

WELS Historical Institute

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Prof. Dr. E. Moldehute.

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**Proceedings of the 14th Convention of the  
German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of  
Wisconsin and Other States  
held in the First German Evangelical Lutheran  
Congregation in Manitowoc, Wisc.  
Watertown  
printed by the publishers of the *Weltbuerger* and *Westl.  
Monats-Schrift*  
1864**

The synodical convention of the "German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and Other States" was held May 27 to 31, 1864 A. D. in Manitowoc, Wis. Already on May 26 a majority of the preachers and congregation delegates arrived. A most friendly and cordial welcome was extended to all members by Pastor Ph. Koehler and his dear congregation.

The business sessions of the synodical convention were opened festively in church on Friday, May 27, at 9:00 a.m. At 7:30 p.m. on Saturday a confessional service was held at which Pastor P. Koehler preached the confessional sermon on Ps. 32:1-5. On the next day, the First Sunday after Trinity, a festival service was held. After the festival and synodical sermon, preached by Pastor Sieker on John 3:16, the convention members along with the members of the local congregation participated in the Sacrament of the Altar which was administered by Pastors Ph. Koehler and H. Sieker. In the afternoon at 2 o'clock Pastor W. Dammann preached on the Gospel lesson for the day, Luke 16:19-31. Each of the following days was closed with a vesper service. On Monday evening Pastor C. G. Reim preached a mission sermon on Isaiah 52:13-15; and on Tuesday evening Pastor J. Ritter preached an education sermon on II Timothy 2:1-5.

The proceedings and business matters were taken care of in eight synodical sessions and five pastoral conferences. That which was sought in prayer before each session was granted by the God of peace in rich measure: The brotherly unity in all discussions was not disturbed, which made the days of the convention a refreshing experience for all members. As much as considerable differences were feared here and there, nevertheless the convention for this year bore strong and firm witness that the entire synod is openly on the way to a firm conclusion of not being based and established on some learned church politic, but unanimously positioned on our Lutheran Confessions. This is exactly what was sincerely expressed in words which will long be remembered, and associated with this convention.

**Proceedings and Business**

**Session 1. Friday, May 27, 9:00 a.m.**

Vice-president G. Reim opened the session with a liturgical service consisting of a

hymn, Scripture reading and prayer. A roll call of the pastors then took place. Those present took their seats. Absent were Pastors J. Bading, J. Conrad, E. Sauer, J. Hoffmann, F. Boehner, E. Strube, F. Hass, H. Warnke, H. Waldmann, Fr. Mayer, L. Ebert, P. A. Leupp. Then the congregation delegates handed in their certification letters and were authorized to take their seats and to have voting privileges.

The official assembly consisted of the following members:

#### **Pastors**

1. J. Muehlhaeuser, Milwaukie
2. C.F. Goldammer, Jefferson
3. D. Huber, Germany
4. Ph. Koehler, Manitowoc
5. W. Streissguth, Milwaukie
6. G. Reim, Helenville
7. O. Sprengling, Mosel
8. Ch. Stark, La Crosse
9. C. Braun, Columbus
10. F. Waldt, Oshkosh
11. C. Gausewitz, Reedsville
12. Th. Meumann, Platteville
13. C. Wagner, Winchester
14. H. Quehl, Centerville
15. W. Dammann, Milwaukie
16. E. Moldehnke, Watertown
17. J. Kylian, Greenfield
18. H. Sieker, West-Granville
19. M. Ewert, Burroak-Valley
20. J. Ritter, Hallowayville, Ill.
21. A. Denninger, Addison
22. C.G. Reim, Green Bay
23. H. Bartelt, Two Rivers
24. A. Lange, Lebanon
25. A. Hoenecke, Farmington
26. P. Brenner, Kenosha
27. C. Titze, Burlington
28. H. Hilpert, Eldorado

During the session the following arrived:

29. J. Hoffmann, Racine
30. F. Bochner, Beaver Dam

During the past synodical year the following placed themselves at the disposal of the synod and were accepted as advisory members:

1. J. Brockmann, Ahnepee
2. A. Opitz, Schlesingerville
3. J.J. Kern, Fond du Lac
4. E. Giese, Hermann
5. G. Vorberg, West Bend

6. G. Thiele, Ripon
7. Mayerhoff
8. Zwolanek, New Berlin

The following guests were present and accepted as advisory members:

1. J. Schladermundt, Milwaukie
2. G. Fachtmann, St. Paul, Minn.

#### **Congregation Delegates**

1. Joh. Mayer, Manitowoc
2. J. Wagner, New Berlin
3. Rissmann, Hermann
4. F. Gentz, Burlington
5. Ad. Theilig, Mosel
6. G. Duwe, Columbus
7. C. Kiekhoefer, Milwaukie
8. J. Krueger, Milwaukie
9. R. Schoof, Milwaukie
10. F. Baebenroth, Centerville
11. J. Schmidt, Newburg
12. G. Gamm, Watertown
13. F. Berndt, West-Granville
14. J. Roepke, Newton
15. J. Grimm, Town of Rockland
16. W. Heynen, Naperville
17. Fischer, Racine

The following was accepted as an advisory delegate:

1. Egel, Port Washington

The Vice-President, Pastor G. Reim, presented his annual report to the synod.

### **Annual Report of the Vice-president**

Grace be with you and peace from God, our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ!

Honorable and beloved brothers and delegates of our congregations—We opened last year's convention with the words of the Psalmist: Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. We could proclaim, the Lord has done great things for us. He not only opened many new fields for us, and permitted us to found congregations, but he also sent us a large number of young, vigorous men to work with us. If we look back to the year 1856 when we assembled in this congregation for our synodical festival, how small we were at the beginning, how weak our numbers were, we must thus today cry out: Yes, the Lord is doing great things for us; he is doing this beyond our pleas and understanding. Let us rejoice and be glad. For our this year's synodical festival I would like to use as a basis the words of the Apostle Paul from I Corinthians 4:2 "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful." Great gifts and grace also bring on great responsibilities; from everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with

much, much more will be asked. As Christ's servants and caretakers much has been given us and much commanded. Into the fold of our dear Evangelical Lutheran Church much is given and entrusted to us: God's mysteries, the sweet, dear Gospel in unadulterated purity and clarity, just as it was brought back to light by the Reformers through God's grace and mercy and comes to us in our dear Confessional Articles. What they battled with life and goods has fallen into our laps as an inheritance without any great struggle. Let us not forget, my brothers, the Lord seeks truth from us, truth in preserving, searching and acquiring these treasures of grace. – If on the other hand we take a look at the congregations which the Lord has given us, we see that he has also here placed great things under our trust. Thousands of immortal souls he has entrusted to us for our care and protection, that we should direct and lead them as the work of his hands to him. His instruction is to arouse the secure ones, to comfort those who are alarmed about their sins, and to lead them to faith, and to encourage the believers to be diligent in sanctification. And here again he requires of us faithfulness and will hold us accountable. – One of us, our dear brother Koester, he has this past year called from his labors. What an earnest warning this is for us, to be faithful and to work diligently while it is yet day. Others he has revealed to us as being unfaithful workers and has separated them from us as a gripping warning to us. The Lord demands faithfulness, this is what the past synodical year cries out to us in its passing.

On the other hand, my dear brothers, this work is also truly comforting and is a guiding principle for our actions and for the attacks from which we were not spared in the past year, and which will also not be wanting at the present time. St. Paul closes as follows: as a steward I am obligated to God in all things, indeed only to him; it is he who directs me, therefore I have no concerns about the reproof and judgment of a secular day. Whatever anyone thinks of us, what they may call us or however they may defame us, it is an insignificant thing, a mere human judgment. Some make the judgment that we are United and that we are not serious about our Confessions, and others charge us as being ultra-Lutherans, but both of these judgments are purely human. However we must be concerned on how the Lord judges us instead of how humans judge us. We have therefore in this year remained silent concerning the spiteful, public attacks and slander, and have granted information only to friendly inquiries. It is the Lord indeed to whom we are accountable, and not to those who make judgments usually on the basis of unfounded rumors without first getting correct information. Answering hateful attacks leads only to altercations which lead to unpleasant anger, which does not build up the congregation of Christ, but rather tears down what has already been built. –

Three years of our bloody civil war have passed. The lives of thousands have been snatched away by this war, and also in our congregations families are grieved at the loss of loved ones. Still the end of this war is not in sight, and while we are gathered here peacefully considering our church's matters, the slaughter continues unabated. The sad thing is that our people in general do not recognize the hand that causes it, and do not submit to the holy and just judgment of God. Isn't it also our calling to participate in the political problems of the day; it is even more our duty to inform our people, on the one hand, of the only true way to peace, namely sincere repentance and humility before God, but also, on the other hand, to inform them how once Abraham, Moses and others approached God with priestly prayers.

Concerning the development of our synod this past year, we today have many reasons to thank our Lord. Quietly and without fanfare the work which the Lord has com-

manded us to carry out has progressed. Because of the industrious zeal of our *Reiseprediger* (traveling preacher), new areas were opened up for us, and we were able to take care of several of these with the arrival of new workers. The ardent participation of our friends in our former homeland supports our honorable president to the greatest degree in his efforts for the founding of our seminary. This most necessary institution for us will demand a vital part of our convention agenda. The official acts of the past year were numerous and in part very difficult. I now will present to the Hon. Synod a brief overview thereof.

## I. Implementation of Last Year's Synodical Resolutions

The matter of incorporation of our synod in accord with the laws of our state was of urgent necessity, because of the efforts of our Hon. Pres. Bading in collecting the important means for the establishment of our seminary. At my request, the Hon. Mr. Struve of Farmington was so courteous as to draw up a copy, and to have it presented to the legislature through the Hon. Mr. Bingham. Their efforts were also successful in having the draft accepted by the legislature. It is my pleasure to be able to place before the Hon. Synod its legally accepted charter; along with this I urge the synod to thank the named gentlemen for their courteous and valuable services. I also add that the Board of Trustees, according to Section 7 of our Charter, met on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of this month in Watertown and a report to the synod will be made at the scheduled time. Soon after last year's synodical convention our Hon. president left for Germany to collect funds for the establishment of our seminary, having been commissioned by the synod to do so. According to information from him, he has been successful in awakening a great interest in our cause among the friends there and in collecting a significant sum. He, after consultation with his congregation here and with the officers of the synod, believed that he had to yield to the urgent request of our friends to remain there until late in the year and to then bring the collecting to a conclusion. His extended stay made it necessary to move to Berlin with his family. This gave rise to significantly increased costs and he asks the synod to provide for him a set salary, at least \$42.00 a month. It is clear that it is our duty to grant him this request, considering the great service that he is rendering the synod.

In accordance with the resolution of the Hon. Synod, our *Reiseprediger*, Pastor Moldehnke, moved to Watertown late last year, in part to substitute for our president in his congregation, in part to establish the opening of our seminary and college. The opening of the college had to be postponed until the necessary buildings are constructed. Two students, Engelhard and Siegler, entered the seminary. The former had to be dismissed for lack of necessary Christian knowledge; the latter is happily making great strides forward. – Since the acceptance of students gives rise to special expenditures, reimbursement should be granted Pastor Moldehnke.

Last year's synodical resolution concerning the Agenda (church service book) was implemented by the appointed committee. Contacts were made with the Hon. Synod of Ohio which in the course of the past year published an Agenda. This resulted not only in that the Hon. Synod of Ohio sent a copy of its published Agenda to our committee, but also that the establishment of a friendly relationship with the Hon. Synod of Ohio and our synod was begun.

## II. Releases from Our Synod

In June of last year I received a request for a release from our synod from Pastor Leupp. His reason was that our synod had taken on an exclusive character. I did not feel justified to grant an honorable release for such a reason. Before he received my answer, Pastor Leupp left his congregation and went to a congregation in the Hartmann Synod. Soon thereafter a painful remorse grabbed him. Conscience-stricken over the fact that he had become untrue to the dear Confessions of the Lutheran Church in a moment of passion, he returned to his former congregation in October. The same sad error befell Pastor Waldmann. In November of last year he asked me for a peaceful release from our synod. Partly because of health problems, partly in order to collect for his congregation he took a trip late last year to Cincinnati. There he appears to have been persuaded by pastors of the *Westlicher unirten Verein* (Western United Association) to establish a congregation in their interest in Cincinnati. In my dealings with him, I explained in detail to him that this definitely is a formal departure from the Lutheran Church and that I, in such a case, could not feel justified in granting him an honorable release, but that I would have to present the matter to the synod. On August 24 of last year I received a complaint from the congregation in West Bend against Pastor Roell. The investigation which I together with our Hon. Secretary and Pastors A. Lange and A. Hoenecke conducted in September in West Bend proved that named Roell was not only unworthy of the holy preaching office, but also was throughout an unchristian and corrupt man. The investigation committee immediately removed him from his position with the congregation, and the officers of the synod saw it necessary to publicize his dismissal.

## III. Changes of Pastorates

On October 19 of last year I received from Pastor Huber the notice that he had accepted the call from the Ev. Lutheran congregation in Germany, Jefferson County. In November he began his work in the congregation and at my direction was installed as pastor of the congregation by Pastor Goldammer. After Pastor Hilpert was released from his position as substitute pastor in Farmington, he followed his long held call from the Ev. Lutheran congregation in Eldorado and was installed there by me on October 28 of last year.

## IV. Arrival of New Preachers, Ordination and Installation

On June 28 of last year Pastor E. Giese arrived here from Germany. I, after the close of last year's synodical convention sent him to the congregation in Town Hermann, which had been previously served by Pastor Sauer. On the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity he was installed by Pastor Sauer.

In September of last year Mr. Opitz arrived here from New York and desired to enter the holy preaching ministry. I sent him to the Central Conference for an examination and then ordained him under the obligation of his accepting our confessional books on October 7, in Jefferson. He is now serving in Schleisingerville [today Slinger], replacing the deposed Roell in one of his parishes.

On October 3 Pastor Vorberg arrived from Germany. He accepted the call of the Ev. Lutheran congregation in West Bend and vicinity, and was installed there at my direction by Pastor Sieker.

On January 12 Pastor Thiele arrived here from Germany and followed a call to Ri-

pon, where he also has a large mission field in the surrounding area. He reports gratifying results in his work there.

On May 7 Pastor Zwolanek arrived here from Indiana and accepted a call from the congregation in New Berlin which had been orphaned since the departure of Pastor Huber.

Finally, on May 18 Pastor E. Mayerhoff arrived here from Germany. I sent him to the Ev. Lutheran congregation in Fond du Lac which had been without a pastor for several months.

Accordingly, I can happily report that we have six new workers. Unfortunately this joy is intermixed with the sadness of the three workers whom we lost during the course of the year. One, as we already reported, had to be dismissed, one became unfaithful to our Ev. Lutheran Church, one, however, was called by the lord of the vineyard, our Lord Jesus Christ, from working in the vineyard. Our dear brother and co-worker, C. Koester, is no longer with us. Sickly for some time, he was sent by our Lord to a difficult and painful sickbed. After suffering terribly, he fell asleep, gentle and blessed. How painful it is, when glancing at the need for workers, to lose a loyal and trustworthy co-worker; but it is also encouraging; his life's end calls out to us: "Which end are you contemplating;" and if under the heat of work of the day the hands become tired for us, a glance at the sacred evening vigil and the blessed rest of the saints strengthens us.

## V. The Traveling Preacher Program

Unfortunately this branch of our activities could not be pursued as thoroughly as in past years. Our traveling preacher had to take on being the substitute for our president, as well as opening the seminary in Watertown. He reports: The trips in this past year extended a bit out of Wisconsin into Iowa and Minnesota. Because of substituting as pastor for our president, the traveling had to be discontinued at the beginning of September. During the course of winter two short trips were taken. All in all 23 stations, including the state prison in Waupun were served. Of all of these places only Ripon, and provisionally Princeton, have received a pastor. Wherever possible, Sunday Schools and reading services were established. On my journeys I baptized 70 children and served the Lord's Supper to 79 communicants.

## VI. Correspondence

Time does not permit me to give the specifics of all the correspondence. I will make all available to the Hon. Synod and will leave it up to the various committees for reports. In general, I make mention of the fact that our relationship with the societies in Germany as well as with the Hon. Synod of Pennsylvania have remained the same as in the past. Also they have supported us generously this year and their zeal for our development is becoming greater. The sending of workers in greater number has already been reported. But it is especially our seminary for which they are devoting their attention through friendly counsel and ardent support. I recommend to the Hon. Synod that it expresses its thanks in special resolutions to the Hon. Societies and the Hon. Synod of Pennsylvania.

Much important and weighty work, my brothers, lies before us, the time however is short and precious. Let us begin our proceedings with eyes heavenward to Him whose work we are carrying out. May His spirit of truth guide and enlighten us, so that everything redounds to the honor of Jesus Christ and to the increase of His congregation and

church on earth.

*Gottl. Reim, Vice-president.*

By resolution of the convention the annual report of the vice-president was accepted with thanks and accordingly given to a committee for a further report.

The Hon. Vice-president informed the synod that the time had come for the election of officers. Named to the election committee were Pastors D. Huber and H. Sieker.

The election results were as follows:

- Pastor G. Reim – President
- Pastor W. Streissguth – Vice-President
- Pastor A. Hoenecke – Secretary
- Pastor D. Huber – Treasurer

After this the president named the committees for reports on the various synodical matters.

**Committee 1. On the annual report of the Vice-president.** – Pastors W. Streissguth, A. Lange, H. Quehl and Delegates J. Roepke and N. Schoof.

**Committee 2. Acceptance of new pastors.** – Pastors E. Moldehnke, W. Dammann, H. Sieker and Delegates J. Krueger and F. Baebenroth.

**Committee 3. Ratification of excuses from absent pastors.** – Pastors Lange, Chr. Stark, C. Gausewitz.

**Committee 4. Acceptance of applicant congregations.** – Pastors C.F. Goldammer, D. Huber, F. Waldt, and Delegates G. Gamm and A. Theilig.

**Committee 5. Pastors leaving Synod.** – Pastors A. Lange, C. Gausewitz and Delegate F. Berndt.

**Committee 6. Seminary matter.** – Pastors Th. Meumann, H. Sieker, J. Ritter, Delegates J. Roepke and G. Duwe.

**Committee 7. Implementation of last year's synodical resolutions.** – Pastors C. Gausewitz, H. Quehl, C. Braun.

**Committee 8. On the treasurer's report.** – Pastors C. Wagner, C. Titze and Delegate G. Gamm.

**Committee 9. Librarian's report.** – Pastors Ph. Sprengling, A. Denninger, C.G. Reim.

**Committee 10. Traveling preacher program.** – Pastors W. Streissguth, F. Waldt, and Delegate J. Krueger.

**Committee 11. Concerning the synod's charter.** – Pastors Th. Meumann, A. Lange, C.F. Goldammer, Ch. Stark and Delegates F. Berndt and J. Grimm.

The treasurer was asked to present his report. He declared however that he could not as yet close his books because of outstanding funds not yet received.

The parochial reports were then read.

[A synopsis of the report follows]

Reporting were 42 pastors and one vacant congregation, Naperville, Ill.

The synod consisted of 75 congregations and 29 preaching stations.

There were 45 parochial schools and 36 Sunday Schools.

The report included baptisms, of which the highest number, 180, was reported by W. Streissguth of St. John's, Milwaukee.

Also, confirmations, number of times authorized communicants partook of the Lord's Supper, guests that partook of the sacrament, weddings, burials, funds for heathen missions, home missions, students and for the synodical treasury.

The presentation of the parochial report gave rise to the question: which funds under "Home Missions" are to be expended. It was resolved that the response to this question be given to a committee. To this committee the president named Pastors C. Gausewitz, W. Dammann, Chr. Starck and Delegates J. Schmidt and J. Krueger. – At the same time Pastor W. Streissguth took the opportunity to tell the synod to consider seriously heathen missions.

After finally a few procedural matters concerning future meetings were discussed, it was resolved that the convention adjourn to 2:00 p.m.

The session was closed with prayer by Pastor Ph. Koehler.

# A BILL

## To Incorporate the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin

No. 176, A.

State of Wisconsin ... In Assembly

February 15.—Introduced by Mr. Bingham—Read first and second times, and referred to committee on Judiciary.

The People of the State of Wisconsin, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

**Section 1.** That Johannes Bading, Philipp Kachler, Daniel Huber, Gottlieb Reim, C. F. Goldammer and their associates and successors, be and hereby are created a body politic and corporate, under the name and style of "the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin," for the purpose of establishing, maintaining and conducting a seminary and college combined, and shall be the trustees of the said corporation, and by the said corporate name, remain in perpetual succession, with full power to have and use a common seal, to contract and be contracted with, to sue and be sued, plead and be impleaded, to receive, acquire, hold, enjoy and convey property, real, personal and mixed, in all lawful ways, by bequest, donation or purchase, and to sell and dispose of Mortgage, and convey the same; *Provided*, The powers herein granted shall not so be construed as to authorize the said corporation to purchase, sell and deal in any property except for purposes connected with the erection, completion and preservation of houses of public worship and instruction, and such other buildings as they may think necessary, and on a plan sufficiently large to afford ample facilities to perfect the scholar: *Provided*, That at no time shall the trustees be required to exceed the means under their control as trustees: *And provided further*, That the value of the property owned by the said corporation shall not exceed the sum of sixty thousand dollars.

**Section 2.** There shall, at all times, be five trustees of said corporation, and they shall have control of all funds and property of the corporation, and shall faithfully apply the same, to the best of their judgment, for the benefit of their institution, to be created and maintained by the same: *Provided however*, That in case a donation or bequest be made for purposes which accord with the designs of the institution, the trustees shall receive and accept the same, and shall apply such donation or bequest in conformity with the designs of the donor, and all corporate property belonging to the said institution, both real and personal, is, and shall be free from taxation. The said trustees shall have the power to fix time and place of their meetings, and a majority of their number, which may be increased to twelve, shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

**Section 3.** This institution shall be under the control of the annual conference of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, and the said conference shall annually, at its annual session, fill all vacancies of trustees, occasioned by the provisions of this act, and shall, at its annual session, elect by ballot, three suitable persons, members of its own body, visitors to said seminary and college, who shall *ex-officio*, be members of the board of trustees, and have the right to vote on all questions that may come before them, and who shall attend the examination of the students, and look into the condition

of the institution, and report thereon to the next session of said conference.

**Section 4.** The term of office of said trustees shall be two years: *Provided always*, that the trustees shall hold their offices until their successors are chosen, and that they may by election fill any vacancy which may take place until the next conference of the said German Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

**Section 5.** The board of trustees shall have power in their corporate name to make all necessary by-laws for the due order of their own affairs, and for the government of the institution, not inconsistent with the constitution and laws of this state; to remove members of their own body for long continued neglect of duty; to confer such degrees and other honors upon those whom they deem worthy to receive the same, as are usually granted by universities, colleges and seminaries of learning in the United States, and in testimony of such grants to give suitable diplomas under their seal, which diplomas shall entitle the possessor thereof to immunities and privileges which by usage or statute are allowed to the possessors of similar diplomas, granted by universities, colleges and seminaries; to elect from their number a president, secretary and treasurer, whose duties and liabilities shall be prescribed by the by-laws of the corporation; to elect such professors, teachers and other officers, as in their opinion, the interest of the institution may demand; to fix their salaries, and also prescribe and direct the course of study and discipline to be observed in said institution, also to remove any teacher or professor, and other officer from office, for incapacity, immoral conduct or misbehavior in office, or to suspend the same and appoint others to fill their places; to regulate the course of instruction and prescribe the books, authorities and apparatus to be used in the various departments, and to have such further general powers not herein specified, and not inconsistent with the letter and spirit of this act, as are granted to corporations under the name of "general provision," in chapter seventy-eight of the revised statutes of this state.

**Section 6.** The business place of the corporation hereby created, shall be at Watertown Jefferson county, Wisconsin, but the trustees shall have the power to change the same from time to time, and locate it at any other place within the state of Wisconsin.

**Section 7.** The board of trustees shall hold their first meeting under this act, on the first Tuesday in May, A.D. 1864, and afterwards shall meet on their own adjournment, or upon a call of a majority of said board of trustees.

**Section 8.** This act shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage.



# The Contribution of Adolf Hoenecke to the Election Controversy of the Synodical Conference and an

## Appendix of Translated Articles

by Jonathan Schroeder

In the Election Controversy that rocked the fledgling Synodical Conference, history consistently points to the leadership of Dr. C.F.W. Walther and the Missouri Synod. However, the Wisconsin Synod's preeminent theologian, Dr. Adolf Hoenecke also made substantial contributions to fight for truth in this controversy. The Wisconsin Synod's early doctrinal vacillation seems to cloud history's recollection of the synod's later efforts under the guidance of Hoenecke. Rather than indecision, vacillation, or blind capitulation, the historical record shows that as theological leader of the Wisconsin Synod Hoenecke provided Walther with quiet support from the beginning, with encouragement and counsel when needed, and finally with public confession for synodical unity.

Although its coals had been smoldering for several years, the genesis of the Election Controversy came at the 1877 meeting of the Western District of the Missouri Synod when Walther presented an essay on election. Several men took issue with some of Walther's statements in his essay and in subsequent publications; they perceived them as Calvinistic teachings of absolute predestination and irresistible grace. Preeminent among Walther's opponents were Friedrich Schmidt, Henry Allwardt, and Frederick Stellhorn. They, in turn, faced accusations of synergism for their election in view of faith. Walther succinctly defined the controversy in 1881:

It consists simply in the following twofold question: first, whether God from eternity, before the foundations of the world were laid, out of pure mercy and only for the sake of the most holy merit of Christ, elected and ordained the chosen children of God to salvation and whatever pertains to it...or second, whether in his election God took into consideration any thing good in man, namely the foreseen conduct of man, the foreseen non-resistance, and the foreseen persevering faith, and thus elected certain persons to salvation... The first of these questions we affirm, while our opponents deny it, but the second question we deny, while our opponents affirm it.<sup>1</sup>

The controversy and its relative doctrine are often spoken of as *Walther'sche* and Missouriian. But from the beginning, far from indecisive or non-committal, the Wisconsin Synod under the leadership of Adolf Hoenecke gave quiet, consistent support to our older sister synod.

Hoenecke's support of Walther and the Missouri Synod actually predates the beginning of the wider controversy in 1877. In the early 1870s, Professor Stellhorn, the Missouri Synod's educator teaching at Northwestern College, Watertown, WI, already rejected the exclusion of man's role in election and saw a measure of self-determination in



C.F.W. Walther

conversion.<sup>2</sup> During a pastoral conference of the Wisconsin District of the Missouri Synod, Stellhorn presented his self-deterministic views to the assembly of pastors. Koehler provides the following account:

Hoenecke asked for the floor and in his trenchant way showed in short order that the approach was all wrong. The Missouri conference at once decided to make Hoenecke its spokesman and in the ensuing debate between him and Stellhorn, the latter, by Hoenecke's animated gestures, was literally backed up against the wall of the church, where he sat down and admitted his defeat.<sup>3</sup>

Hoenecke's support of Walther and the Missouri Synod continued after the controversy re-ignited in 1877. However, it was a quiet support, for Hoenecke differed greatly from Walther in personality: "Hoenecke was no fire-breathing warrior who pressed recklessly forward and broke through enemy lines so that others might follow."<sup>4</sup> Synodical reports contain next to nothing regarding the controversy for the first few years. But "in this case, too, Hoenecke had not plunged forward like a man breaking new ground. Rather, with great care he had worked his way through this article of Christian doctrine, thoroughly and over a long period."<sup>5</sup> Quietly, the doctrines were studied through, and the Wisconsin Synod followed the leadership of Hoenecke who had quickly come to Walther's defense in the instructive articles of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, the official German

periodical of the Wisconsin Synod. From his position as editor, he used the pages of the *Gemeinde-Blatt* to explain his support of Walther's position.

In November of 1877 he authored the article "*Was kann ich zu meiner Bekehrung bei tragen oder wie werde ich bekehrt?*" [What can I contribute to my conversion, or how am I converted.] In his early article, Hoenecke's stance against the self-determinism of Schmidt-Stellhorn-Allwardt is blatantly clear. He said, "The word of God clearly and plainly teaches that God alone is the one who begins and completes the work of conversion in the heart of man."

In January of 1878 he authored the lead editorial entitled "*Wenn Gott allein die Menschen bekehren kann und muß und solches thut ohne des Menschen Zuthun, woher kommt es denn, daß so viele Menschen unbekehrt bleiben?*" [If only God can and must convert men, and does so without man's cooperation, then why do so many men remain unconverted?] Though the controversy was yet in its infancy, Hoenecke displays a complete grasp of the doctrine causing such conflict. In this article he answers, *cur alii prae aliis* [Why some and not others]. The short answer to the question is this: the fact that so many men are not converted is not God's fault, but rather solely and only the guilt of the men who remain unconverted.<sup>8</sup> He emphasizes both the universal call to grace and the efficacy of grace:

He also gave his church the command to go into all the world and to preach the gospel. This command doesn't exclude anyone; each one who believes shall be saved. That is his expressed, clear will: he does not want the death of the sinner, but rather he wants the sinner to turn and live... The word spoken by him is able to win the hearts of all... The word of the gospel is also an all-powerful word; whoever hears it feels something of its power. The gospel is the power of God to save all who believe it. Just as God placed power in kernels of wheat to nourish and strengthen man's body, in the same way he placed his divine power in the word of the gospel.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, he concludes by saying that although many different causes may impel a man to reject the grace offered in the gospel, "all the other causes are encompassed within the chief cause which is the inborn unbelief of all men... And so, few are converted because the majority repeatedly struggles against the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, and despises the means of grace while lusting after the world instead."<sup>10</sup>

Even in the articles that he didn't author, Hoenecke used his position as editor to shape the character of his publication. In February and March of 1880, *Gemeinde-Blatt's* leading editorial had the heading: "Though a Man Can Do Nothing to Obtain his Salvation, He Can Through his Own Fault Lose it." – In August, "The Lord Knoweth Them That are His." – March, 1881: "God Saves a Sinner by Grace."

Finally, in April 1880, as the controversy began to rise to a feverish pitch, Hoenecke published a beautifully simple, clear, and sound article entitled "*Zur Lehre von der Gnadenwahl*" [regarding the Doctrine of Predestination]. With characteristic clarity he begins the article with a simple summary:

It is certain, that the grace of God is a universal grace. It is further certain that the merit of Christ is sufficient for the whole sinful world. Finally, it is certain that God wants repentance and faith preached to all peoples. Even so, it is also certain that God has not predestined all.

He continues by pointing out the reason why the error had reared its head within the church:

In predestination as the Scriptures teach it, our corrupted reason sees God as unjust. Because of this, many have been persuaded to either completely deny the doctrine of predestination, or to at least justify the actions of God to reason... They feel they must justify the holy and righteous God in his unknowable counsel and actions. However, God needs no such justification. He is always just, even when he appears to us to be unjust.

His solution to the doctrinal conflict calls for subservience of reason to Scripture:

In view of this, if we want to consider the doctrine of predestination in a fruitful way, then we must beat down all our thoughts and all the conclusions of our reason which contend against the Word of God. We must cling only to the revealed Word of God.

The body of the article is comprised of four points of doctrine which culminate in a quotation from the Formula of Concord. His main points are:

- A. The Scriptures not only teach that the number of the elect is small, but also that the elect are individual, completely definite persons.
- B. It is to be observed further that it wasn't first in time that God make this decree to choose some out of the fallen human race. Rather, his election is an eternal election.
- C. This eternal election of God stands unshakably firm. Those whom God has chosen are inevitably saved; in contrast, no one is saved who does not belong to the number of the elect.
- D. Finally, God's Word also teaches us that God has elected his own not only to salvation, but in general he has elected them to be his temple, so that they should belong to him and be his possession already in this life. We see therefore: God has not chosen his elect immediately from hell into heaven, from damnation to salvation, but he has chosen them in Christ and through Christ. He has chosen them and thus wants them in time to travel on the path ordained by him, in Christ, to salvation.<sup>11</sup>

While diligently pursuing his duties at the Wisconsin Synod Seminary, Milwaukee, WI, Hoenecke greatly contributed to the efforts of the Synodical Conference in the Election Controversy by quickly defending Walther's position, by gently leading the Wisconsin Synod through careful instruction, and by publicly formulating clear, sound testimonies to the doctrines expressed in Scripture. Although Hoenecke began by offering quiet support for Missouri, his role quickly expanded.

What began as a disagreement over a conference essay had quickly deteriorated into an intersynodical controversy inextricably bound to numerous strong personalities. In 1879 Hoenecke began to contribute to the controversy with more than quiet support: under his theological leadership the Wisconsin Synod offered Walther both encouragement and counsel.

Hoenecke understood both the positive and negative aspects of Walther's expositions of Missouri's stance on election; he saw what areas needed to be emphasized and

what areas needed to be moderated. August Pieper records this remark Hoenecke made privately:

Walther's teaching is not Walther's, but the teaching of the Scriptures, of Paul, of Luther and of the Formula of Concord. The second way of presenting this doctrine, however, is dogmatic derailment. Walther, in his zeal, let slip several sentences that said too much, and they will have to be set straight. But Walther stands directly on Scripture, and his opponents are mired in reason. With him we stand on Scripture. Several Missourians are hard to bear, but on the score of theology we are of one flesh and blood with Walther. Therefore there can be no talk made of separating from Missouri.<sup>12</sup>

Hoenecke began his campaign to correct those "several sentences" at the 1879 pastoral conference. At that meeting, the Missouri Synod was asked to provide emendations to several questionable phrases. The Wisconsin Synod's concerns were sent in the following letter:

The undersigned committee for the examination of the report of the Western district of the Honorable Missouri Synod from the year 1879 takes leave to report to the Synodical Conference that discussions on the doctrine of predestination are contained in the stated synodical report and regrets that the expressions therein are not always precise and careful enough according to the pattern of the divine Word. Nonetheless, we must explicitly declare that we find no error in it...<sup>13</sup>

Walther accepted the counsel and offered a correction on the language at a Chicago caucus in 1880. It is a testament both to the counsel offered and to the man who received it, that in front of colleagues and opponents he made the emendations, "After the meeting, according to Ernst's and Bading's story, he remarked half-humorously to the latter; 'You put me on the spot right in front of my own cohorts.'"<sup>14</sup>

Though, under Hoenecke, the Wisconsin Synod insisted on changes in phraseology, its support of Walther was never in question. Rather, Hoenecke and the synod served as a great encouragement to Walther in troubling times. At the 1881 Colloquy in Milwaukee, war was declared within the Conference (*Wohlan, wollet ihr Krieg, ihr sollt Krieg haben!*) [OK! You want war, war you shall get!] and the theologians couldn't even adjourn with joint prayer because of their differences. But the stance of Hoenecke and the Wisconsin Synod evoked from Walther this joyful sentence in the midst of his solemn description of the events: "Praise God! We Missourians do not stand in this fight alone! The Wisconsin Synod, in the theologians of its faculty and in its many able members, stands at our side."<sup>15</sup>

With the encouragement, however, came more insistence by Hoenecke that Walther retract the language of some of his statements. August Pieper relates that it was Hoenecke's persuasion that led Walther to publish his article "*Sententiam teneat, linguam corrigat*" [freely: the sense is the same, the wording is corrected] in the month following the colloquy.<sup>16</sup> Walther conceded that in their explanation of the doctrine of election the Missouri Synod representatives hadn't always written and spoken in such a way that they couldn't have been misunderstood. Then, speaking of Hoenecke, he wrote: "Our

friends have called to us, '*Sententiam teneatis, linguam corrigatis.*'"<sup>17</sup> So, by the counsel of Hoenecke, he corrected his language in three areas: that there are no conditions in God; that those who are lost perish because their perdition is foreseen by God; that the elect receive a richer grace.<sup>18</sup>

In October of 1881, the Wisconsin Synod began to deal corporately and publicly with the doctrine of election. As before, this public confession for synodical unity was under the guidance and tutelage of Hoenecke. The following announcement appeared in the October 15 issue of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*:

#### Pastoral Conference

According to the resolution of last year's pastoral conference, this year's conference will convene on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October, at 9:00 AM in the church of Grace Congregation in Milwaukee. The subject for discussion will be theses on the doctrine of Election by Professor Hoenecke...<sup>19</sup>

Hoenecke presented two theses at the pastoral conference. Unfortunately, the minutes of the conference proceedings have not been preserved. Although there is no record of the explanation and discussion of the theses, the theses themselves have been preserved in the *Lutheran Standard* and *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*: Hoenecke said:

1. Just as Scripture teaches a general gracious will of God for the salvation of all men, so also it certainly teaches God's special election of individuals to salvation.
2. The eternal election of God is the cause of faith in the elect. However, Election did not happen in view of the faith of the elect.<sup>20</sup>

From the description of Professors A.L. Graebner, M. Loy and G. Fritschel, the theses generated a great deal of discussion. At least to some, it appeared that there was neither closure nor consensus on the doctrine of election at the pastoral conference. However, Graebner's account of the conference shows that Hoenecke's theses were received with joy:

The subject of the essay was the doctrine of election. This is an article of Christian doctrine which clearly shows that mortal reason is totally blind when dealing with things pertaining to man's salvation... It was indeed worth the time and effort for the pastors to assemble to consider this thoroughly comforting doctrine and to study, to hear, and to learn what the gracious God has revealed about his eternal election to comfort us poor sinners... Indeed, dear reader, the discussion of our pastoral conference was richly blessed.<sup>21</sup>

Hoenecke's public confession of the scriptural doctrine received quick attention. Though his teaching had not changed in the past ten years, its reception throughout Midwestern Lutheranism certainly did. Within two weeks of the conference's adjournment, Loy in the *Lutheran Standard* quoted Hoenecke's theses and called the second theses "an open denial of Lutheran doctrine."<sup>22</sup> The Ohio Synod's German publication, the *Kirchenzeitung* also attacked the theses and included the response of a Reformed publi-



A.L. Graebner

cation which saw Hoenecke's doctrine as being in accord with their own.

The Wisconsin Synod's response came in the December 15 issue of *Gemeinde-Blatt*. In it Graebner answers the attacks of the Ohio Synod's publications:

Let's take a look at the *Standard* first. This publication accuses Prof. Hoenecke's second thesis of "an open denial of Lutheran doctrine." That such an accusation is merely its own addition, is unfortunately no longer surprising in the columns of the *Standard*. If others had not already clearly shown the writers of that publication that what they maintain is untrue, we would consider it our duty to furnish them proof in any way we were able. However, we leave it up to them to come to terms with the Second Commandment and only advise them to do it yet at the proper time.<sup>23</sup>

Although there was discussion after the presentation of the theses, Graebner clearly states that the *Standard* had received faulty information. Graebner clearly explains that the Wisconsin Synod didn't "agree to disagree":

Now let's look at the other claim which the writer of the *Standard* transcribed in a somewhat corrupted form from his source. He maintained that our synod now has the policy of agreeing to disagree in order to avoid division. So we now want to make the following publicly known to the *Standard* and its source: In a conversation that represents its majority according to the truth, if, after long and pointed discussion, the one opposed is clearly told to cease the unpleasant misleading he had done till now, and until the resumption of the discussion, to study the doctrine under conflict in the light of God's Word, and if it is earnestly and resolutely explained to

him, yet he seeks to spread the error further, then nothing remains except to separate oneself. If then one comes out and repeats such union as the *Standard* and its source ascribe to us, then we call this calumny and advise both to make sure that they come to terms with the Eighth Commandment, and do it likewise yet at a proper time.<sup>24</sup>

The *Kirchenzeitung* attacked Wisconsin from a different angle. They maintained that Hoenecke's doctrine merely aped the Missouri Synod. However, Graebner quite correctly points out that the Wisconsin Synod had shown enough independence to thwart her larger sisters' State-Synod plans:

He indicated at the same time that many people are inclined to let themselves surmise that the Wisconsinites adopted their present position on the doctrine of election at least in part because "they like to be guided by the Missourians." In reference to this last insinuation we may note that whoever is conversant in the newer and most recent church history will hardly suspect us Wisconsinites of adopting any position because "Missouri" or "Ohio" or any other synod adopted it.<sup>25</sup>

In response to the *Kirchenzeitung* report that the Reformed agreed with Hoenecke's doctrine on election, Graebner offered this retort:

Indeed we know well enough what this agreement means – namely, it's the first praise of the Formula of Concord on the part of the Reformed in three hundred years.<sup>26</sup>

Fritschel immediately replied in the pages of *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* with his "Zur Chronik des Prädestinationstreites." He understands the point of Hoenecke's theses, but opposes them along party lines:

One sees (here most decidedly Missouri's doctrine is pronounced) that not the general gracious will of God concerning all men, but the special grace of election of only a certain few is designated as the source from which faith flows forth. The result is that those who are not predestined cannot even come to faith; and one sees therefore that it was completely true, when Prof. Loy explained in *The Lutheran Standard* that the second thesis contained "an open denial of Lutheran doctrine."<sup>27</sup>

After quoting Graebner's explanation of the convention's procedure when there is doctrinal disagreement, Fritschel responds by saying, "So that means they didn't agree to disagree. Certainly that is an explanation unable to be misunderstood – a clear explanation that in the Wisconsin Synod the pure Lutheran doctrine shall be condemned and excluded from now on."<sup>28</sup>

Hoenecke had led Wisconsin into the fray, and his 1881 theses served as the basis for his next work which would bind the Wisconsin and Minnesota Synods with the Missouri Synod in a united front. But although Hoenecke's theological leadership on the doctrine of election had been consistently sound and public for over a decade, there were still quite a number of the most respected pastors who were on the verge of jumping to the Ohio Synod.<sup>29</sup> The deciding battle would come at the synod's convention in June.

In order to provide an opportunity to study the issues, Prof. Graebner had been asked to draw up theses on conversion for the 1882 Wisconsin Synod convention. The rationale was simple:

Theses on conversion formed the subject of the doctrinal essay. The treatment of this doctrine was extremely important and timely, especially because there are many today who maintain that they are the defenders of Lutheran doctrine, and that we synods of the Synodical Conference have fallen away from the doctrine of our Church and have endeavored to bring false and dangerous things into acceptance in reference to this doctrine.<sup>30</sup>

But when the synod convened on June 8, 1882, in La Crosse, Wisconsin, not quiet study but loud dissension characterized the early days. Pastor Klindworth of Galena, Illinois, who recently had come from the Iowa Synod, wrote several pamphlets attacking the doctrines of election and canvassed his views even outside of the sessions of the convention.<sup>31</sup> The next morning's presentation of Graebner's second thesis dealt with the cause of faith and the inability of man to contribute to his conversion. Klindworth's actions led to a discussion on election during presentation of the essay. By mutual consent, Hoenecke rose and gave the following presentation of the doctrine of election:

“Regarding Eternal Election Holy Scripture Teaches the Following”

Out of his unending mercy for lost mankind, God from eternity resolved to redeem all the world through Christ. We thus reject as a damnable doctrine the teaching of the Calvinists: 1. That God sent his dear Son only for the elect. 2. That God decreed this election without any regard for Christ and his merit. Only the pleasure of his and Christ's will, and Christ's sacrifice, which was offered for all, have determined God with the special decree of election.

The Bible teaches further, that God has mercy on all, that Christ has come for all, and that he wants all men to be saved. We designate as a damnable doctrine that teaching which says that Christ only shed his blood for the elect.

In the same way Scripture teaches that for Christ's sake and according to the pleasure of his will, God from eternity has elected certain men to salvation. In these men their election serves as the cause from which God works their calling, conversion, and everything else that is necessary for their salvation – so then they certainly are saved; and because Scripture says it, therefore we believe it.

One may ask: Can you make sense of that for yourself? – What then? – God wants to save all, but again: Has he elected only a few who alone are saved? – No, I can't make sense of that for myself. However, has God revealed his truth to us that we should make sense of it for ourselves? No, exactly the opposite, we believe it as he has revealed it to us.

Further, Scripture teaches: 1. That God has the steadfast will to call all men to sal-

vation in Christ; 2. That this call is meant earnestly and sincerely; 3. That the means through which this call happens are always powerful and efficacious. Therefore, the doctrine of the Calvinists is a damnable one that teaches a two-fold call of God, an earnest one for the elect and one that is one call that God truly intends for all. With it, he calls innumerable men who are not saved on account of the hardness of their hearts. Through the same call he also calls his elect and does nothing in addition; his call is the same for all.

That is Scripture's teaching regarding election.

However, someone could say about this doctrine of election, “Isn't it basically a terrifying thing?” No, we answer, if we simply remain with what Scripture says about it, and do not forget that election happens in Christ. For as with all of the Gospel, this part too is only comforting. Look at Jesus Christ; then you see your election. Don't speculate about the secret counsel, rather cling to Christ and to the Gospel which speaks so comfortingly about the universal gracious will and mercy of God in Christ. Let us suppose that you have been a terrible sinner, a drunk, a fornicator. Does it now in some way say, “Stay away from Christ; you have no part in him; election in no way applies to you?” No, rather much more: Christ has died for all; his blood purifies all; fornicators and tax collectors still enter the kingdom of heaven sooner than Pharisees. In Christ, “whose blood perpetually cries: Mercy, mercy!” there is a wide gate open for all sinners. When it says: “Many are called, but few are chosen,” the election of God agrees with his mercy which applies to all. Just believe that you also are chosen. – In this way one should speak regarding election, and in this way also, one should take the word of Scripture as it reads.<sup>32</sup>

Hoenecke's clear and simple words expressed the unfathomable mystery as Scripture reveals it. He placed the contradiction of *cur alii prae aliis* back onto God, while affirming both the universal grace of God and particular election. He didn't fall into Walther's error of “richer grace,” but affirmed one call from God; he rejected irresistible grace, but insisted on the efficacy of its means; he admitted inability to harmonize the doctrine with human reason, but affirmed that it provides great comfort; he ascribed election to God's mercy and Christ's merits, and denied that man added anything at all – election is the cause of faith in the elect.

The moment of decision came in the afternoon session. After years of quiet leadership and instruction, Hoenecke through his doctrinal explanation had led his synod to the fork that divided the roads of the Ohio and Missouri Synods. Before the question was put to vote, “it was explicitly explained that the presentation rejected an election in view of faith.”<sup>33</sup> Then the convention displayed sound fellowship principles and brotherly love when it was emphatically stressed:

We are certainly ready to be patient with brothers who are not yet clear on this doctrine – insofar as they do not work against and combat the truth recognized by us. However, though ready to be patient, we still cannot refrain from giving testimony to the truth, nor can we in unionistic fashion – either actual or apparent – keep our attitude secret.

In the afternoon session, the two synods followed where Hoenecke had led them. Graebner relays the eyewitness account:

The two synods in turn confessed to this presentation of the doctrine of eternal election by a standing vote. The first question raised was whether the Wisconsin Synod would accept this presentation of the doctrine as its own. A powerful impression was left when the large convention rose silently and full of holy earnestness. Then when those who did not agree with the presented doctrine were requested to stand up, two pastors (Klindworth, Althof) and a teacher (Gruber) rose. In addition, the delegate from the congregation of one of the two pastors rose. A third pastor (Kleinlein) had previously explained that he wasn't yet fully clear on the doctrine and therefore he abstained from the voting.

The moving event was repeated when the acting president of the Minnesota Synod placed the questions before his synod. Here as well two pastors (Vollman, Siegrist) stood up as those who did not agree with the presented doctrine.<sup>35</sup>

Loy's reaction to Hoenecke's presentation on election and the synodical response bemoaned the loss of a sister synod into the Missouri Synod's fold. He seems to ignore the study and leadership of Hoenecke, but rather sees the synod's actions merely as capitulation to Walther:

Missouri has gained a triumph in the West. The synods of Wisconsin and Minnesota, both in the Synodical Conference, have met in joint convention and adopted the Missouriian platform... How do the men of Wisconsin manage to render it plausible that there is comfort in their theory? "God's election," they say, "is in harmony with his mercy, which extends over all men: only believe that you are elected!" It is sad that a large body of men who were once earnest in their opposition to Reformed error should so speedily be led to the adoption of a Reformed principle.<sup>36</sup>

The Missouri Synod's reaction to Hoenecke's presentation was, of course, much more favorable. In the Synodical Conference convention of 1882, Hoenecke's presentation was read along with the Missouri Synod's Thirteen Theses. With only Pastor Muus voting against the recognition, each synod accepted the other's confession as their own.<sup>37</sup> Due to Hoenecke's thorough study, careful instruction, and consistent leadership, the Minnesota and Wisconsin Synods stood side by side with the Missouri Synod for the rest of the controversy.

Without doubt, Dr. Walther and the Missouri Synod led orthodox Lutheranism in its fight against false doctrine in the Election Controversy. However, the contributions of Adolf Hoenecke cannot be overlooked. He provided the Missouri Synod and Dr. Walther with quiet support from the beginning, with encouragement and counsel when needed, and with public confession for synodical unity. Hoenecke's stability amid the tumult of the controversy was noted even by his opponents. Fritschel spoke of Prof. Hoenecke as one "of whom it is said that in the doctrine of predestination he has proceeded much more logically and exactly than Professor Walther." His calm, instructive words served to balance Walther's often invective speech. "During the controversy, Dr. Hoe-

necke by gentle and conciliatory speech took the sting out of the Missouri Synod's offensive phraseology, and accomplished much in the interest of peace in the church."<sup>38</sup>

But his contributions were greatest within the Wisconsin Synod. "He kept our synod on the right track, although a small number of men – they never were really one with us – deserted us. Humanly speaking, our synod might well have been torn apart if Hoenecke's theology – not outwardly dazzling, but strong because it was Lutheran to the core – had not held us together."<sup>39</sup>

### An Appendix of Translated Articles

The following article appears in the January 1 edition of the *Gemeinde-Blatt* in 1878, Volume 13, Number 9. What follows is this writer's translation of Hoenecke's article entitled "*Wenn Gott allein die Menschen bedehren dann und muß und solches thut ohne des Menschen Zuthun, woher kommt es denn, daß so viele Menschen umbekehrt bleiben?*"

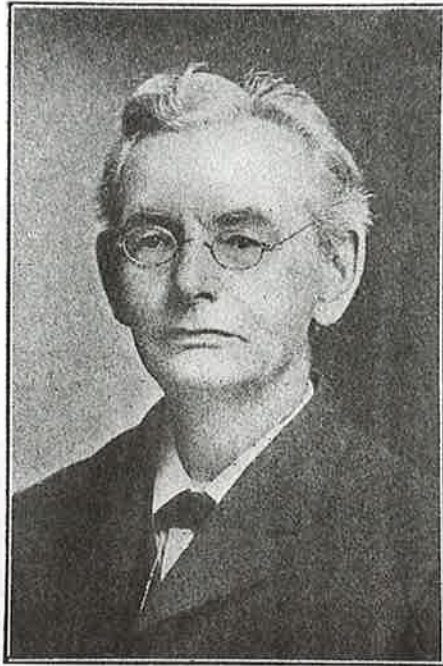
#### If only God can and must convert men, and does so without man's cooperation, then why do so many men remain unconverted?

By A. Hoenecke

That is an important question and everyone who wants to be saved should seek its answer. The short answer to the question is: the fact that so many men are not converted is not God's fault, but rather solely and only the guilt of the men who remain unconverted. To prove this assertion, we utilize the story told us in Luke 4:14-30. For in this story we see the sinner-seeking Savior and the heart of man which rejects that loving Savior. From both of these we see that the fault belongs not to God, but only to man, when a man is not converted. Even though a man possesses within himself absolutely no will or power to convert himself, yet he does possess the frightful power to oppose the working of God in his heart and to reject God.

In the cited story we are told that after he had spent forty days and forty nights in the wilderness and had been tempted by the devil, the Lord Jesus went forth to begin his teaching ministry among the people of Israel. He came to Nazareth, the town in which he had spent his youth, and he entered the synagogue and preached the Gospel – for he came to seek and to save the lost. Soon he gathered a band of disciples around himself and sent them out with the commission to preach the gospel to all creatures. Whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved. This preaching of grace since then has gone to the ends of the earth. To lead them, he established the preaching ministry in the church and will preserve it until the last day. In addition to that ministry he also gave his church the command to go into all the world and to preach the gospel. This command doesn't exclude anyone; each one who believes shall be saved. That is his expressed, clear will: he does not want the death of the sinner, but rather he wants the sinner to turn and live. He wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. On the other hand, he does not want a man to be lost. God even had the gospel preached to the Gentiles who accepted it. Many do not get to hear it, because God in his omniscience knows that they wouldn't accept it even if they did hear it.

The word spoken by him is able to win the hearts of all. We see that in the beautiful, remarkable sermon which he preached to his countrymen there. According to his custom



*Adolf Hoenecke*

he entered the synagogue and stood up to read. The book of the prophet Isaiah was passed to him. He then opened the book and found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is with me; he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to preach freedom to the captives, sight to the blind, and release to the oppressed, to preach the year of the Lord's favor." After he had set aside the book, he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Oh, how near salvation was brought to those people! The one of whom Moses and all the prophets had prophesied, the one who is the point of all of scripture, Jesus, true God and true man, stood before them and testified to them that he was the one for whom their fathers had waited. With the words, "The Spirit of the Lord is with me; he has anointed me," the prophet points to the person of the Lord – for the Lord Christ was anointed with the Holy Spirit without measure. He is received by the Holy Spirit. The eternal Godhead has bound itself with humanity in the most personal and indivisible way in Jesus. The result is that in Christ, God and man are only one person. God even testified to the fact at the baptism of his son. What great grace was shown to those people of Nazareth! They were given the honor of actually seeing the true God-man Jesus with their bodily eyes and of hearing the gospel of free grace in Christ from his blessed, divine mouth!

These remarkable passages contain the sweetest gospel. He was sent to proclaim the gospel to the poor: those who knew that they were poor and miserable in their souls; those who knew that they lacked the righteousness which has value before God; those who knew that the devil had robbed them of all their jewels and riches which God had

created in them so that now they could be justified and saved only through a foreign righteousness. To those people, the joyful message should be proclaimed, that now has appeared the one who will return to them all their lost goods and treasures. These poor people are also called the broken-hearted. They said with David, "I cry out from the unrest of my heart." They are called captives because the devil holds them captive in the bonds of sin and death. They are called blind because they could not recognize God and therefore they could not come to him. They are called oppressed because they are under God's wrath. Since all men find themselves in this miserable condition by nature, the Savior appeared to all so that all may be helped. The year of the Lord's favor is the time of the New Testament in which grace is announced to all in place of the well-deserved punishment. The joyful year of jubilee has begun which all the slaves are given freedom and in which all pawned possessions must be given back to their original owners. This joyful, blessed time began for them at that time and for all men today. Oh, how everyone should rejoice and grasp this proclaimed grace with both hands to be a participant of it!

However, the word of the gospel is also an all-powerful word; whoever hears it feels something of its power. The gospel is the power of God to save all who believe it. Just as God placed power in kernels of wheat to nourish and strengthen man's body, in the same way he placed his divine power in the word of the gospel. Through it all who receive this word are strengthened in their soul and are saved. We see in this story how he had proven his power to all the people there in Nazareth. In verse 22 we read: "They all spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words which came out of his mouth." We read further in verses 14 and 15: "Jesus came to Galilee in the power of the Spirit and the news about him spread through the whole countryside. And he taught in their synagogues and was praised by everyone." We see from these words what a powerful impression the word of the gospel made and still makes on all men. The most wicked enemies of Christ have to sense that no other word on earth is like the word of the gospel. Therefore, it's certainly true when one says, "It takes more effort for a man to enter hell than it would for him to be saved." Therefore, on the last day there will be horrible contrition over disdaining the gospel.

We see now that, despite the wonderful grace shown to them, those people of Nazareth had pushed salvation away. The first thing we are told about them is that they took offense at the humble person of our Lord. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they called out. "Does this one want to teach us who are older, wiser, and more intelligent than he?" What can we learn from this? Is it any different today? The majority (especially the wise and intelligent people of the world) takes offense at the humble person of the Lord Jesus. Should such learned people first learn true wisdom from the poor carpenter from Nazareth? The true Church of God on earth is very similar in its outward appearance to the Lord its Savior. Like him, the church has no form or beauty that is pleasing to the world. Therefore, it is most deeply despised for its servants and its means of grace. Men are ashamed to belong to it. The false church of the papists has much more respect in the world. There, even sooner, natural man finds something suitable to his intellect. The Lord Christ is proclaimed, offered, and imparted to us in the word of God and in the holy sacraments, but oh, how these means are despised! Who today wants to bow before God's Word? Who today esteems the sacraments? The unenlightened human reason takes offense at these means and considers them worthless in spite of the fact no one can deny their power. So the world shoves away the offered grace and rejects its Savior who came to seek and to save.

The people of Nazareth took further offense because he had not performed great signs and wonders among them as he had in Capernaum. Through such signs and wonders, they wanted to make a name for themselves, to become a famous city, and to derive all kinds of profit. Had the Lord performed such signs and wonders, things would have gone well for him among his native people. Isn't this still so? If one would derive all kinds of profit from following after Jesus, then the whole world would cling to him. But because we are only dealing with spiritual possessions, one may not trouble himself. Of what use is it to be a Christian and to follow the Lord Christ? Aren't many who don't believe much richer and more honored than those who do believe? Thus we see that the world's intelligence and greed is the reason why many reject the offered gospel and to cling to the world and its treasures.

However, the chief cause that encompasses all the other causes is the inborn unbelief of all men. The Lord Christ illustrates that in two examples – namely, in the example of the widow of Zaraphath and in the example of Naaman the Syrian. Why wasn't Elijah sent to a widow in Israel? Because there was none at hand who would have received him in faith and have provided for him. Why was no leper from Israel made clean through Elijah? Again, no leper was cleansed because no one had used the means in faith which the prophet had recommended. Thus they hindered their true conversion because they took offense at the person of Christ and pushed grace away. They further hindered their conversion, through the intelligence of the world and the love of the world which they could not overcome, and finally, the third hindrance was their great unbelief in which they were firmly set.

If someone is so disposed and throws salvation further and further away from himself, then he doesn't remain as he was, but rather he becomes an open enemy of Christ. This is what happened to the people of Capernaum who went so far as wanting to kill the Lord. And so, few are converted because the majority repeatedly struggles against the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, and despises the means of grace while instead lusting after the world.

The following article comes from the April 15, 1880, issue of *Evangelisch-Lutherisches Gemeinde Blatt*, Volume 15, Number 16. What follows is this writer's translation of Hoenecke's article entitled *Zur Lehre von der Gnadenwahl*.

## Regarding the Doctrine of Predestination

By A. Hoenecke

It is certain, that the grace of God is a universal grace. It is further certain that the merit of Christ is sufficient for the whole sinful world. Finally, it is certain that God wants repentance and faith preached to all peoples. Even so, it is also certain that God has not predestined all. "Many are called," spoke our Lord Jesus Christ, "but few are chosen." We stand here before a bottomless mystery for our reason. Is it possible, we ask, that God earnestly wants the salvation of all? Is it possible that he actually is reconciled with the whole sinful world through Christ? Is it possible that he wants the Gospel to be preached to all men so that they believe and are saved? Is it possible for all these things to be true, and yet nevertheless this same God from eternity predestined to this salvation only a small number from this sinful world? However, in this we make our rea-

son captive to the Word of God. It stands in the Bible, and it's not for us to ask, "What sense does this make?" Rather, we are obliged to believe the Word of God. If it is necessary to make our reason captive to obedience of the Word of God for a right understanding of all divine doctrine in general, then it is all the more necessary, for a right understanding of the doctrine of predestination. In the consideration of this doctrine, anyone who wants to be led by his reason, his wisdom and his own thoughts, must err, for we are dealing here not with human thoughts, but with God's thoughts. This necessity of error must also stand fast for all those who do not unconditionally subject themselves to God's Word, but subject themselves to a logical explanation. Writing which is led by the conclusions of reason must go dangerously astray in the doctrine of predestination, as we will see in the course of this essay.

How difficult it is for us men to subject ourselves unconditionally to the Word of God! When he speaks in his Word, how difficult it is for us to honor God by saying, "Your thoughts are not our thoughts, and our ways are not your ways. Rather, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are your ways higher than our ways, and your thoughts higher than our thoughts." How difficult it is to do that so that we can rightly understand the doctrine of predestination. In predestination as the Scriptures teach it, our corrupted reason sees God as unjust. Because of this, many have been persuaded to either completely deny the doctrine of predestination, or to at least justify the actions of God to reason. However, they either don't see, or don't want to see that this always happens at the cost of the revealed Word. Even in the Lutheran church, which has always held to the principle: "Scripture is to be explained with Scripture," men who are unfaithful to this principle in the doctrine of predestination have quickly erred. This is because they feel they must justify the holy and righteous God in his unknowable counsel and actions. However, God needs no such justification. He is always just, even when he appears to us to be unjust. He overcomes when he is judged. (Rom. 3:4)

In view of this, if we want to consider the doctrine of predestination in a fruitful way, then we must beat down all our thoughts and all the conclusions of our reason which contend against the Word of God. We must cling only to the revealed Word of God. The only one who will derive true blessings and comfort from this doctrine, is the one who falls with a believing heart in true reverence before God and his Word in the Scriptures—the one who, full of confidence through faith in the Word of God, can lift up his heart to God and can say: "Speak, Lord. Your servant is listening."

For anyone who knows Scripture, there is no doubt that Scripture contains the doctrine God predestined only a few out of the whole sinful world. Our Lord Christ himself said, "Many are called, but few are chosen." Yet the Scriptures not only teach that the number of the elect is small, but also that the elect are individual, completely definite persons. This is proven not only from the word "chosen" which shows that they were taken out of the others, namely, those who were called, but also it becomes evident from many clear testimonies of Scripture. In Mark 13:20 Christ says, "And if the Lord had not cut short these days, no one would be saved; but for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them." Christ isn't speaking here about the elect in general, but about completely definite persons whom his heavenly Father had chosen. "I know," Christ says in another place, "whom I have chosen." Paul also teaches the same thing in 2 Timothy 2:19, "The Lord knows his own," namely, his elect. If he knows them, then they must be definite persons who are known to him.

It is to be observed further that it wasn't first in time that God made this decree to choose some out of the fallen human race. Rather, his election is an eternal election.



Scripture also teaches this. Ephesians 1:4 tells us that God chose us through Christ "before the foundation of the world was laid," and 2 Timothy 1:9 says, "before the beginning of time." Paul writes in Thessalonians that God had chosen them "from the beginning" for salvation. Before humans were created, even before the world was created, thus from eternity God chose out of the sinful world all those who would become his possession.

The Word of God also tells us that this eternal election of God stands unshakably firm. Those whom God has chosen are inevitably saved; in contrast, no one is saved who does not belong to the number of the elect. In Matthew 24:23 Christ says, "False christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders that will deceive even the elect—if that were possible." "If that were possible," Christ said. With that he wants to say, "It is not possible to deceive them. Even if such a thing were to actually happen at some point, they will yet finally come back to the right path, because God has chosen them and his election is unchangeable. In John 10 Christ says that no one can snatch from his hand the sheep which his heavenly Father had given to him. The Apostle Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:19, "The solid foundation of God stands firm and has this seal: the Lord knows his own." This means that not only does God know those who are his own, but he has surrounded them with eternal love so that they also must remain his own for all eternity. If we compare this with what Christ held against the condemned in Matthew 7:23, "I have never known you (as my own); Away from me, you evildoers!" then from that it irrefutably proceeds that all those who are not included in this eternal election of God are lost.

Finally, God's Word also teaches us that God has elected his own not only to salvation, but in general he has elected them to be his temple, so that they should belong to him and be his possession already in this life. However, we are his possession only in Christ and through faith in him. Therefore the Scriptures also say, "God has chosen us in Christ," Ephesians 1. Paul says, in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, "But we should always thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, that God chose you from the beginning for salvation in the sanctifying work of the Spirit and in the faith of the truth to which he has called you through our Gospel to the glorious possession of our Lord Jesus Christ." Those God has chosen from eternity, he also calls through the Gospel, works faith in them, and gives them to Christ to be his glorious possession. Christ is looking at this eternal election of God in John 6:37 when he says, "Everything which my Father gives me comes to me, and whoever comes to me, I will not drive away." That God the Lord conveyed his election to Christ already in this life, can be clearly derived from the High Priestly Prayer of our Savior (John 17), in which Christ repeatedly pronounces that those elected to salvation are given to him already in time. We see therefore: God has not chosen his elect immediately from hell into heaven, from damnation to salvation, but he has chosen them in Christ and through Christ. He has chosen them and wants them then in time to travel on the path ordained by him, in Christ, to salvation. In Romans 8:29-30, Paul gives us the order in which God wants the decree he made in eternity regarding the elect to be followed in time, "For those God foreknew he also foreordained that they should be conformed to the likeness of his son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. But those God foreordained, he also called; but those he called, he also justified; but those he justified, he also glorified." With that the Apostle wants to say: Those God through his son Christ foresaw and foreordained to salvation, he also called through his Word, gives them his Holy Spirit who justifies them (i.e., makes them be-

lievers), and then glory also follows this Word and faith, so that those justified through faith in Christ are certain of the adoption of God and eternal life; they praise God for his good deeds; they extol him in their lives as his children; and ultimately, they are saved.

Our Formula of Concord teaches the following regarding predestination: "If we wish to think or speak correctly and profitably concerning eternal election, or the predestination and ordination of the children of God to eternal life, we should accustom ourselves not to speculate concerning the bare, secret, concealed, inscrutable foreknowledge of God, but how the counsel, purpose, and ordination of God in Christ Jesus, who is the true Book of Life, is revealed to us through the Word, namely, that the entire doctrine concerning the purpose, counsel, will, and ordination of God pertaining to our redemption, call, justification, and salvation should be taken together; as Paul treats and has explained this article Rm. 8:29ff.; Eph. 1:4ff., as also Christ in the parable, Mt. 22:1ff., namely, that God in His purpose and counsel ordained:

1. That the human race is truly redeemed and reconciled with God through Christ, who, by His faultless obedience, suffering, and death, has merited for us the righteousness which avails before God, and eternal life.
2. That such merit and benefits of Christ shall be presented, offered, and distributed to us through His Word and Sacraments.
3. That by His Holy Ghost, through the Word, when it is preached, heard, and pondered, he will be efficacious and active in us, convert hearts to true repentance, and preserve them in the true faith.
4. That He will justify all those who in true repentance receive Christ by a true faith, and will receive them into grace, the adoption of sons, and the inheritance of eternal life.
5. That he will also sanctify in love those who are thus justified, as St. Paul says. Eph. 1:4.
6. That He also will protect them in their great weakness against the devil, the world, and the flesh, and rule and lead them in His ways, raise them again when they stumble, comfort them under the cross and in temptation, and preserve them.
7. That He will also strengthen, increase, and support to the end the good work which He has begun in them, if they adhere to God's Word, pray diligently, abide in God's goodness, and faithfully use the gifts received.
8. That finally He will eternally save and glorify in life eternal those whom He has elected, called, and justified.

And in this His counsel, purpose, and ordination God has prepared salvation not only in general but has in grace considered and chosen to salvation each and every person of the elect who are to be saved through Christ, also ordained that in the way just mentioned He will, by His grace, gifts, and efficacy, bring them thereto, aid, promote, strengthen, and preserve them" (FOC, *Triglöt*, 1068-1069).

This article is found in the December 15, 1881, edition of the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, Volume 17, Number 8. What follows is this writer's translation of Graebner's *Kirchliche Nachrichten*.

## Ecclesiastical News

By A. Gräbner

Two publications of the Ohio Synod, the *Standard* and *Kirchenzeitung* have occupied themselves with the proceedings of our last pastoral conference. Each of the two publications has harnessed a stranger's colt and has plowed freely with it under the whip-cracks of its own additions.

Let's take a look at the *Standard* first. This publication accuses Prof. Hoenecke's second thesis of "an open denial of Lutheran doctrine." That such an accusation is merely its own addition, is unfortunately no longer surprising in the columns of the *Standard*. If others had not already clearly shown the writers of that publication that what they maintain is untrue, we would consider it our duty to furnish them proof in any way we were able. However, we leave up to them to come to terms with the Second Commandment and only advise them to do it yet at the proper time.

Now let's look at the other source which the writer of the *Standard* transcribed in a somewhat corrupted form from his source. He maintained that our synod now had the policy of agreeing to disagree in order to avoid division. So we now want to make the following publicly known to the *Standard* and its source: In a convention that represents its majority according to the truth, if after long and pointed discussion, the one opposed is clearly told to cease the unpleasant misleading he had done till now, and until the resumption of the discussion, to study the doctrine under conflict in the light of God's Word, and if it is earnestly and resolutely explained to him, yet he seeks to spread the error further, then nothing remains except to separate oneself. If then one comes out and repeats such union as the *Standard* and its source ascribe to us, then we call this calumny and advise both to make sure that they come to terms with the Eighth Commandment, and likewise, do it yet at a proper time.

Now we come to the *Kirchenzeitung*. This publication reprinted an article from the *Reformirten Kirchenzeitung* in which the Milwaukee Theses on the one hand are described as scriptural, but on the other hand it is said that the Lutherans of the Wisconsin Synod earlier were opposed to such a meaning. The Reformed writer of the reprinted article appealed to observations made on a past visit by a previous president and by other prominent pastors of the synod. He indicated that at the same time that many people are inclined to let themselves surmise that the Wisconsinites adopted their present position on the doctrine of election at least in part because "they like to be guided by the Missouriians." In reference to this last insinuation we may note that whoever is conversant in the newer and most recent church history will hardly suspect us Wisconsinites of adopting any position because "Missouri" or "Ohio" or any other synod adopted it.

Moreover, we consider it shameful that our synod is under suspicion because of the words of the *Reformirte Kirchenzeitung* and because of the *Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* which reprinted the article without reservation, especially in this case, where it is a question of the status of teachers; and as far as "the past president and those other prominent pastors" are concerned, we say what St. Paul first wrote: "As for those who seemed important—whatever they were makes no difference to me." That passage reminds one that church history tells of a certain Doctor Luther, who according to his own confession didn't become a master overnight. The earlier Luther was corrected by the later. But the first point which the *Lutherische Kirchenzeitung* makes (and doing so seems to give it special satisfaction), namely, that according to the *Reformirten Kirchenzeitung*, our doctrine of election concurs with the teaching of the Reformed, we find to be but a vain at-

tempt. For apart from the consideration that in reference to the doctrine of election one shouldn't speak all at once of the "doctrine of the Reformed Church," we indeed know well enough what this agreement means—namely, it's the first praise of the Formula of Concord on the part of the Reformed in three hundred years; and that can make us neither rejoice nor go astray.

The following article appeared in *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, volume 1881, page 183. What follows is this writer's translation of *Zur Chronik des Prädestinationsstreites*.

## On the Chronicle of the Predestination Conflict

By G. Fritschel

In its pastoral conference held in the late fall, the Wisconsin Synod had discussed the following theses regarding predestination which were composed by Professor Hoenecke, of whom it is said that in the doctrine of predestination he has proceeded much more logically and exactly than Professor Walther.

1. Just as Scripture teaches a general gracious will of God for salvation of all men, so also it certainly teaches a special election of God of individuals to salvation.
2. The eternal election of God is the cause of the faith of the elect. However, the election did not happen in view of the faith of the elect.

One sees (here most decidedly Missouri's doctrine is pronounced) that not the general gracious will of God concerning all men, but the special grace of election of only a certain few is designated as the source from which faith flows forth. The result is that those who are not predestined cannot even come to faith; and one sees therefore that it was completely true, when Prof. Loy explained in *The Lutheran Standard* that the second thesis contained "an open denial of Lutheran doctrine."

The two parties on hand came to no agreement in the pastoral conference. The news trickled down through letters; the outcome of the conference was this: that despite the present differences in doctrine they wanted to remain together in peace, so they agreed to disagree. Thereupon, an explanation was given in the *Gemeinde-Blatt*, in which it was openly pronounced that this was an untruth, and that even those who held fast to the doctrines of all the old Lutheran dogmatists would be excluded from the synod if they did not submit to Walther's doctrine. It said, "In a convention that represents its majority according to the truth (by "truth" is meant the Calvinist error), if after long and pointed discussion, the one opposed is clearly told to cease the unpleasant misleading he had done till now, and until the resumption of the discussion, to study the doctrine under conflict in the light of God's Word, and if it is earnestly and resolutely explained to him, yet he seeks to spread the error further, then nothing remains except to separate oneself." So that means they didn't agree to disagree. Certainly, that is an explanation unable to be misunderstood—a clear explanation that in the Wisconsin Synod the pure Lutheran doctrine shall be condemned and excluded from now on.

The *Reformirte Kirchenzeitung* praises the thesis treated in Milwaukee as being in accord with Scripture, but said at the same time that the Lutherans of the Wisconsin Synod earlier held to a contrary meaning. The reformed author of this article thereby appealed to observations made on a past visit by a previous president and by other prominent pastors of the synod. He indicated at the same time that many people are inclined to let themselves surmise that the Wisconsinites adopted their present position on

the doctrine of election at least in part because "they like to be guided by the Missouri-ans." The *Gemeinde-Blatt* angrily denies that: "Whoever is conversant in the newer and most recent church history will hardly suspect us Wisconsinites of adopting any position because "Missouri" or "Ohio" or any other synod adopted it." The *Columbus Kirchenzeitung* did a shameful deed, that it reprinted that article from the *Reformirte Kirchenzeitung*; and as far as the past president and those other prominent pastors are concerned, even Luther didn't become a master overnight, but the early Luther was corrected by the later Luther" (*Gemeinde-Blatt* 15 Dec 1881). *The Lutheran Standard* made an observation on the point which is certainly true: Men may change in the course of time.

This excerpt is from the *Verhandlungen der Zweiunddreißigsten Versammlung der Deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin und anderen Staaten, gehalten in Gemeinschaft mit der Synode von Minnesota zu La Crosse, Wisconsin, vom 8. bis 15. Juni 1882.*

The essayist for the convention was Prof. A. Graebner who presented the essay: *Thesen über die Bekehrung*. The presentation of the second thesis led to brief explanation of election by Prof. Hoenecke, found on pages 33-34 of the *Proceedings*. What follows is this writer's translation of the minutes which contain Prof. Hoenecke's words, and the synodical reaction.

### Proceedings

After this [presentation of Graebner's second thesis] followed the related explanation of the doctrine of Election by Professor Hoenecke which is reproduced below:

#### "Regarding Eternal Election Holy Scripture Teaches the Following"

Out of his unending mercy for lost mankind, God from eternity resolved to redeem all the world through Christ. We thus reject as a damnable doctrine the teaching of the Calvinists: 1. that God sent his dear Son only for the elect. 2. that God decreed this election without any regard for Christ and his merit. Only the pleasure of his and Christ's will, and Christ's sacrifice, which was offered for all, have determined God with the special decree of Election.

The Bible teaches further, that God has mercy on all, that Christ has come for all, and that he wants all men to be saved. We designate as a damnable doctrine that teaching which says that Christ only shed his blood for the elect.

In the same way Scripture teaches that for Christ's sake and according to the pleasure of his will, God from eternity has elected certain men to salvation. In these men their election serves as the cause from which God works their calling, conversion, and everything else that is necessary for their salvation—so then they certainly are saved; and because Scripture says it, therefore we believe it.

One may ask: Can you make sense of that for yourself? — What then? — God wants to save all, but again: Has he elected only a few who alone are saved? — No, I

can't make sense of that for myself. However, has God revealed his truth to us that we should make sense of it for ourselves? No, exactly the opposite, we believe it as he has revealed it to us. Further, Scripture teaches: 1. that God has the steadfast will to call all men to salvation in Christ; 2. that this call is meant earnestly and sincerely; 3. that the means through which this call happens are always powerful and efficacious. Therefore, the doctrine of the Calvinists is a damnable one that teaches a two-fold call of God, an earnest one for the elect and one that is only a mere pretense for those who are not chosen. We know only one call that God truly intends for all. With it, he calls innumerable men who are not saved on account of the hardness of their hearts. Through the same call he also calls his elect and does nothing in addition; his call is the same for all.

That is Scripture's teaching regarding election.

However, someone could say about this doctrine of election, "Isn't it basically a terrifying thing?" No, we answer, if we simply remain with what Scripture says about it, and do not forget that election happens in Christ. For as with all of the Gospel, this part too is only comforting. Look at Jesus Christ; then you see your election. Don't speculate about the secret counsel, rather cling to Christ and to the Gospel which speaks so comfortingly about the universal gracious will and mercy of God in Christ. Let us suppose that you have been a terrible sinner, a drunk, a fornicator. Does it now in some way say, "Stay away from Christ; you have no part in him; election in no way applies to you?" No, rather much more: Christ has died for all; his blood purifies all; fornicators and tax collectors still enter the kingdom of heaven sooner than Pharisees. In Christ, "whose blood perpetually cries: Mercy, mercy!" there is a wide gate open for all sinners. When it says: "Many are called, but few are chosen," the election of God agrees with his mercy which applies to all. Just believe that you also are chosen. - In this way one should speak regarding election, and in this way also, one should take the word of Scripture as it reads.

A member of the Minnesota Synod also repeated this presentation of the doctrine of predestination in its essential parts.

Now after the aforementioned explanation of the doctrine of predestination was given, a member of the Wisconsin Synod stated that he could not confess the doctrine as explained. In response, it was emphatically stressed, that we are certainly ready to be patient with brothers who are not yet clear on this doctrine-insofar as they do not work against and combat the truth recognized by us. However, though ready to be patient, we still cannot refrain from giving testimony to the truth, nor can we in unionistic fashion—either actual or apparent—keep our attitude secret. It was therefore resolved, to meet in joint session again in the afternoon, and to have each member of both synods be ready to explain his agreement with the reported doctrine, or if he couldn't confess it, to likewise make this publicly known.

In the afternoon session once more it was brought up, that although the given explanation certainly did not in detail enlarge upon each individual point connected to the doctrine of predestination, yet in it one had an explanation of the points especially significant at the present time regarding this doctrine. In view of this, each of those present could take a position on this explanation. After it was stressed yet again, that through this vote the synod did not intend to force out those who were not yet clear enough on this doctrine, as long as they did not combat the correct teaching. Finally, on the ques-

tion of whether a confession to the above explanation should also count as a confession to all that the honorable Missouri Synod had written about this subject, it was explained, that we represent nothing other than what we ourselves have confessed here. On the inquiry which was about to happen the explanation was given that the reported explanation of the doctrine of predestination indeed rejected the teaching that God elected in view of faith. In accordance with the prepared resolution the Wisconsin Synod first took a standing vote on the question of whether the explanation of the doctrine which had been given should be considered as the position of the Synod of Wisconsin on the doctrine of predestination. The outcome was that only two pastors, namely Pastor Klindworth and Pastor Althoff, Teacher Gruber and the delegate of Pastor Klindworth's congregation, could not join in this explanation. Pastor Kleinlein had stated before the vote that he was not yet ready to take a position and so abstained.

After the Wisconsin Synod vote, the members of the Minnesota Synod voted on whether their synod should also state its position on the doctrine of predestination. With twenty-four in favor and twelve against, the chief question was brought to a vote. Thirty-three Synod members rose in favor of the aforementioned explanation of doctrine and two, Pastors Siegrist and Vollman, voted against it.

The following report on the Synod convention of 1882 was printed in the July 1, 1882, edition of *the Gemeinde-Blatt*, Volume 17, Number 21. What follows is this writer's translation of the article entitled *Unsere Synodalversammlung*.

## Our Synodical Convention

By A. Gräbner

"Can two walk together if they are not one with one another?" These words of the prophet Amos were the text which served as the basis for the honorable Vice President Adelberg's opening sermon. He delivered it on the eighth of June in the church at La Cross before the first joint session of this year's convention of the Wisconsin and Minnesota synods. Seven days later, when the last joint session of this year's convention was closed with prayer and its members left, they could take home in thankful hearts the knowledge that through the wonderful grace of God the two synods walk hand in hand with one another, as is pleasing to God—for they are one with one another.

Immediately after the opening service the two synods had an organizational meeting. It was resolved to jointly convene for the morning session and to hear the doctrinal essay at that time. For these common sessions the following were elected to their offices: Rev. Bading, President; Rev. Tirmenstein, Vice President; Rev. Jaekel, Secretary; Rev. Hoyer, Assistant Secretary. Theses on conversion formed the subject of the doctrinal essay. The treatment of this doctrine was extremely important and timely, especially because there are many today who maintain that they are the defenders of Lutheran doctrine, and that we synods of the Synodical Conference have fallen away from the doctrine of our Church and have endeavored to bring false and dangerous things into acceptance in reference to this doctrine. These are the same people who in the doctrine of eternal election of the children of God wander down the wrong path, walking by the false light of human reason. As for the true Lutherans who bow in the obedience of simple faith before the Word of God—these they accuse of secession to Calvinist false doc-

trine.

By looking at the following excerpt from the minutes of the doctrinal essay, one can see that our synods didn't want to fall into either the Calvinistic false doctrine on the one hand, or into reason's discovery of an election in view of faith in the other. The excerpt comes from the minutes of the discussion of the second thesis:

Out of his unending mercy for lost mankind, God from eternity resolved to redeem all the world through Christ. We thus reject as a damnable doctrine the teaching of the Calvinists: 1. that God sent his dear Son only for the elect. 2. that God decreed this election without any regard for Christ and his merit. Only the pleasure of his and Christ's will, and Christ's sacrifice, which was offered for all, have determined God with the special decree of election.

The Bible teaches further, that God has mercy on all, that Christ has come for all, and that he wants all men to be helped. We designate as a damnable doctrine that teaching which says that Christ only shed his blood for the elect.

In the same way Scripture teaches that for Christ's sake and according to the pleasure of his will, God from eternity has elected certain men to salvation. In these men their election serves as the cause from which God works their calling, conversion, and everything else that is necessary for their salvation—so then they certainly are saved; and because Scripture says it, therefore we believe it.

One may ask: Can you make sense of that for yourself – What then? – God wants to save all, but again: Has he elected only a few who alone are saved? – No, I can't make sense of that for myself. However, has God revealed his truth to us that we should make sense of it for ourselves? No, exactly the opposite, we believe it as he has revealed it to us.

Further, Scripture teaches: 1. that God has the steadfast will to call all men to salvation in Christ; 2. that this call is meant earnestly and sincerely; 3. that the means through which this call happens are always powerful and efficacious. Therefore, the doctrine of the Calvinists is a damnable one that teaches a two-fold call of God, an earnest one for the elect and one that is only a mere pretense for those who are not chosen. We know only one call that God truly intends for all. With it, he calls innumerable men who are not saved on account of the hardness of their hearts. Through the same call he also calls his elect and does nothing in addition; his call is the same for all.

That is Scripture's teaching regarding election.

However, someone could say about this doctrine of election, "Isn't it basically a terrifying thing?" No, we answer, if we simply remain with what Scripture says about it, and do not forget that election happens in Christ. For as with all of the Gospel, this part too is only comforting. Look at Jesus Christ; then you see your election. Don't speculate about the secret counsel, rather cling to Christ and to the Gospel which speaks so comfortingly about the universal gracious will and mercy of God in Christ. Let us suppose that you have been a terrible sinner, a drunk, a fornicator.

Does it now in some way say, "Stay away from Christ; you have no part in him; election in no way applies to you?" No, rather much more: Christ has died for all; his blood purifies all; fornicators and tax collectors still enter the kingdom of heaven sooner than Pharisees. In Christ, "whose blood perpetually cries: Mercy, mercy!" there is a wide gate open for all sinners. When it says: "Many are called, but few are chosen," the election of God agrees with his mercy which applies to all. Just believe that you also are chosen. — In this way one should speak regarding election, and in this way also, one should take the word of Scripture as it reads.

After it was explicitly explained that the presentation rejected an election in view of faith, the two synods in turn confessed to this presentation of the doctrine of eternal election by a standing vote. The first question raised was whether the Wisconsin Synod would accept this presentation of the doctrine as its own. A powerful impression was left when the large convention rose silently and full of holy earnestness. Then when those who did not agree with the presented doctrine were requested to stand up, two pastors and a teacher rose. In addition, the delegate from the congregation of one of the two pastors rose. A third pastor had previously explained that he wasn't yet fully clear on the doctrine and therefore he abstained from the voting.

The moving event was repeated when the acting president of the Minnesota Synod placed the questions before his synod. Here as well two pastors stood up as those who did not agree with the presented doctrine. Already during the synodical convention, all four pastors (Klindworth, Althof, Vollmar and Siegrist) explained their separation from the union of their synods.

We do not need to prove that such an open and candid stance for the truth was imperative on the part of our synod in view of current circumstances. If we should and would walk further with one another as brothers, then we must clarify for ourselves the following questions: Are we actually still one with one another in faith and in doctrine? Are we all actually firmly grounded on the old teachings of the Word of God and are we remaining true to the old good confession of our fathers? We have asked those questions, and we rejoice that it has happened...

## ENDNOTES

1. C.F.W. Walther, *The Controversy Concerning Predestination*, trans. A. Cruss (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1881), 5.
2. Edward C. Frederick, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992), 59.
3. J.P. Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, (St. Cloud, Minnesota: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1970), 158.
4. August Pieper, "The Significance of Dr. Adolf Hoenecke for the Wisconsin Synod and American Lutheranism," trans. W. Franzmann, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Volume 88, Number 2, (Spring 1991), 144.
5. *Ibid.*, 144.
6. Koehler, 158.
7. Adolf Hoenecke, "Was kann ich zu meiner Bekehrung bei tragen oder wie werde ich bekehrt?" *Evangelisch Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Vol. 13, Number 5 (1 Nov 1877), 1.

8. Hoenecke, "Wenn Gott allein die Menschen bekehren kann und muß und solches thut ohne des Menschen Zuthun, woher kommt es denn, daß so viele Menschen unbekehrt bleiben?" *Evangelisch Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Vol. 13, Number 9 (1 Jan 1878), 1.
9. *Ibid.*, 2.
10. *Ibid.*, 2.
11. Hoenecke, "Zur Lehre von der Gnadelwahl," *Evangelisch Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Vol. 15, Number 16 (15 Apr 1880), 1-3.
12. Pieper, 145.
13. Carl Meyer, *Moving Frontiers*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 273.
14. Koehler, 158.
15. Walther, "Das Colloquium," *Der Lutheraner*, Volume 37, Number 2 (15 Jan 1881), 1.
16. Pieper, 145.
17. Walther, "Sententiam teneat, linguam corrigan," *Lehre und Wehre*, Volume 37, Number 3 (15 Feb 1881).
18. Roy Arthur Suelflow, "This History of the Missouri Synod during the Second Twenty-Five Years of its Existence," (Ph.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, 1946), 162.
19. *Evangelisch Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Vol. 17, Number 4 (15 Oct 1881), 32.
20. Quoted by Gottfried Fritschel, "Zur Chronik des Prädestinationstreites," *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, 1881, 183.
21. Graebner, "Unsere Pastoralconferenz," *Evangelisch Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Vol. 17, Number 5 (1 Nov 1881), 32.
22. M. Loy, *Lutheran Standard*, Volume XXXIX, Number 45 (12 Nov 1881), 356.
23. Graebner, "Kirchliche Nachrichten," *Evangelisch Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Vol. 17, Number 8 (15 Dec 1881), 62.
24. *Ibid.*, 62.
25. *Ibid.*, 62.
26. *Ibid.*, 62.
27. Fritschel, 183.
28. *Ibid.*, 184.
29. Pieper, 144.
30. Graebner, "Unsere Synodalversammlung," *Evangelisch Lutherisches Gemeinde-Blatt*, Vol. 17, Number 21 (1 Jul 1882), 162.
31. Koehler, 159.
32. Hoenecke, "Verhandlungen der Zweiunddreißigsten Versammlung der Deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin und anderen Staaten, gehalten in Gemeinschaft mit der Synode von Minnesota zu La Crosse, Wisconsin, vom 8. Bis 15. Juni 1882," 33-34.
33. Graebner, "Unsere Synodalversammlung," 162.
34. "Verhandlungen," 34.
35. Graebner, "Unsere Synodalversammlung," 162.
36. Loy, "Wisconsin's Ways," *Lutheran Standard*, July 15, 1882, 2.
37. "Verhandlungen der neunten Versammlung der evangelisch lutherischen Synodal-Konferenz zu Chicago, Illinois, vom 4. bis 10. Oktober 1882," 64.

38. J.L. Neve, *The History of the Lutheran Church in America*, ed. Willard Allbeck, (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1934), 231.
39. Pieper, 145.

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## from the editor ...

by Arnold O. Lehmann

A special thank you to Jonathan Schroeder for the article on Dr. Hoenecke. It was his Senior paper at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, and suggested to us by his professor, whom we also thank.

It may be that many of our readers have little or no knowledge of Dr. Hoenecke. He was born in 1835 in Brandenburg, Germany, and studied theology there. After serving a few years in Switzerland, he was sent to America by the Berlin Mission Society, arriving here in February, 1863, the year that he was accepted in the membership of the Wisconsin Synod, and was assigned to Farmington, Wisconsin, a small German community about eight miles south of Watertown. In 1866 he was called to teach at the fledgling seminary in Watertown, where he remained until 1870, when he accepted a call to St. Matthew Congregation in Milwaukee. An arrangement had been made between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods to have the Watertown Seminary amalgamate with the St. Louis Seminary, and Hoenecke was to be the Wisconsin Synod professor there. Health problems prevented his moving to St. Louis. This seminary arrangement lasted until 1878 when the Wisconsin Synod voted to reestablish its own seminary. Hoenecke accepted the call to teach Dogmatics and Homiletics, but he retained his pastorate at St. Matthew until 1890. He was recognized and regarded as the theological leader of the synod and the guiding hand of the seminary students until his death in January, 1908. One close relative is still living, a grandson, the Rev. Edgar Hoenecke of San Diego, California, who was also a very influential and effective WELS member, especially in synodical mission work, both home and foreign.

The controversy on Election and Conversion (Predestination) played a major part in the historical development of Lutheranism in the Midwest United States in the fourth quarter of the 19th century. It affected virtually all of the synods of the Midwest, as well as joint synodical associations.

Pastor E. Moldehnke, cover photo, was the choice of the synod's president to be the founder and first educator of the proposed educational institution of the synod. He had been called by the synod to be its traveling preacher, a call which he deeply enjoyed, and it appeared that he did not lose that desire while he was professor at the seminary after its establishment in 1863, although there was only one student there the first year, because he "slipped in" short trips from time to time. He did not remain as educator very long, being replaced by Adolf Hoenecke, the subject of our article in this issue.

Professor August L. Graebner was a professor at the Wisconsin Synod's college in Watertown from 1875 to 1878, in which latter year he was called to the re-established synod Seminary in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. Nine years later he was called to the Missouri Synod Seminary in St. Louis to teach church history and later on also dogmatics. He died December 7, 1904. He was recognized as a major contributor to midwest Lutheranism.

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