but witnessed the personal tragedies and sorrows in his life. From the time of its origin it was to see the emotional, spiritual, and mental growth of Pastor J. F. Buenger.

Through this period of years the Immanuel congregation continued to expand. It passed safely through the turbulent Civil War years. Then on Saturday, December 9, 1865, a fire broke out in the church building. Before the fire could be extinguished only the bare walls of the church remained standing. The basement remained in good condition for church services. The pastor then preached an impressive sermon of admonition and comfort the following Sunday on Isaiah 60:10. The old church was repaired to serve as a place of

²A Century of Grace, 1847-1947, Immanuel Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Missouri, 1947. pp. 5 ff.

³Walther, op. cit., p. 63.

worship and as a school.⁴ Even in the hard times following the Civil War, Buenger set about building a new church. Visiting his parishioners, he urged them to respond to the urgent need of a new church. Oftentimes he would gather a family together and read a portion of Scriptures with them, reminding the family that they should not live in fine houses while the Lord's house remained in the condition it was. Like Haggai of Old Testament times, his people responded to the need and set about building a new house of worship. This was remarkable inasmuch as it followed upon the lean post-Civil War years.⁵

A new location was purchased on 16th and Morgan Streets, where the next church was erected and dedicated on March 22, 1868. The new church seated a capacity of 1,500 person and contained room for a four room school. The building was 137 feet long and 64 feet wide, with a tower of 209 feet. With a voting membership of only 160 members they took on a debt of \$105,537.00, oftentimes obtaining a personal loan on their own homes, that they might bring a cash donation for the new church.⁶ These good people were at the same time giving to

⁴"A Century of Grace," op. cit., pp. 7 ff.

⁵L. Fuerbringer, Eighty Eventful Years (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944) p. 210.

⁶Walther, op. cit., p. 64.

the newly founded Lutheran hospital, and the young people were supporting needy students at the seminary.

Buenger spent much of his time in study. At first he studied the Book of Concord and many strongly pietistic writings and writers, but later he leaned more in the directions of Luther's writings and Brenz, in which he built himself up in theological knowledge. His doctrine was the pure teaching of the Lutheran church, and not only did he know the Truth, but he esteemed it as the highest treasure in all the world. To give a further look into Buenger's theological thinking, and to show how highly he esteemed the Word of God, we quote from the manuscript that was put into the cornerstone of Immanuel Church:

Der Herr helfe, dasz in dieser Kirche sein reines Wort zu seiner Ehre und zur Errettung und Erbauung vieler Seelen Verkündigt werde; ja, dasz auch dann noch, wenn dieser Grundstein geoffnet wird, treue Bekenner der reinen Lehre, wie sie in den öffentlichen Bekenntnisschriften der lutherischen Kirche enthalten ist, sich finden und dieses zu ihrer Ermunterung lesen. Ehe in dieser Kirche Rationalismus, . . . Geprediget werden sollte, . . . dasz Gott diese Kirche durch Feuer, Sturm oder Erdbeben zerstören mochte.

Buenger's strong stance on the Word of God is brought out clearly in this manuscript for a witness to all posterity. He knew personally through his own inner soul struggles what a poison false doctrine was for the inner and outer life of the Christian. Hence as he grew older, he drew closer and closer to the writings of the apostles and prophets, and grew more and more hesitant to mix man's reason with any inter-

pretation.⁷

As a pastor and preacher he was very much inclined to judge mildly and preach strongly against all false churches and sects. It seems that Buenger inherited a strong dislike for the Papacy from the teachings of Luther. This evidently penetrated deeply into his heart, for he was especially filled with zeal against the Roman Catholic Church.

Buenger's preaching contained a strong Law character. He did not hesitate to apply the Law to both rich and poor alike. Many of his sermons were directed against ungodly and unpious living. His sermons were practical and popular to a high degree and could be understood even by the most simple person. Being gifted with a natural finesse, he was able to deal with even the most delicate subjects from the pulpit. Often his excitement and ardour became so strong, that a calm disposition was required to follow him quietly. In this respect he was very much dissatisfied with himself, and tried to speak more softly, but again and again his character would show through in a thunderous voice. As a rule his sermons were rich in godly thoughts going straight to the hearts of the hearers. Walther characterized him concerning his personal devotion, preaching and sermonizing

⁷Ibid., p. 65.

as an American Lutheran Valerius Herberger.⁸

Throughout his life he continued to read and to study, following the synodical publications with great interest. Not until the end of his life did he give up the study of the Latin language. He remembered his good friend, C. F. W. Walther, with a congratulatory poem in Latin on his birthday each year.⁹

Concerning his temperament it is said that he did not flatter anyone, and in fact was a little impetuous in his dealings with others. He was ready for correction, and therefore his impetuous behavior did not offend the congregation since they knew it came from a true and faithful heart.¹⁰

The governmental organization of his congregation was evangelical in nature. His guideline was the Word of the Lord, "One is your master, Christ. Not that we are masters over your faith, but that we are helpers of your joy."¹¹ His congregation responded joyfully to this evangelical urging. Whenever J. F. Buenger desired aid in his many organizations, his parish gave the necessary support and help. This church was actively behind Buenger's charitable institutions.

⁸Ibid., pp. 65 ff.

⁹Ibid., p. 76.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 71.

¹¹Ibid., p. 70.

During his ministry, he was very strict about the attendance of the youngsters at the Christenlehre examination. This was a question and answer period on the Christian fundamentals as contained in M. Luther's small Catechism. If the children were not there, then he asked them at the earliest opportunity the reason for their absence.¹²

While pastor, he executed the office of school superintendent with great love, and tried to raise the standards of the school. This is easily understandable, because of his former experiences in the teaching profession.¹³

It was during his period of parish ministry in the St. Louis districts, that Buenger became instrumental in the formation and founding of the first synodical youth organizations. The original youth group was organized from young people of both the St. Louis Districts, Trinity and Immanuel, on May 7, 1848. Buenger called a meeting of his young men after a morning service one Sunday, and informed them concerning the needy theological students at the seminary.¹⁴ The healthy growth and consecration of the Verein bears mute

¹²Ibid., p. 68.

¹³Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁴H. E. Simon, "Background and Beginning of Organized Youth Work in the Missouri Synod." Unpublished Bachelor's Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1944. p. 27.

testimony that Buenger led the group wisely and well.¹⁵ Actually the first general appeal for young people's societies appeared in Der Lutheraner on June 24, 1851. Pastor Buenger had been requested by Synod to write such an article in the hope that such organizations would aid in the support of needy students. Directions were given in this article for organization of their groups. The necessary officers were proposed, monthly dues, and an annual evening service for the youth of the church.¹⁶ Walther, in an article in Der Lutheraner, showed that this group was not organized without the approval of leaders of Synod.¹⁷

The purposes in organizing these youth groups were manifold. Buenger wanted to keep his young people away from the temptations of the city, to keep them in the faith, and to make useful tools of them for the advancement of the kingdom. A great many seminary students could thank the possibility of their study to the substantial aid from these youth groups. Many other works of love were performed by them.¹⁸ Notices in Der Lutheraner show contributions from the youth groups for the eleemosynary institutions in the St. Louis area.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁶"Historical Sidelights," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly XXIV, 85.

¹⁷W. T. Dau, editor, Ebenezer, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), p. 431.

¹⁸Walther, op. cit., p. 72.

CHAPTER IX

PASTOR AND PRESIDENT

Throughout his whole life Buenger was a faithful servant of the Missouri Synod. He considered the purpose of Synod as his own. Only a physical barrier could have hindered him from attending a synodical or pastoral conference.¹ His constant and unflagging efforts in behalf of Synod are evidenced by the various committees he served upon and the interest that he took in any organization that would aid the enlarging of the Districts.

It was perhaps because of just such a spirit and will, that the Western District elected him to the office of president in the year 1863. He served faithfully and diligently in this capacity until 1874, at which time his congregation expressed a desire for more of his time. Buenger was modest insofar that he protested that his gifts were far too few for such a demanding and illustrious office. He even maintained that he was elected to the office over protest, but Walther states that the election was done rightly.

Buenger executed the duties of his office with diligence and exactness. Wherever his presence was required and needed,

¹C. F. W. Walther, Kurzer Lebenslauf des Weiland Ehrwuerdigen Pastor Johann Friedrich Buenger (St. Louis: Verlag von Dette, 1882), p. 75.

he came, always succeeding in negotiating between preacher and congregation with satisfactory results.

For his brethren in the ministry he was an advisor and a comforter, directing them in the proper channels. Even a harsh word was taken correctly by both the brethren and the congregations, because they knew he expressed himself in Christian simplicity.²

During his term as president he made many trips into the towns and villages of the widespread Western District. At the same time these visitations developed into mission endeavors, for he would stop in small settlements, look up the Germans and Lutherans, which were usually equated, preach to them, and persuade them to gather together into congregations. As President of the District he would then send out pastors to these newly formed churches. A great many of the Lutheran Churches in the Western District owe their origin to just such mission endeavors.³ In this manner J. F. Buenger founded the congregation at New Brunswick, Missouri. Leaving St. Louis, he arrived with Candidate F. Walther, the son of C. F. W. Walther, in New Brunswick. On Saturday he walked up and down the main street talking to all the people, and inquiring whether they were German and Lutherans. He then introduced them to Candidate Walther, telling them to come to services

²Ibid., pp. 72 ff.

³Ibid., p. 74.

tomorrow morning at which time he would ordain and install their new pastor. The next day a number of people gathered for the service. After the sermon he presented the candidate, saying, that if they were willing he would ordain and install him as their pastor. The people assented, and Candidate Walther was duly installed, remaining there until his dying day.⁴

In the summer of 1868, President Buenger made a trip through the great western plains of Kansas stopping at Atchison, Leavenworth, Lyons Creek, Alma and Paola.⁵ There he learned first hand of the great spiritual needs of these scattered Lutherans. The result was, that the following year, 1869, three new workers were sent into the field of Kansas, namely; T. H. Luecker, Candidate Jonas Matthias, and Candidate H. T. Senne.⁶

While on these trips he would talk to young boys and girls about their future education, inducing them to attend the college at St. Louis. If they did not have funds, he either gave them aid from his own pocket or found help for them through some good Christian. Since at that time there was

⁴"Historical Sidelights," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXVI, p. 6.

⁵A. R. Suelflow, The Heart of Missouri (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 60.

⁶"Kurzes Geschichte des Kansas-distrikts 1861-1888-1913 auf Beschluss Desselben zum 25 jährigen Jubiläum," (Gesammelt und zusammengestellt von M. K. T. Vetter, 1913), p. 9.

not yet a high school in St. Louis, Buenger would gather the young ones around him, preparing them with the necessary Latin fundamentals.⁷

During this time Synod was offered the land and building in Springfield, Illinois, for the small price of \$6,000.00. No-one felt officially empowered to enter into any financial and land buying agreement until the matter was placed before Synod. Still, because the buy was good, no-one wanted to pass it up. It was then that Buenger and several of the St. Louis brethren went to Springfield and persuaded the congregation there to buy the property. In this manner the facilities were brought into the services of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.⁸

Buenger's whole life was marked with an avid interest in home missionary activity. As long as the Church had a missionary to the Indians he supported the activity with every means at his disposal. When finally the endeavor was given up there was no-one more disappointed than Buenger. The idea, that if at all possible, the work should be resumed, remained constantly with him.⁹

At the end of the Sixties Buenger became acquainted with

⁷Walther, op. cit., p. 74.

⁸R. A. Suelflow, "History of the Missouri Synod During the Second Twenty-five Years," Unpublished Doctor of Divinity Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1946. p. 509.

⁹Walther, op. cit., p. 70.

a retired missionary from China by the name of Carl Vogel. Vogel served in the Chinese field for three years and then retired because of conscience scruples, to take up farming in Missouri. Buenger was convinced of his evangelical theology and persuaded Vogel to begin mission work among the Chinese in and around St. Louis. In 1874 Buenger was selected as chairman of a special committee to further this endeavor, by Synod. Although Missionary Vogel worked with quiet zeal, his death brought an early end to this endeavor.¹⁰

In a compensatory manner J. F. Buenger devoted himself to a greater extent in the work of Negro missions.¹¹ It was already in 1877 that the plan to begin work among the Negroes was brought before the convention in Ft. Wayne. At this time Buenger was appointed chairman of the committee and later chairman of the actual mission activity itself. He served in this capacity with great faithfulness until the time of his death.¹² The boundless energy and willingness to work, which he showed in missionary activity, are trademarks of J. F. Buenger. He followed the men in the field, aiding their endeavors with financial and prayerful support.

¹⁰Suelflow, op. cit., p. 112.

¹¹Walther, op. cit., p. 75.

¹²W. A. Baepler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 163.

CHAPTER X

THE FAMILY AND THE HOME ABOVE

It was not until after J. F. Buenger's arrival in St. Louis in 1840 that he married. Buenger was very shy during his early years in America. While he was in Perry County, Missouri, a farmer's daughter by the name of Rosine, "Rosa" Maria Mueller captured his attentions. She was a very gifted person, able to speak English, Italian, and a little French. After a short engagement they were married in the Fall of 1843 in Trinity Lutheran Church. Their marriage was marked by the loss of their only three offspring. The first was a son, called Christian, born about January 1, 1845. He died a few days after his birth. The second was called Friedrich Lutherus, because he was born on Luther's birthday, November 10, 1845. His death occurred a few years later on June 5, 1847. The third son, Gotthilf Nathanael, was born March 29, 1848, and died one year and four months later in the cholera epidemic of 1849. This epidemic also took the life of Rosine Maria, the wife of Johann. She died at the age of twenty-six years, leaving young Johann a widower.¹

¹Theodore A. Buenger, "Letter to Kenneth R. Molnar," dated February 19, 1955. Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri. (The personal statistics in this chapter are based on this letter.)

After an interval of over a year, J. F. Buenger married again, on November 20, 1850. The bride was Johanna Sophia Reissner, born December 3, 1823, in Bavaria. She had recently come to America in the summer of 1849, with her brother J. F. Reissner. Buenger was personally acquainted with her since her arrival and knew her as a sincere Christian woman. It was Buenger's brother-in-law who performed the marriage ceremony in Immanuel Church. This marriage was blessed with four daughters. The eldest was Katherina Coelestina, born on January 23, 1852, who died eighteen years later. The next was Maria Elizebeth, who was born on October 1, 1854, and died September 3, 1857. The third daughter was born November 4, 1857 and was named Johanna Lydia Maria. She married C. F. Keller on June 5, 1884. She died in Chicago in March of 1955. The fourth daughter of this marriage was born Agnes Amalia Dorothea on May 3, 1863. She married H. H. Wind in November of 1889. On February 3, 1916, she too, passed away. In addition J. F. Buenger and his second wife acted as foster parents for her niece and nephew, Monica Reissner, and Johann F. Reissner. The daughters all learned something of the gentle arts, the piano, and what was most important of all, how to cook, sew, wash, iron, and keep house. They did not belong to any societies in the city,

but did do entertaining of friends at home.²

The Buenger home was always a hospitable place. Many times relatives would come in from out of town without notice, and because of the lack of suitable hotels, stayed with the Buengers for many days. Anyone who was in need found help from Pastor Buenger. At times he went out of his way to help someone else. Arrangements had been made for a young fiancée of a local pastor to meet him at the Buenger home. Unforeseen incidents caused a delay in her arrival from Germany, causing the groom no small amount of anguish. Finally the bride arrived. Meantime relatives of Buenger arrived from the country, causing a housing problem. The groom was embarrassed, for he had never met his fiancée prior to this time. Kind-hearted Buenger solved the rooming problem and the groom's embarrassment by marrying them that very evening, and all ended happily.³

Buenger was always active in his church's work. On the First Sunday in Advent, 1855, he served as main speaker at a mission festival in Edwardsville, Illinois. The sermon was based on 1 Timothy 2:4-6. The theme was, "Encouragement to be active in spreading the true Christian Religion." The

²C. F. W. Walther, Kurzer Lebenslauf des Weiland Ehrwuerdigen Pastor Johann Friedrich Buenger (St. Louis: Verlag von Dette, 1882), pp. 85 ff.

³J. W. Wiltenberg, "Missouriana," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXII, 147 ff.

service was enhanced by selections from the choir accompanied by trumpets.⁴

The Anzeiger des Westens bears an account of the three hundred-fiftieth anniversary of the Augsburg Confession celebration in St. Louis. A parade was held from Souldard Market to the Fairgrounds. Some came on foot, others by carriage. Among the clergymen was J. F. Buenger of Immanuel, preceded by C. F. W. Walther, the president of Concordia College.⁵ Buenger to his end was interested in the Church and all of its activities.

As for the man himself, Walther relates that he was always gay in company and used to laugh quite a bit. His appearance showed that he was in his prime, and his visage was not disturbed by his intense struggles of soul nor by the tragedies in his life. His fine appearance he maintained until the time of his sickness in the later part of his life. It seemed that especially in his old age he became younger and younger. His face was friendly and full of genuine simplicity. His tall and powerful figure impressed everyone who saw him. He was an original man with a personality entirely his own. Outwardly he maintained a staid pastoral

⁴"A Mission Festival," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXIV, 27.

⁵"The three Hundred-fiftieth Anniversary of the Augsburg Confession," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, III, 36.

demeanor, which often caused those who did not know him to mistake him for a Catholic priest. It is said to have occurred frequently, that while he was riding on a streetcar, an Irishman mistaking him for a servant of the Pope, would offer him his seat and even offer to pay his fare.⁶ Such consideration must have proved very disconcerting, for throughout his life he maintained a strong antipathy toward the Papacy. This was evidenced in the instruction that he gave his people. Even in the address at the dedication of the Orphan's Home he spoke against the Papacy as the Antichrist. Very often, in season and out of season, he mentioned the Antichrist and his dangerous doctrine. Ludwig Fuerbringer relates in his book Eighty Eventful Years the following anecdote:

. . . Buenger left a day or two before Synod closed because he had heard that an orphan would be taken to a Catholic orphanage if the Lutherans would not take care of the child, and being president of the orphanage at Des Peres, he returned to St. Louis in order to arrange the matter, saying to me when he took leave that he must return, "For I cannot permit the Antichrist to devour the child."⁷

Buenger once told Walther that one night it seemed to him that devil appeared to him. The devil told him that he could not die quietly if he would not reconcile himself

⁶Walther, op. cit., pp. 88 ff.

⁷L. Fuerbringer, Eighty Eventful Years (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), pp. 210 ff.

with the Pope. Buenger then replied that he could never retract his beliefs against the Pope. If the devil wanted him to repent he should refer to other sins, after which the devil left.⁸

In Buenger's last years as pastor of Immanuel, his congregation erected a new home on 15th and Morgan streets for their pastor. On August 1, 1881 a notice appeared in Westliche Post advertising the old home at 1015 West 13th Street for sale.⁹ Buenger explained a few months before his death, that he would move into the house his faithful parishioners had built for him, but he would soon be moving into the wonderful home in Heaven. Yet, since he was still healthy and strong he hoped that God would give him a few years to serve his church. A strong anticipation of death filled his heart during the few months preceding his death.

On New Year's Day he was apparently in good health and preached a strong sermon. On the following day he happily celebrated his seventy-second birthday. Then suddenly on the fourth of January he became very ill with an inflammation of the abdomen (Unterleibsentzündung). Other complications set in, making a very painful operation necessary. Amid the prayers and tears of his loved ones gathered around him, he

⁸Walther, op. cit., p. 88.

⁹Louis V. Schneider Papers, Unpublished Manuscript, Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis.

passed away to his heavenly Father on January 23, at seven-fifteen in the morning. Shortly before his death he reaffirmed his belief in the grace of God and in Christ, stating that he believed in the doctrine which he preached all his life.¹⁰

On January 25, 1882, the funeral was held in Immanuel Church, said to be one of the largest in St. Louis. Not only did members of his own church and other Lutheran Churches in town attend, but many men and women from all walks of life, who had been helped by this benefactor when they were in need. Even some Catholics from "Kerry Patch" who had been befriended by Buenger made an appearance at the funeral.¹¹

Pastor Otto Hanser delivered the sermon on the basis of Acts 15:25,26. He compared Buenger to Paul and Barnabas as a man who gave his life in the Saviour's service. The funeral address at the open grave was given by Pastor George Link on Isaiah 57:2. He comforted the bereaved with the thought that J. F. Buenger had entered into eternal rest and would with all the redeemed and all the blessed arise on Judgement day unto eternal life.¹²

¹⁰Walther, op. cit., pp. 89 ff.

¹¹L. Fuerbringer, op. cit., pp. 210 ff.

¹²Walther, op. cit., pp. 91 ff.

CHAPTER XI

THE LUTHERAN CHARITIES IN ST. LOUIS

Lutheran Hospital

It is possible to trace attempts at charitable work back to the original conception of the Saxon Emigration. Charity was not forgotten by these emigrants. Already in setting up the traveling regulations for the Lutheran Saxon movement to America, the founders foresaw the need of caring for the sick in America. The following paragraph from the code of "Traveling Regulations for the Lutheran Gesellschaft Emigrating with Herr Pastor Stephan to the United States of America" brings this to light:

Immediately when someone is taken ill, the supervisors shall notify the board, which will endeavor to provide the necessary medical attention. Separate nurses shall be appointed for men and women, and will receive adequate compensation for their services. However, if the patient has relatives and friends, he may have himself attended by these.

Care is to be taken that as far as possible the sick enjoy the requisite rest.¹

This never materialized into an organized system of aid for the sick. It actually remained for O. H. Walther to set up an organized system of welfare. This was done in a draft called krankenkasse. The plan of this draft was to set up a fund for the support of the sick. Each person was to put

¹W. O. Forster, Zion on the Mississippi (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), p. 574.

in a certain amount. Elected elders were to take care of the dispensing of the fund and securing necessary nursing and medical services for the incapacitated.² This is the original endeavor of the Saxons to meet the crying need of the helpless and sick.

The American scene of the nineteenth century played an important part in the development of charitable institutions. The mass movement to and across the United States created social and economic problems for every family in this migration.

The very nature of increased immigration presupposed displaced families, and strained facilities for welfare. According to J. A. Hawgood, it was during the Fifties and Sixties of the nineteenth century that the Germans reached their most dominating numerical position in the American immigrations. Between 1840 and 1880 over eighty per cent of Germany's total emigration to the United States occurred.³ With this sudden influx of foreign immigrants it is easy to envision the pressures and upheavals that were brought to bear upon the new citizens of this young country. It is interesting to note that during this period the charitable

²T. A. Buenger, "Johann Friedrich Buenger, Founder of Lutheran Charities and Inner Mission Work in the Synodical Conference," Proceedings of Thirty-Eighth Annual Convention, Associated Lutheran Charities, Milwaukee, 1939. p. 27.

³J. A. Hawgood, The Tragedy of German America (New York: G. P. Putnam Sons, 1940), p. 58.

institutions of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod originated.

Perhaps the first Lutheran to take the lead in charitable work was Dr. W. A. Passavant, who started a hospital near Pittsburg, Pennsylvania in 1849. This institution was soon followed by an orphanage.⁴

Within the Missouri Synod, the first attempt to meet the needs of the sick and destitute was by a group in St. Louis. This group, under the guidance of J. F. Buenger, took care of the needy and helpless. It is notable here that these Lutherans were active in beneficent work even before 1858. In the fall of 1858 Pastor Johann Friedrich Buenger, aware of the many welfare cases in St. Louis, confronted the Immanuel congregation with the dire plight of many of the sick and helpless. As a result, on December 1, 1858, a group of Lutherans formed the Hospital Association, electing J. F. Buenger chairman. Thus with a complete lack of fanfare, the welfare minded Lutherans, stimulated by Buenger, began to work upon the development of the first Lutheran hospital in St. Louis.

It was this group that gathered to discuss welfare problems of the city of St. Louis in the next years, and served as the nucleus of the charitable work in St. Louis.⁵

⁴A. Wentz, The Lutheran Church in American History (Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publishing House, 1933), p. 172.

⁵Der Lutherische Kranken und Waisenfreund (St. Louis: Publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Hospital, Asylum, and Orphan's Home), VIII, 29.

At first it was virtually impossible to find a location for the planned hospital. Everyone, laboring under old country delusions, was afraid of having such an institution in the neighborhood. At the same time it was difficult to find suitable persons to serve as nurses, and even a physician who would be willing to work under church supervision. No one seemed to be concerned about the financial support of such an institution, for in such an endeavor the organization felt Christians would respond cheerfully. Early in the year Mr. L. Bertram, a pious trustee of Immanuel, offered the Lutheran Hospital Association of St. Louis two rooms, rent free, for the hospital. This location was on Carondelet and Emmet Streets, now Broadway and Geyer. Through this Christian example courage and joy was aroused in the association and those connected with it. Almost at the same time another hindrance was bridged when a suitable physician was found in the congregation, who subscribed to the purpose of the hospital with all his heart, and promised his services. This was Dr. F. Schade, who stayed with the hospital through the Civil War until 1865. A family was found to take care of the sick, and since there was already an ill person who, strange as it may seem, was a former Mormon, the hospital immediately began to function. The matter of support was satisfied by abundant giving among the laity of the Lutheran churches. Furthermore, the various youth organizations were approached, and contributed generously and consistently

throughout the years, as notices in Der Lutheraner will attest. In addition a supervisor was appointed to collect fees.⁶

In the February 7, 1860 edition of Der Lutheraner, Buenger reported that three rooms were acquired, one for the family that was to take care of the sick, and one each for the female and male patients. At this time the wish of the hospital association and friends of this group was that they should have a special room for patients afflicted with contagious diseases, in addition to a bathroom and a convalescent room. Furthermore, it was desired that the hospital take not only sick people who could be healed, but also the aged and poor who would need help until their dying day. Dr. F. Schade in his physician's report for this first year gives the following statistics; a total of fifteen cases were cared for, thirteen of these were males, two females, and a total of three died.⁷

By the next year the desires of the Hospital Association were fulfilled, when a bequest by Ferdinand Rudloffs gave further financial impetus to the hospital movement. Buenger then was able to report in his Jahresbericht that during the year 1860 God's blessing rested on the institution. Two rooms

⁶C. F. W. Walther, Kurzer Lebenslauf des Weiland Ehrwuerdigen Pastor Johann Friedrich Buenger (St. Louis: Verlag von Dette, 1882), pp. 77 ff.

⁷Der Lutheraner, An Official Publication of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, XVI, 101 ff.

were acquired, making a total of four, so that now Buenger could say that it can be properly called a Krankenhaus. He adds that they still could use a bathroom, a kitchen, and a morgue. Dr. Schade's report for this year listed a total of twenty-seven patients, with only one dying.⁸

The fact that many young Lutheran people began to move to the city from their country congregations, spurred on the hospital movement. Many of these people, finding themselves helpless in a new situation looked for aid from the church. The hospital group recognizing the inadequacy of their facilities, and the scarcity of reliable doctors, set about founding an institution that would be adequate and sufficient.⁹

In 1861 a decline in patients treated by the Lutheran Hospital occurred. Buenger explained in his annual report that this was due to a decline in immigration, a movement to the West of many families, and that many of the sick soldiers from the Civil War were now taken care of in military hospitals. The report continues with statistics of interest. The average stay of inpatients during the entire year was twelve days. In this particular year the entire group treated consisted of people of German descent and Lutheran beliefs. The sicknesses varied all the way from diarrhea, gastric

⁸ Ibid., XVII, 119.

⁹ Ibid., XVI, 101 ff.

fever, dysentery, stomach disorders, lung disease, to various types of fevers.¹⁰

The diseases and ailments treated at the Lutheran Hospital stayed basically the same over the years. Only in 1875, when St. Louis was hit by a smallpox epidemic, did one disease take precedence over another. Due to this epidemic, the Lutheran Hospital had a mortality rate of eighteen per cent, the highest in the period covered by this study.

Because of the constant need and growth, the hospital association began looking for another location and house. In the spring of 1864 they purchased a permanent location in the neighborhood of the Arsenal, on the south side of Seventh Street near Sydney Street. This property consisted of two very fine houses connected to each other, that gave the appearance of having been built to serve as a hospital. These houses stood only a few feet from the street, and were landscaped with many trees, bushes, and shrubs of all sorts on the property. The houses when purchased were only about four years old, and were set up in such a manner that besides the cellar and attic, there were ten rooms, and two large halls that could be used for wards. The house was of such a size that in addition to the caretaker and his family, thirty or forty persons could easily be accommodated. The total

¹⁰Ibid., XVIII, 34 ff.

cost of the new hospital was \$6,500.00.¹¹ The last payment on this debt was made in 1869. Dating from the purchase of this property the hospital gained numerically in patients until it reached a high in 1870 of one hundred eighty-two patients. There seems to be a relation of cause and effect between the accession of new quarters in 1864 and the immediate jump in patients cared for, although one cannot discount the fact of the Civil War and the effect it would have on the hospital. By far the largest number of patients were grouped in the twenty-thirty year age group, and they were closely followed by the thirty-forty year old. On April 30, 1864, the Hospital moved into the new location, and Buenger remarked that it was not only a hospital for the curable, but also an asylum for the incurable.¹²

The March 13, 1867, Der Lutheraner contains an account of how a cholera epidemic contributed toward the need for expansion of the Lutheran Hospital. In the late summer of 1866, cholera spread throughout St. Louis. This brought more and more patients into the hospital, who were in the last stages of their illness. This sudden surge in patients underlined the need which was constantly manifested for additional medical facilities. The association felt that a more adequate

¹¹ Ibid., XX, 108 ff.

¹² Ibid., XXI, 119 ff.

structure should be built to relieve the present facilities. Fresh appeals were made to the surrounding congregations to contribute liberally toward the welfare fund. This was justified on the basis that seminary students were treated without cost at the hospital.¹³

A Fall issue of Der Lutheraner carries a striking presentation of the needs of the hospital. It consists of a dialogue between Karl and his friend Andreas. Karl speaks of the need of the hospital, but Andreas is dubious until a little girl and a housewife tell him of their experience with the institution. Karl continues the conversation until Andreas is thoroughly convinced, and asks impetuously where he can give for this cause. Through such dialogues the association inspired the people to support the hospital.¹⁴

From February 1867 to January 1868 the Lutheran hospital cared for 120 patients. Dr. Louis Bosse, who replaced Dr. Schade, handled 118 of these patients and two of them were treated by other doctors. In the course of this year, forty-five students of the seminary were treated by the institution.

The founders of the hospital were concerned not only for the physical cure of patients, but also for the spiritual well

¹³Ibid., XIII, 109.

¹⁴Ibid., XXIV, 41.

being of the individual persons treated. A detailed account of five patients is given in the January 1868, edition of Der Lutheraner. This report is exemplary of the spiritual concern for the cure of the soul shown by the early hospital attendants. For each of the five persons who died during the year, a short notation is noted as to their spiritual relation with the Savior.¹⁵ J. F. Buenger does not mention a hospital chaplain. Evidently he, himself, served in this capacity since he was cognizant of the patients spiritual condition and ministered to their needs. This is further evidenced from Buenger's report in Der Lutheraner of 1877. Of seven people who died in this year, six of them received the Lord's Supper before they passed away.¹⁶ Evidently someone was watching over the spiritual needs of the hospital patients.

By the year 1869, the last of the bill was paid on the hospital. It amounted to \$1,060.00. After this Buenger instigated construction on a new building behind the others, which was to serve for those who suffered from contagious diseases. This building was of such a nature that Buenger was able to say in his Jahresbericht for 1870, that we are now housed in a two-story brick building. The medical staff at this time consisted of Doctors Bosse, Bang, and C. Rohlfing.

¹⁵Ibid., XXIV, 133 ff.

¹⁶Ibid., XXXIV, 68.

The faithful Mr. Freitag served as general attendant.¹⁷

On April 4, 1871, Dr. Bosse retired from his position as hospital doctor. He felt that because of his age and widespread practice it was necessary to retire from the services of the hospital. Fortunately, another doctor by the name of Karl Reiss, was secured soon after Dr. Bosse's retirement. Dr. Reiss lived much closer to the hospital and was therefore able to visit the patients more often.¹⁸

The hospital was not always a self supporting institution, nor was it founded on this principle. It catered to the needs of the unfortunate and financially destitute. In fact due to the many seminary students and welfare cases that it handled the hospital was often in debt at the end of the year. The report for 1878 shows that thirty-five of the eighty patients treated were unable to pay for the medical services rendered.¹⁹ Even in 1876, when Dr. Wichmann became the official hospital doctor, almost one-third of the patients were unable to pay for various reasons.²⁰ It was while under the guidance of Dr. Schlosstein that the numerical quota of patients cared for dropped to a very low

¹⁷Ibid., XXVII, 117 ff.

¹⁸Ibid., XXVIII, 102 ff.

¹⁹Ibid., XXXV, 93 ff.

²⁰Ibid., XXXIII, 77 ff.

point in comparison with the highs of the Sixties and early Seventies. Finally in the last years of Buenger's active leadership of the welfare association the number of patients totalled only ninety-seven with eleven deaths. This decline in hospital admissions and patients is hard to explain. There may be a number of reasons. The decline dates from the resignation of Dr. Bosse in 1871. The subsequent doctors were not well known in St. Louis. As a result the number of patients that were attracted to Lutheran Hospital was small. In addition, for a long time the hospital lacked sufficient funds for proper medical facilities, which may have effected its reputation in the city. Then when the immigration numbers slackened during this era, it allowed St. Louis and the nation to adjust and meet the welfare needs of the people. It is probably a combination of all three of these factors which lead to a decline in the services rendered by the Lutheran Hospital in the last years of Buenger's life.

The period 1858 to 1881 are the formative years of the Lutheran Hospital. The institution grew from a two room private home to a two-story brick edifice. It has the distinction of being the first Protestant hospital in St. Louis, as well as the first Missouri Synod institution of its kind.²¹

²¹F. W. Herzberger, "The Charitable Activities of the Missouri Synod," Ebenezer edited by H. T. Dau (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), p. 452.

Buenger's influence can be reckoned only in terms of his association with the welfare group in St. Louis that sponsored the hospital through these formative years.

Lutheran Orphan's Home

The Lutheran Orphan's Home in Des Peres has little precedent in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. Before any organized activity on behalf of orphans began, Buenger was caring for the homeless through less systematic but effective channels. In 1864, when the new location for the hospital was purchased, Buenger intended to use several of the rooms for orphan children. The rapid expansion of the hospital during these years prevented this, so the welfare organization began to look for land for the purpose of building an orphanage. Meanwhile, to solve the pressing need for homes, Buenger found living quarters for several of the orphaned children with various Lutherans throughout the St. Louis area.²²

The first widespread notice of Buenger's activity came early in 1865. A soldier, who was in a military hospital, faced with certain death, asked Pastor J. F. Buenger to care for his motherless ten year old son. Buenger took the boy under his care and placed him in a Christian teacher's home in St. Louis. Not having the necessary money on hand, J. F. Buenger promised to pay the necessary upkeep at the rate of

²² Der Lutheraner, XXII, 125.

ten dollars per month. Soon, Buenger received money through the mail designated for "the orphanage" or "the young orphan." For no apparent reason people sent money from as far away as 200 miles.²³ In this manner Buenger was enabled to meet the financial needs of these first activities in behalf of the homeless. This method of boarding in foster homes was used as only a temporary measure until more satisfactory facilities could be obtained.

As a result of Buenger's early activities on behalf of the homeless, the needs of orphans were included in the program of the Lutheran Hospital Association of St. Louis. On February 18, 1867, the Lutheran Hospital, Asylum, and Orphanage Association of St. Louis was formed and elected Pastor J. F. Buenger as president.

Already in 1867 definite steps were taken on the orphan project. Pastor August Lehmann of St. Paul's Church, Des Peres, Missouri, reported to the association that there was land adjoining their church property that could be purchased for one-hundred dollars an acre. The Lutheran Hospital, Asylum, and Orphanage Association of St. Louis investigated the property and soon purchased forty acres for \$4,000.00.

Plans for the new institution were discussed by the association for some months, when, it was decided that the first building would be a two story block house, with a large

²³Ibid., XXI, 119 ff.

hall and porch, later to be converted into a commissary. Already on March 15, 1868, the cornerstone was laid for the first Lutheran orphanage and Asylum in the Missouri Synod. This was a grand occasion. Lutherans from all the churches in St. Louis came to Des Peres to witness the cornerstone laying. Many came by train as far as Kirkwood and there joined the procession to Des Peres. The program began with the choir from Trinity congregation, St. Louis singing the hymn Fang Dein Werk Mit Jesu An. This was followed with an address of dedication by Pastor J. F. Buenger of Immanuel Church, St. Louis.

Building progress was fast and on April 6 the cellar was finished. The building itself was completed in the early part of the summer. It was furnished with fourteen sleeping rooms and a reception hall. As soon as possible an orchard and vines were planted in order to supplant the future food supply. Reverend August Lehmann, who already had a house full of orphans, was appointed the first housefather of the orphanage. The institution received five orphans and two elderly men in its first year.²⁴ According to the enrollment book of the orphanage, John Peter Jung, was the first child accepted in the orphanage on July 22, 1868. The log cabin orphanage was dedicated on October 11, 1868, with appropriate services.

²⁴Ibid., XXIV, 134.

In the next few years so many children were admitted to the orphanage that larger quarters became necessary. By 1873 the orphanage housed sixty-four children and seven old people. In order to alleviate the housing situation a new home was built and later dedicated on June 8, 1873. It was on this dedication day that the orphanage received the name Evangelisch-Lutherisches Waisenhaus Zum Kindlein Jesu. In 1874, Pastor A. Lehmann and his wife resigned as house-parents of the orphanage. Mr. and Mrs. F. Ude were appointed to succeed them.²⁵

During the year 1881, 114 children were taken care of in the Evangelisch-Lutherisches Waisenhaus Zum Kindlein Jesu. Twenty of these children had no parental home at all, eighty-one had either no father or no mother, and thirteen were from unfortunate homes. At this time, the orphanage cared for children from eight different states of the union, in addition to some whose homes could not even be determined. The racial descent of the children was predominantly German, but other racial groups such as the English, Norwegian, Dutch, Italian, and Irish were given the proper care.²⁶

In this thirteen year period, from 1868 to 1881, the rapid growth of the Lutheran orphanage shows the tremendous

²⁵Der Lutherische Kranken und Waisenfreund, XXXII, 51 ff.

²⁶Der Lutheraner, XXXVIII, 106.

need that this institution met in the early years of the Missouri Synod. This institution, under the guidance and direction of J. F. Buenger, set the pace for future eleemosynary endeavors in this field. Statistics hardly reveal the concern that Pastor Buenger showed for this early orphanage.

CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION

One can not help but notice the amazing parallels in the life of J. F. Buenger and August Hermann Francke. It is worth noting that both continued their studies at the University of Leipzig, were members of a "Collegium Philobiblicum," and were deeply dissatisfied with their own spiritual condition. The parallel continues with the establishment of an orphanage and the instruction of neglected children, and the early missionary endeavors of Francke in foreign missions and Buenger in Home Missions.¹ We should not underestimate the influence in this case of the many pietistic writings that Buenger read early in his life, and hence the pietistic bent to the eleemosynary endeavors in St. Louis by Buenger.

Buenger was far ahead of his time in the founding of these charitable institutions. The earliest Lutheran mercy institution in the West was founded by Passavant near Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. The greatest immigration movement of the century was taking place, and as is so often the case it resulted in unsettled conditions, upset homes, and un-

¹A. H. Newmann, A Manual of Church History, Vol. 11. (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1953), pp. 528 ff.

fortunates who looked to any and every group for help and aid. J. F. Buenger was filling a very definite felt need of both the nation and the church, when he organized the first Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod charitable association and institution.

There was a need for many kinds of eleemosynary institutions in an environment that was increasingly populous, and in which the processes of growth were not always smooth and pleasant. Conditions in America at that time demanded the kind of charitable work that J. F. Buenger organized.

The influence of the early tragedies in J. F. Buenger's life should be considered as a stimulation for beneficent work. Perhaps only a man who felt the loss of dear ones so completely and devastatingly as Buenger did, can lend himself, and literally throw himself into the work of mercy and love that was so much needed at the time. The death of his father left him with the responsibilities of the household. The early death of his first wife and subsequent loss of his children in this marriage must have had an impact upon his emotional life, leaving a searing scar, that was only healed in his own activities on behalf of others.

In these formative years of the early Lutheran charitable organizations, Buenger was the driving force that was intensely interested not only in the spiritual welfare but the physical well-being of God's people. He was the motivating force behind the organizations, lending his time and talents to the pressing need. But as Walther pointed out, the glory

can not be given to J. F. Buenger alone, but to the gracious God who gave him the abilities, and placed the man in this position.²

As others devote their lives to the service of God in more astounding and illustrious ways, so Buenger devoted his life to the service of the Savior in these charitable endeavors. He gave his life to these charitable institutions and these mercy organizations gave life to others. The life giving activities of organized Lutheran charities are a fitting tribute to Johann Friedrich Buenger.

²C. F. W. Walther, Kurze Lebenslauf des Weiland Ehrwuerdigen Pastor Johann Friedrich Buenger. (St. Louis: Verlag von F. Dette, 1882), p. 83.

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