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## Professor W. G. Polack, Litt. D., 1890–1950

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# Concordia Theological Monthly

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## W. Gustave Polack, 1890—1950

**I**N the passing of Professor W. G. Polack on June 5 of this year, Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, and our entire Synod lost one of its ablest Christian leaders. The Lord had endowed Dr. Polack with a variety of gifts. He had given him a discerning mind, a courageous heart, an evangelical outlook, a facile pen, an intense love for the Church, and an unflagging zeal to promote the cause of his Savior. Fastidious in appearance, calm and suave in speech, considerate of the opinions of others, aware of his own sins and inadequacies, yet wholly committed to the grace of God which appeared in our Lord Jesus Christ, Dr. Polack left an abiding impression on all who learned to know him.

Professor Polack came to the Seminary in 1925 to teach church history. He soon displayed a special interest in the history of Lutheranism in America and of the Missouri Synod in particular. To provide an outlet for his research studies in the history of our Church, he founded soon after coming to the Seminary the *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* and was its editor until a short time before his final illness. At the same time he contributed many articles dealing with historical matters to the *Lutheran Witness*, on whose editorial staff he served since 1925, to the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY, the *Walther League Messenger*, the *American Lutheran*, and other church papers. At the time of his death he was editor in chief of the *Concordia Historical Series*, which he envisioned as a set of scholarly monographs dealing with the most significant developments in the history of the Missouri Synod. Some of his books and pamphlets on church and missions are the following: *John Eliot*, 1926; *David Livingstone*, 1929; *Into All the World*, 1930; *Story of Luther*, 1931 (3d edition, 1947); *The Story of C. F. W. Walther* (3d edition, 1947); *Fathers and*



*Founders*, 1938; *The Building of a Great Church*, 1941 (2d edition, 1947); *How the Missouri Synod was Born*, 1947.

But Professor Polack also developed a keen interest in liturgics and hymnology. From 1929 until 1949 he was chairman of the Intersynodical Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics. Under his leadership this committee published in 1941 *The Lutheran Hymnal*, of which at present over a million copies are being used in the Synodical Conference. Soon followed *The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal*, of which the second edition appeared in 1947. Dr. Polack lived to see the day when his Committee on Hymnology and Liturgics published the revised *The Lutheran Liturgy*, *The Lutheran Agenda*, and *The Lutheran Lectionary*. Other works which indicated his interest in hymnology are: *Martin Luther in English Poetry*, 1938; *Story of Our Favorite Hymns*, 1939; and *Hymns from the Harps of God*, 1940, co-author, *The Seven Ways of Sorrow*, 1949.

Dr. Polack contributed two original hymns and ten translations to *The Lutheran Hymnal*. Perhaps one of his most successful translations was his "With the Lord Thy Work Begin," which the Seminary family has sung for years with fixed regularity at the beginning of a new school year.

Professor Polack contributed the following articles to the CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY: "Christian Missions in China before Morrison" (Vol. 3, pp. 274 ff. and 417 ff.); "Ottomar Fuerbringer" (Vol. 5, pp. 211 ff.); "Frederick August Craemer" (Vol. 7, pp. 704 ff.); "Richard William Heintze" (Vol. 8, pp. 907 ff.); "Why Should a Pastor Continue to Study Church History?" (Vol. 9, pp. 590 ff.); "The Arrival of the Saxons in St. Louis" (Vol. 9, pp. 905 ff.); "Henry Melchior Muhlenberg" (Vol. 13, pp. 673 ff.); "Girolamo Savonarola, 1452—1498" (Vol. 19, pp. 161 ff.); "Our New Altar Service Books" (Vol. 19, pp. 327 ff.); "With Reference to the Formula of Absolution" (Vol. 19, pp. 606 ff.).

Professor Polack was called to his heavenly home on June 5, 1950; Dr. Walter A. Maier on January 11, 1950; Dr. Martin Sommer on December 16, 1949; and Dr. Theodore Engelder on June 23, 1949. May God grant our Seminary other consecrated leaders who will prove themselves worthy successors of these departed men of God.

PAUL M. BRETSCHER