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# The Predestinarian Controversy and its Effects on the Missouri Synod's Attempts Toward Lutheran Unity

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## Recommended Citation

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*Master of Divinity Thesis*. 23.  
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THE PREDESTINARIAN CONTROVERSY AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE  
MISSOURI SYNOD'S ATTEMPTS TOWARD LUTHERAN UNITY

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A Research Paper Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for elective  
H-200

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by

John C. Wohlrabe, Jr.

May 1981

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Adviser

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....1

I. STRIVING TOWARD ONE ORTHODOX LUTHERAN CHURCH BODY  
IN AMERICA

Missouri desires unity.....2

Free Conferences.....3

The General Council.....5

Colloquies.....7

The Synodical Conference.....7

Attempts at merger.....9

Conclusions on the attempts toward unity.....10

II. AS THE SUBJECT OF PREDESTINATION AROSE

Early papers on the doctrine of predestination in  
the Missouri Synod.....14

The Fritschel brothers.....16

Meeting of the Western District of the Missouri Synod,  
1877.....17

Criticism is again brought forth.....18

III. THE PREDESTINARIAN CONTROVERSY BREAKS INTO THE OPEN

Altes und Neues.....25

Meetings are called.....26

The synods meet alone.....28

IV. THE THEOLOGY OF THE PREDESTINARIAN CONTROVERSY EXAMINED

As the subject of predestination was discussed within  
Christendom.....33

Statements from the controversy within American  
Lutheranism.....35

Theological conclusions concerning the Predestinarian  
Controversy.....38

V. THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE AFTER THE EXPLOSION OF THE  
PREDESTINARIAN CONTROVERSY

The 1882 convention of the Synodical Conference.....43

Missouri and Wisconsin relations.....44

The Norwegian Synod withdraws.....45

Missouri's relations with other Lutheran bodies.....47

VI. AN ANALYSIS OF THE PREDESTINARIAN CONTROVERSY AND ITS  
EFFECTS ON MISSOURI SYNOD'S UNITY ATTEMPTS

Factors that contributed to the establishment of unity.....51

Factors that contributed to the disruption of unity.....53

Effects of the Predestinarian Controversy on Missouri's basis for fellowship.....	57
Effects of the Predestinarian Controversy on Missouri's attempts toward Lutheran unity.....	58
APPENDIX A	
Missouri's Thirteen Theses.....	63
APPENDIX B	
Ohio's Four Theses.....	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	67

## INTRODUCTION

In the Preface to the Augsburg Confession we read:

We are prepared...to discuss...in so far as this can honorably be done, such practical and equitable ways as may restore unity. Thus the matters at issue between us...may be discussed amicably and charitably, our differences may be reconciled, and we may be united in one, true religion, even as we are all under one Christ and should confess and contend for Christ.

This statement truly exemplifies the means and the goal of the Missouri Synod in its striving for Lutheran unity. Yet, this goal was never reached. A controversy arose within American Lutheranism, the effects of which can still be seen today in terms of synodical relationships, alignments, and theological understandings. It does us well to closely examine this controversy so that we may better understand our own position and learn from our past mistakes.

J.T. Mueller put it well in his article entitled "The Predestinarian Controversy" as it appeared in Ebenezer:

The Predestinarian Controversy is, no doubt, the most important and the most deplorable of all conflicts that perturbed the American Lutheran Church. It blasted Dr. Walther's hope of accomplishing his proudest task -- "the final realization of one united Evangelical Lutheran Church of North America."

This paper will attempt to set forth important facts involved in the Predestinarian Controversy and then analyze its effects on the Missouri Synod's attempts toward Lutheran unity. One must realize that it is very difficult to set forth a totally unbiased account and analysis. Yet, I have sincerely tried to give an honest presentation while holding true to my own convictions.

## I. STRIVING TOWARD ONE ORTHODOX LUTHERAN CHURCH BODY IN AMERICA

### MISSOURI DESIRES UNITY

From its very conception, the Missouri Synod fostered the idea of Lutheran unity. This becomes quite clear when one looks at the conferences held prior to the organization of Synod. One could even be so bold as to say that the very founding of the Missouri Synod was a union effort, i.e., a group of Lutherans from Missouri joined with Lutherans from Indiana and Ohio.<sup>1</sup> Even before he became the first president of Synod, C.F.W. Walther expressed his openness to other Christians in Der Lutheraner, September 7th, 1842:

The Lutheran Church is not limited to those people who from their youth have borne the name "Lutheran" or have taken that name later on. To every person who honestly submits to the whole written Word of God, bears the true faith in our dear Lord Jesus Christ in his heart, and confesses it before the world, we extend our hand, regard him also as a fellow believer, as a brother in Christ, as a member of our church, no matter in which sect he may lie sealed and captive.<sup>2</sup>

Walther held that there was one true, invisible church made up of only those who truly believe in Christ. Yet, the marks of the true church are that God's Word is purely preached and the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, Missouri's desire for unity did not stand without principle. The first Constitution of the Synod, in its paragraph on conditions of membership, maintained:

acceptance of Holy Scripture, both the Old and New Testament, as the written Word of God and as the only rule and norm of faith and life.<sup>4</sup>

Synod also subscribed to the Lutheran symbols "because" they are in complete agreement with Scripture. Walther urged an unwavering subscription to the Confessions, and so expressed himself in Der Lutheraner, January 23, 1849:

Upon the doctrine contained in these books, and upon none other, the first Lutherans were united in ecclesiastical fellowship. Upon this book of confession, therefore, the Lutheran Church is founded, for through it she has come into being, and through it she distinguishes herself from all factions and communions in Christendom. Therefore he who says: "I want to be a Lutheran" confesses thereby and professes his adherence to the symbolical books and to the doctrines contained in them. And he who says that he wants to be a Lutheran pastor confesses therewith not only that he holds the articles of faith in these books to be true and right but also that he will preach them, defend them, and seek to spread them as God gives him grace and power to do so.<sup>5</sup>

The Missouri Synod deeply desired unity - true unity based on agreement in doctrine and practice. As the leader of the Missouri Synod, Walther held the cherished dream of the formation of one large, united orthodox Lutheran Church on American soil.<sup>6</sup> In attempting to carry out this dream, Walther used three basic methods: "free conferences" (1856-1859); "colloquies" (1866-1872); and the activities of the Synodical Conference.

#### FREE CONFERENCES

When the founders of the Missouri Synod organized their church body in 1847, confessionalism had reached a low ebb in other parts of American Lutheranism. The General Synod (organized in 1820), in its efforts to reinterpret Lutheranism on the American scene, "became somewhat guilty of an indefiniteness of character and purpose."<sup>7</sup> Thus, Dr. S.S. Schmucker, Samuel Sprecher, and Dr. Benjamin Kurtz of the General Synod issued an attempt to modify the Augsburg Confession called the "Definite Platform" (1855), which left out doctrines that might prove disagreeable to the rest of Protestant America. This platform of "American Lutheranism" and its efforts to eliminate confessional standards spurred Walther into calling for "free conferences."<sup>8</sup>

For Walther, confessional subscription was not only a matter of principle and the obligation of all who desired to be called Lutheran,

but the Symbols also served as the basis for efforts to unite Lutherans in America. After the first free conference, Walther wrote in the October 21, 1856 issue of Der Lutheraner:

For acceptance of the Augsburg Confession with reservations is no acceptance of the confession but a repudiation of it. For that reason we cannot expect salvation for our church from the General Synod. An outward union, as outlined by a constitution, is not at all the thing we need. If one single Evangelical Lutheran Church, strong in unity, is to arise here, it can arise only through the unity of faith, through the awakening of the consciousness of the presence of such unity, and through rallying around one confession as around a treasure which must be mutually defended and preserved.<sup>9</sup>

Walther's goal and course of action were set forth in his invitation for "free conferences" which appeared in the January 1856 issue of Lehre und Wehre:

So we venture openly to inquire: would not meetings, held at intervals, by such members of churches as call themselves Lutheran and acknowledge and confess without reservation that the Unaltered Augsburg Confession of 1530 is the pure and true statement of the doctrine of sacred Scripture, and is also their own belief, promote and advance the efforts towards the final establishment of one single Evangelical Lutheran Church of America?<sup>10</sup>

Here we can clearly see that Walther sincerely hoped for unity through confessional subscription and these conferences. The conferences were to be free in a two-fold sense: first, they were to be open to all Lutherans who accepted the Augsburg Confession without reservation; and second, its participants were not officially to represent their church bodies but rather, appear as individuals. Walther believed that only after there was assurance of unity in the faith could there be unity in organization and a conference with official representation to bring it about.<sup>11</sup>

Only four "free conferences" were held: the first in Columbus, Ohio (October 1856); the second in Pittsburgh, Pa. (October and November 1857); the third in Cleveland, Ohio (August 1858); and the fourth in



Fort Wayne, Ind. (July 1859). All of the "free conferences" were opened with some form of devotional exercise. The devotions may have varied but usually included a hymn, a prayer and the confession of the Apostle's Creed. Walther could not attend the fourth meeting because he was in Germany, nor could he attend the scheduled fifth conference because of illness. Walther's illness and the reluctance of the Ohio Synod to have its representatives attend a fifth conference helped bring these efforts to an end.<sup>13</sup>

### THE GENERAL COUNCIL

As mentioned earlier, the General Synod was organized in 1820 and held as its aim the ultimate union of all Lutherans and Lutheran synods. Yet, from its very beginning, conflicting doctrinal views were tolerated which ultimately led to disruption. In 1860, the Scandinavians withdrew because of laxity in doctrine, and in 1868 Dr. Charles Porterfield Krauth, of the General Synod, issued his "Fraternal Address," proposing the organization of a new church body based on distinctively Lutheran principles. A preliminary meeting at Reading, Pennsylvania was arranged for December 11-14 at which delegates from thirteen synods participated. At this meeting, "Fundamental Principles of Faith and Church Polity" were drawn up and an organizational meeting was set for the following year in Fort Wayne.<sup>14</sup>

Rev. J.A.F.W. Mueller was the representative for the Missouri Synod at Reading and presented a letter prepared by Walther and Sihler. The letter advised against the organization of a new general body at this time and argued in favor of "free conferences" at which differences in doctrinal views might be discussed and unity of doctrine achieved. The group at Reading disagreed with the "free conference" idea and suggested that the Missouri Synod send delegates to its next meeting with the privileges of debate.<sup>15</sup>

In 1867, the representatives from various Lutheran bodies met at Fort Wayne and the General Council was formed. The Missouri Synod was not officially represented at this meeting but the Presidents from the four districts of Synod addressed a letter to the General Council defining Synod's position:

In view of the relation we sustain toward different members of the General Council in reference to doctrine and churchly practice, we must be apprehensive that the consideration and discussion of differences still existing in the convention of the General Council might give rise to the reflection that we intended to interrupt the bringing about of unity, and are therefore fearful lest our participation instead of leading to an agreement, might be productive of greater alienation.<sup>16</sup>

Walther voiced his opinion of the General Council in a letter:

I do not regret that I didn't go to Reading. It would have been extremely painful for me to meet with such false spirits as the people from the Iowa and Canada Synods.<sup>17</sup>

Missouri was hesitant and refused to join the General Council because of the Council's willingness to accept the Iowa Synod, with its lax view of the Confessions and "open questions", not to mention the difference on the doctrine of the ministry and former problems with Loehe. Iowa was considered to hold to a new "progressive theology" and had openly attacked Missouri in its publications.<sup>18</sup>

When the General Council offered to hold "free conferences" in connection with a convention, Missouri declined on the grounds that a "free conference" can only be free if the members come as individuals and not as official representatives.<sup>19</sup>

The Ohio Synod sent delegates to the General Council meeting at Fort Wayne, but refused to join the organization because the body had not declared itself on four points: chiliasm, altar fellowship, pulpit fellowship, and secret societies.<sup>20</sup> When the General Council failed to act decisively, the Ohio Synod withdrew from the movement. The Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois Synods had joined the Council in 1867,

but because of the unclarified four points, Wisconsin withdrew in 1868 and Minnesota and Illinois followed suit in 1870.<sup>21</sup>

### COLLOQUIES

A series of seven colloquies between the Missouri Synod and other Lutheran bodies led to the formation of the Synodical Conference. Colloquies differed from "free conferences" in that colloquies were held between Missouri and a specific synod rather than individuals from varied synods. Colloquies were conducted with the Buffalo Synod in 1866; the Iowa Synod in 1867; the Ohio and Wisconsin Synod in 1868; the Illinois Synod in 1869; and the Minnesota Synod and English Lutherans of Missouri in 1872.<sup>22</sup> Since 1855, several meetings with the Norwegian Synod had taken place and complete doctrinal accord was reached.<sup>23</sup> The colloquies with Buffalo and Iowa reached an impasse on the doctrine of the church and the ministry (with Iowa, chiliasm, the doctrines of Sunday and the doctrine of the Antichrist also became a problem). Yet, the other colloquies proved very fruitful and "the door was now open for a federation of synods which pledged itself unequivocally to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions."<sup>24</sup>

### THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE

The colloquies prepared the way for further union, and it was the Ohio Synod which took the first step. In June 1870, the Eastern District of the Ohio Synod resolved to acknowledge the Missouri Synod as an orthodox Evangelical Lutheran Synod and to appoint a committee to meet with Missouri. At the delegate convention of the Joint Synod of Ohio, October 5-12, 1870 in Dayton, Ohio, a committee was elected to meet with

committees of other synods and an invitation was issued to the Missouri, Wisconsin, Illinois and Norwegian Synods to meet in conference. Two preliminary conferences were held in 1871. In June 1872, the Synodical Conference was organized at the church of Rev. J. Bading in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.<sup>25</sup> At the meeting prior to the formation of the Synodical Conference, the participating synods adopted a paper prepared by Prof. F.A. Schmidt entitled "Memorial, containing a thorough presentation of the reasons why the synods uniting in the Synodical Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of North America have not been able to join one of the already existing organizations of synods bearing the Lutheran name."<sup>26</sup> In subsequent conventions of the Conference, a series of theses by Pastor Wilhelm Sihler of the Missouri Synod were read and adopted stating that fellowship and union required agreement not only on the doctrines of the Confessions, but on the doctrinal conclusions implicit in their teaching and on the proper church practice in accord with the faith confessed.<sup>27</sup>

That the Synodical Conference desired union cannot be over-emphasized. This fellowship and union was to be based on confessional and Scriptural adherence, as can be seen in Article II of the Synodical Conference constitution:

The Synodical Conference accepts the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as God's Word and the Confession of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of 1580, called the Concordia, as its own.

To stress the ultimate goal of uniting all Lutherans in America, Article III was included (probably through Walther's influence):

To give outward expression to the unity of spirit of the respective synods; to encourage and strengthen one another in faith and in confession; to further the unity in doctrine and practice and to remove whatever might threaten to disturb this unity; to cooperate in matters of mutual interest; to strive for the establishment of synodical boundaries according to territorial lines, assuming in advance that the language does not separate; to unite all Lutheran synods in America in one orthodox American Lutheran Church.<sup>28</sup>

Yet, the Synodical Conference had only limited powers and with reference to the authority of the new federation the constitution stated:

The Synodical Conference is only an advisory body with respect to all things concerning which the synods constituting it have not given it authoritative power. Only the totality of all synods represented in the Synodical Conference shall decide what church bodies cannot be received into membership thereof until all synods of the Synodical Conference have given their consent. The Synodical Conference shall see to it that conferences attended by pastors of the various synods be organized and held, the District Presidents taking the initiative. Without the consent of all the synods of the Synodical Conference none of its synods shall be permitted to enter into any church connection with other church bodies.<sup>29</sup>

#### ATTEMPTS AT MERGER

As soon as the Synodical Conference was formed, Walther and others began working toward a union. Initial talks were frustrated due mainly to the difference of opinion in regard to the outward aspects of the church. Wisconsin differed with Missouri in this area and was also fearful of being swallowed up by her larger sister.<sup>30</sup> Both Missouri and Ohio pushed for the formation of "state synods" to alleviate the competition as each synod tried to get new congregations to join its body. A committee was appointed in 1875 and was to report to the 1876 convention of the Synodical Conference. The committee first recommended the formation of one large synod, but this was voted down. Yet, the state synods were again recommended and received general support. The 1876 convention also treated the idea of a joint seminary for all the members of the Synodical Conference. At the 1877 convention of the Synodical Conference, individual synods reported on their body's reactions to the state synod and the joint seminary plan. Both the Minnesota and the Wisconsin Synods expressed dissatisfaction and reluctance. To keep the discussion going, another committee was appointed consisting of all of the Wisconsin

delegates and representatives from the other synods.<sup>32</sup>

In 1878, a second attempt to form state synods began. The new committee recommended that all of the synods organize into three larger synods which would in turn form two joint seminaries. With this plan, the smaller synods were not afraid of being absorbed by either Missouri or Ohio and Wisconsin received equal prestige with Missouri and Ohio.<sup>33</sup> All looked well as the individual synods took the plan back to their respective church bodies, but it was not meant to be. Beginning in 1878, building through 1879, and exploding in 1880, a controversy over the doctrine of predestination rocked the foundations of the Synodical Conference and destroyed Walther's hope of one united, orthodox Lutheran body in America.

#### CONCLUSIONS ON THE ATTEMPTS TOWARD UNITY

Some have accused the Missouri Synod of being separatistic. Yet, considering Walther's great desire for Lutheran unity and the persistent efforts of Missouri and other synods, one must conclude that this statement is far from accurate. Missouri strove for a unity that was meaningful. In a time when some were willing to compromise so much for the sake of pseudo-unity, Missouri held firm to the principles of true fellowship. This could only be achieved by an unequivocal pledge by all parties to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

In order to bring this true unity about, "free conferences", colloquies, and the Synodical Conference were employed. Only by sitting down and discussing doctrinal views in a spirit of Christian love could this be accomplished. To aid in this effort, devotions were held before the conferences. In the spirit of the Preface to the Augsburg Confession, Walther and the other Missourians were willing to pray with any Lutheran

who was honestly willing to discuss his faith in order to achieve true Christian fellowship.

Once fellowship was attained and the Synodical Conference was formed we will note that ultimate unity in the form of merger did not take place. If one was to try and pin-point certain reasons, it might be said that Missouri presented an over zealous approach (if that can be possible in striving for unity) which intimidated the smaller Lutheran synods. It might be said that the Wisconsin Synod was somewhat stubborn and arrogant in their refusal to go along with the state synod and joint seminary plan (yet aren't we all stubborn, each in our own way). Whatever the reason, it really doesn't matter because a disturbance arose within the Conference which aroused such bitterness and animosity that, even if a merger had taken place, it may not have survived the Predestinarian Controversy.

I. END NOTES

<sup>1</sup>August Suelflow, "Walther's Significant Contributions to Lutheranism in America" Proceedings of the 11th Convention of the Montana District, October 4-5, 1961, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>3</sup>For a good treatment of Walther's "Kirche und Amt" see Seth Erlandsson, Church Fellowship - What Does the Bible Say, translated by S.W. Becker, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1979), pp. 8-21.

<sup>4</sup>August Suelflow, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>6</sup>W.G. Polack, The Building of a Great Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1941), p. 117.

<sup>7</sup>August Suelflow, p. 14.

<sup>8</sup>Carl S. Meyer, ed., Moving Frontiers (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), p. 248.

<sup>9</sup>August Suelflow, p. 20.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>11</sup>John H. Tietjen, Which Way to Lutheran Unity? (St. Louis: Clayton Publishing House, reprinted 1975). p. 60.

<sup>12</sup>August Suelflow, pp. 37-38.

<sup>13</sup>Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 248.

<sup>14</sup>Polack, p. 107.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>17</sup>August Suelflow, p. 39.

<sup>18</sup>Roy A Suelflow, The History of the Missouri Synod During the Second Twenty-Five Years of Its Existence 1872-1897, A thesis submitted to the faculty of Concordia Siminary, Department of Historical Theology, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Theology, January 1946, pp. 11-13.

<sup>19</sup>Polack, p. 110.

<sup>20</sup>These four points were held as "open questions" by the Iowa Synod.

<sup>21</sup>Polack, pp.110-111.

<sup>22</sup>August Suelflow, p. 40.

<sup>23</sup>Polack, p. 112.



<sup>24</sup>August Suelflow, pp. 41-42.

<sup>25</sup>Polack, pp. 112-114.

<sup>26</sup>Friedrich August Schmidt was born January 3, 1837 in Leutenberg, Thuringia, Germany. He came to the United States as a child and attended parish school at Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Mo. Walther confirmed Schmidt and also taught him in 1854 when he entered Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In 1857, Schmidt accepted a call to a congregation in Eden, New York and from 1859-1861 he served an English speaking congregation in Baltimore, Md. In 1861, Schmidt was called by the Norwegian Synod to become teacher of German and English at their college in Halfway Creek, Wisc. Schmidt was made the professor of the Norwegian Synod at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis in 1872. Here he served until 1876 when he was transferred to the Norwegian Synod's new seminary at Madison, Wisconsin. Hans R. Haug, The Predestinarian Controversy in the Lutheran Church in North America, Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Religion of Temple University, Philadelphia, 1967, p. 45.

<sup>27</sup>Tietjen, pp. 69-71.

<sup>28</sup>August Suelflow, pp. 42-43.

<sup>29</sup>Walter A. Baeppler, A Century of Grace (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 161.

<sup>30</sup>David Schmel, The History of the Relationship of the Wisconsin Synod to the Missouri Synod until 1925, A thesis submitted to the faculty of Concordia Siminary, Department of Historical Theology, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Sacred Theology, June 1958, p. 30.

<sup>31</sup>The first plan for state synods urged the smaller synods to join either Missouri or Ohio who would then further establish, organize, and then join together. This plan was rejected by the smaller synods who feared they would be swallowed up by Missouri in its drive for expansion.

<sup>32</sup>Roy Suelflow, pp. 43-60.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

## II. AS THE SUBJECT OF PREDESTINATION AROSE

### EARLY PAPERS ON THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION IN THE MISSOURI SYNOD

The doctrine of predestination was not a subject that just popped up in the late 1870's within the Synodical Conference. In the first volume of Lehre und Wehre, 1855, Prof. Sihler wrote "Nineteen theses on the doctrine of the eternal foreordination and the merciful election unto eternal life." In his article, Sihler used the phrase "intuitu fidei" (in view of faith) in explaining how God predestined man. In Thesis 10 Sihler writes:

Foreseen faith is not the cause of election, for we are elected not because of faith, but because of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

It appears that when Sihler used the phrase "intuitu fidei," he did so in the sense that God elected us "through" faith. But, in the second volume of Lehre and Wehre, there appeared a long dissertation by Rev. O. Fuerbringer entitled "Concerning the Doctrine of Election and Several Matters Thereto Pertaining." In his article, Fuerbringer proposes a view which later the Missouri Synod rejected:

It must be held fast above all else that election is in the first place neither the foundation, nor the means, nor the condition of salvation; for these are Christ, His Gospel and the faith given thereby. In the second place, election is not the cause of our faith, in so far as faith would be the effect of election; for the Word works faith.<sup>2</sup>

Although certain men in the early period of Missouri Synod history used the "intuitu fidei" phrase, Walther himself did not like this expression. In his edition of Baier's dogmatics, Walther usually added notes and quotations from other dogmaticians for reinforcement. Under the subject of predestination, when Baier used "intuitu fidei," Walther omitted such additions, thus showing that he had no sympathy for that

section of Baier.<sup>3</sup>

In 1861, Lehre und Wehre published a series of articles entitled "Theologische Axiome" containing sentences of Lutheran dogmaticians. The compiler of these sentences is not mentioned, but it probably was Walther because in the selections on predestination, the "intuitu fidei" phrase is avoided. In 1863, Lehre und Wehre published an article by Walther entitled "A few Remarks about a New Apology of the Reformed Church." In this article, Walther rejects both the double-predestination of Calvinism and the semi-Pelagianism of those who use the "intuitu fidei" phrase.<sup>4</sup>

Why Walther did not take Sihler and Fuerbringer to task for their early articles on predestination is hard to say. It has been suggested that Walther let it go for the time being so that nothing would disturb the early formation and organization of the Missouri Synod. Whatever the reason, both Sihler and Fuerbringer soon came over to Walther's side and were staunch supporters of his position.

In June 1868, the Northern District of Synod assembled for convention in Milwaukee. At the convention, Rev. J.A. Huegli presented the first part of a paper entitled "Twenty-four Theses concerning the doctrine of good works on the basis of the doctrine of free will, election and justification." He continued with the second part of the paper in the 1871 meeting of the Northern District. Huegli made specific statements about election and the concept of "intuitu fidei":

In God there are (fallen) no conditions; yet conditions are claimed for God when it is said that He elected in view of faith... Faith is indeed the middle link; but when it is said that God elected in view of faith, then faith is not the middle link, but a condition. And however sharply we may distinguish, a certain causality will still be ascribed to faith. But we find no statement in the Scriptures saying that we are saved for the sake of faith. Faith is a means not a cause. Christ is the foundation of our salvation, even when He is not apprehended by faith.<sup>5</sup>

## THE FRITSCHEL BROTHERS

Prof. Sigmund Fritschel of the Iowa Synod was said to have been present at the 1868 convention of the Northern District, although his name does not appear among the names of guests present. Sigmund then made a report of Huegli's presentation to his brother Gottfried. It is said that the two brothers became alarmed at the doctrine that was coming out of Missouri.<sup>6</sup> After Huegli had continued his report in the 1871 convention, the Fritschels proceeded to produce numerous articles, published for the most part in Brobst's Theologische Monatshefte, dealing with election, justification and other related doctrines.<sup>7</sup>

Walther was never one to stand idly by and so articles were exchanged in Brobst's magazine, criticisms and counter criticisms, as Walther wrote under the pen-name "Gottlieb Gnadekind." The many other differences between Walther and the Fritschels did not help matters any. Differences on the doctrines of Sunday, the office of the ministry, chiliasm and "open questions", as well as Missouri's refusal to join the General Council because of Iowa's participation, all caused considerable hard feelings and made it easy to come to blows over election. It wasn't long before others joined in and Prof. Stelhorn of the Missouri Synod defended Walther's position in Brobst's magazine under the pen-name "Interpres."<sup>8</sup> In the forward of Lehre und Wehre in 1874, Prof. F.A. Schmidt rejected Fritschel's theory of human co-operation in the process of man's conversion.<sup>9</sup> The arguments continued for several years and the language became so caustic and derogatory that Brobst was losing subscribers. Eventually Brobst announced that henceforth all articles on election would be censored and personal remarks removed before publication, and so the argument subsided.<sup>10</sup>

MEETING OF THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF THE MISSOURI SYNOD, 1877

Prof. Walther had been giving a series of lectures at the conventions of the Western District since 1874 entitled "The Doctrine of the Lutheran Church Alone Gives All Glory to God - an Irrefutable Proof That Its Doctrine Is the Only True Doctrine." Each convention Walther would cover different doctrines under that main theme, and in 1877 he presented "Also in the Doctrine of Election our Evangelical Lutheran Church Gives all Glory to God Alone." Walther divided his paper into theses, and under thesis three he stated:

The Lutheran Church teaches that it is false and incorrect when it is taught that not the merit of God and the most holy merits of Christ alone, but that in us also there is a cause of the election of God for the sake of which God has elected us unto eternal life.

Walther further divided thesis three stating:

Nothing in the human being can in any way be considered a cause which would induce God to elect anyone to salvation, neither: 1) the work of human beings in sanctification, 2) nor the proper use of the means of grace, 3) nor the decision of the human being to accept grace, 4) nor the desire of a person to be saved, nor his prayer, 5) nor the non-resistance of a person, 6) nor the faith of a person.<sup>11</sup>

The Proceedings of the Western District containing Walther's essay were on the market in December 1877. In 1878, the Synodical Conference met and accepted the printed Proceedings of the Western District convention of 1877 as doctrinally acceptable.<sup>12</sup>

At this time all looked well within the Synodical Conference. On January 25, 1878, the Joint Synod of Ohio conferred upon Prof. Walther the degree of Doctor of Divinity.<sup>13</sup> At the 1878 convention of the Synodical Conference, the new draft for the state synod and joint seminary plan was looked upon quite favorably. In the spirit of good will, Missouri extended a call to Prof. Matthias Loy of the Ohio Synod to fill the

English chair at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Loy did not accept, but Ohio called Rev. C.A. Frank of the Missouri Synod who accepted a position to their seminary at Columbus.<sup>14</sup> Because Ohio did not raise any objections to Walther's position on predestination, neither when it joined the Synodical Conference, nor at subsequent conventions, one of three things must be concluded: either Ohio agreed with Missouri up to this point, or Ohio considered the deviations only negligible and not worth mentioning, or Ohio had not studied the matter and had no opinion.

#### CRITICISM IS AGAIN BROUGHT FORTH

It seems that things can never remain quiet for very long, and in a world where the devil is hard at work this is all too apparent. Soon after Walther's presentation at the 1877 Western District Convention, Prof. Asperheim of the Norwegian Seminary in Madison remarked at a pastoral conference that the Missouri Synod suffers from weakness and imperfections like all other human institutions. Well, in true humility, the Missouri brethren probably should have let this comment slide. But instead, Asperheim was assailed for his remark and challenged to prove his charges. This he did in four points: 1) Missouri maintains dogmatic eccentricity; 2) Missouri excludes faith as a factor of election, placing itself in a dangerous middle position between Calvinistic doctrine and the Lutheran teaching as explained by later dogmaticians, e.g. Gerhard; 3) Missouri maintains a traditionalism that neglects newer exegetical tools; 4) Missouri lacks a respect for the work of God accomplished by Missouri's opponents.<sup>15</sup> Prof. F.A. Schmidt staunchly defended Missouri's position against his colleague, Asperheim, in February 1878.<sup>16</sup> In fact, it is said that Schmidt was so upset by Asperheim's attack on his former

teacher and colleague, Walther, that Schmidt resigned from his post at Madison.<sup>17</sup> The Norwegian Synod authorities soon took steps against Asperheim and he resigned while Prof. Schmidt remained at Madison.<sup>18</sup>

The 1878 convention of the Missouri Synod was important for many reasons, some of which have been covered earlier. Yet, a chief concern for the delegates was the work load of their Synodical President, seminary president, and chief editor, Dr. C.F.W. Walther. Walther was not getting any younger and had been urged to write a dogmatic text, a "Dogmatik."<sup>19</sup> At the 1878 convention, H.C. Schwan was elected President of Synod. In addition, Missouri sought to call a new systematics professor for Concordia Seminary who would be the understudy of Dr. Walther. There were many capable men available for this position and one of them was Prof. F.A. Schmidt. On a card addressed to Pastor Wunder, May 7, 1878, Schmidt indicated his willingness to serve as Walther's colleague.<sup>20</sup> Who Walther's choice for this position was, is hard to say. In volume 30 of Lehre und Wehre, Walther spoke of getting Schmidt back to St. Louis.<sup>21</sup> Yet, an unpublished letter by Walther to Thuland tells us that Walther wanted Stoeckhard who was not even nominated at the May 1878 convention.<sup>22</sup>

Schmidt was not elected to the position of Walther's understudy, he wasn't even nominated. Franz Pieper received the position and later became president of Concordia Seminary and President of Synod. Prof. F.A. Schmidt was quite upset by this turn of events and soon began a controversy that would tear the Synodical Conference apart. That there was a connection between the professorial selection and the controversy is hard to say, but some have drawn this conclusion. Consider a letter by a contemporary of Walther and Schmidt named Hochstetter:

A few days later the delegate synod was held, and Prof. Schmidt found himself disappointed in his expectations. Since at that

time he showed himself willing to accept a professorship in the Missouri Synod, evidently he had long since read the Western District Proceedings of the Year 1877. However, at that time he did not protest with one word against these Proceedings. Only afterwards, when he believed himself wronged especially by Prof. Walther (for it was to him, as is shown below, that Schmidt attributed his not being elected), he set out to attack the doctrine of election contained in that report as Calvinistic, yes, even crypto-Calvinistic...The failure to be elected professor brought this about.<sup>23</sup>

An unnamed writer in the Lutheran Witness, June 21, 1882, wrote:

Among the names that were presented for nomination was also that of Prof. F.A. Schmidt, but he was not nominated because the Synod held it uncharitable to deprive the Norwegian Synod of his service. Prof. Schmidt had intimated that he would accept the call, if he could be made the Synod's choice. That he felt rather disappointed when this did not come about, is natural. Now, some one among his friends or enemies informed Prof. Schmidt that Dr. Walther had prevented his nomination by putting on such a face and shrugging up his shoulders in such a manner, when Prof. Schmidt's name was mentioned, as to indicate he would not like Schmidt as a colleague. Though there is not a word of truth in this, Schmidt took it for granted and - now comes the worst feature - took it also as an affronting challenge of his (Schmidt's) orthodoxy, which he was bound to avenge.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, Schmidt and his adherents claim that two months before the election of the new professor, Schmidt had criticized the Western District Report of 1877 in private before his Norwegian friends. The truth of the whole matter is not easy to determine. Yet, Schmidt did admit that he was somewhat disgruntled by the fact that he was not elected to the Concordia Seminary professorship.<sup>25</sup>

On January 2, 1879, Schmidt wrote Walther presenting his objections to the Western District Report of 1877, stating at the same time: "I can no longer go with you...I dare no longer keep silence."<sup>26</sup> Walther did not answer Schmidt's letter right away and Schmidt became somewhat irritated, so some of Schmidt's Norwegian colleagues wrote to Walther concerning this matter. Walther answered Schmidt on February 8, 1879, after which Schmidt replied:

Your silence indeed pained me very much, not because I thought I had therewith received a testimony of heterodoxy - that I received



sufficiently at the convention of the Delegate Synod.<sup>27</sup>

Several other men sided with Schmidt in his attack on Missouri's doctrine of predestination. Among them was Schmidt's brother-in-law, Pastor Allwardt, of the Missouri Synod.<sup>28</sup> Surprisingly, another Missourian, who had defended Walther earlier, began attacking Walther's position. This was Prof. F.W. Stellhorn.<sup>29</sup> John Philip Koehler, in his History of the Wisconsin Synod intimates that, as early as 1873, at a pastoral conference of the Wisconsin District of the Missouri Synod, Stellhorn had set forth ideas of election and conversion based on psychological and anthropological grounds. Stellhorn had reached the conclusion that some measure of self-determination had to be posited so that man's moral responsibility could be psychologically upheld.<sup>30</sup> This took place only a few years after Stellhorn had condemned the Fritschel brother's position in Brobst's magazine.

In July 1879, Prof. Loy of the Ohio Synod wrote Walther questioning his position that a person could be certain of his election.<sup>31</sup> Loy held that if we say this, then we deny that we can fall from grace for God has not actually revealed those who are the elect. Loy also stated:

Is it not an unscriptural solution of the mystery to say that God elected some and therefore they are saved, while all others are lost, instead of saying that, God wants all to be saved, but some resist stubbornly and therefore are lost, leaving the difficulty that arises unsolved. To prevent the evil appearance of synergism is not the appearance of a worse evil adopted?<sup>32</sup>

After Schmidt had written Walther, the Norwegian Synod professor notified President Schwan of his intention to make public his objections if conditions remained as they were.<sup>33</sup> Schwan invited Schmidt and Allwardt to a conference after the 1879 Synodical Conference Convention in Columbus, Ohio and Schmidt was requested:

earnestly to observe the agreement of the Synodical Conference by which its members were pledged not to attack one another

publicly until every means of adjusting differences in doctrine had been exhausted.<sup>34</sup>

Immediately after the 1879 Synodical Conference Convention a colloquy was held where Walther conferred with Schmidt, Allwardt and others about their differences. Nothing was settled at this meeting, but Schmidt agreed to remain silent until another colloquy could be held.<sup>35</sup> Walther gave Fuerbringer the responsibility of negotiating for another meeting and plans were set for a colloquy in Madison, Wisconsin. But before this meeting could be held, Walther continued his presentation of his thesis "Also in the Doctrine of Election our Evangelical Lutheran Church Gives all Glory to God Alone" at the 1879 meeting of the Western District.<sup>36</sup> In this report, Walther spent a considerable amount of time defending his position on predestination and spoke out against "certain people."<sup>37</sup> Even though Walther had mentioned no one by name in his presentation, Prof. F.A. Schmidt considered the 1879 report of the Western District a personal affront and a declaration of war.

II. END NOTES

<sup>1</sup>George H. Schodde, ed. The Error of Modern Missouri: Its Inception, Development, and Refutation (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1897), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>3</sup>Roy Suelflow, p. 97a.

<sup>4</sup>Haug, pp. 78-89.

<sup>5</sup>Schodde, p. 65.

<sup>6</sup>Gottfried Fritschel was born December 19, 1836 in Nuremberg, Germany. He arrived in Dubuque, Iowa in 1857. Gottfried was the younger brother of Sigmund Fritschel who was born December 2, 1833. Both men were taught and sent by Loehe and both, in turn, taught at Wartburg Seminary of the Iowa Synod. For a number of years the Fritschel brothers were the only professors at Wartburg. Sigmund taught Old Testament, Dogmatics and Practicle Theology for first year students while Gottfried taught Dogmatics, Symbolics, Church History, and New Testament for upper classes. The two brothers were inseparable. Sigmund was the speaker and debator while Gottfried was more quiet and contemplative. It was Gottfried who formulated most of the Iowa Synod's resolutions, declarations, and who participated in most of the theological controversies through his articles. Haug, pp. 38-39.

<sup>7</sup>Roy Suelflow, pp. 101-103.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 108-109.

<sup>9</sup>Baepler, p. 199.

<sup>10</sup>Roy Suelflow, p. 109.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 109-110.

<sup>12</sup>Carl S. Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), p. 75.

<sup>13</sup>W.H.T. Dau, ed., Ebenezer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), p. 407.

<sup>14</sup>Polack, p. 148.

<sup>15</sup>Haug, p. 270.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>17</sup>J.L. Neve, History of the Lutheran Church in America (Burlington, Iowa: Lutheran Literary Board, 1934), p. 207.

<sup>18</sup>Haug, p. 271.

<sup>19</sup>Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower, p. 66.

<sup>20</sup>Baepler, p. 199.

<sup>21</sup>Roy Suelflow, p. 120.

<sup>22</sup>Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower, p. 69.

<sup>23</sup>Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 271.

<sup>24</sup>Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower, p. 70.

<sup>25</sup>Roy Suelflow, pp. 117-119.

<sup>26</sup>Baepler, p. 200.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Allwardt was born in 1840 in Germany and received his ministerial training in Ft. Wayne and St. Louis. He served as pastor in Lebanon, Wisconsin and Vice President of the Northwestern District of the Missouri Synod when the predestinarian controversy broke out. Allwardt backed Schmidt against Walther. It has been said that Allwardt was really the first of the group to raise questions about the Western District Report of 1877. Allwardt met with Schmidt several times between April and October 1879. Roy Suelflow, pp. 130-131.

<sup>29</sup>Stellhorn was born in Hanover, Germany on October 2, 1841 and came to America with his parents at the age of 13. He studied at Concordia College and Seminary in St. Louis. In 1865 he became a pastor in St. Louis. Four years later he was called as a professor to Northwestern College at Watertown, Wisconsin. In 1874, Stellhorn accepted a professorship at Concordia College Fort Wayne. Stellhorn accepted a call to the Theological Seminary of the Ohio Synod in Columbus in 1881. From 1880 on and especially after he joined the Ohio Synod, Stellhorn became one of the leading opponents of Missouri's doctrine on predestination. Haug, pp. 43-44.

<sup>30</sup>John Philipp Koehler, The History of the Wisconsin Synod (St. Cloud, Mn.: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1970), p. 157.

<sup>31</sup>Matthias Loy was born in Pennsylvania on March 17, 1828. He studied at Columbus Seminary and became a pastor in 1849. Loy served as President of the Ohio Synod from 1860-1878 and again from 1880-1894. He became the editor of The Lutheran Standard in 1864, and a professor at the Columbus Seminary in 1865. After the predestinarian controversy broke, Loy published many articles in The Lutheran Standard opposing Missouri. Haug, p. 43.

<sup>32</sup>Roy Suelflow, pp. 125-127.

<sup>33</sup>Baepler, p. 200.

<sup>34</sup>Polack, p. 150.

<sup>35</sup>Schmiel, p. 59.

<sup>36</sup>Roy suelflow, pp. 127-128.

<sup>37</sup>Schmiel, p. 60.

### III. THE PREDESTINARIAN CONTROVERSY BREAKS INTO THE OPEN

#### ALTES UND NEUES

Many of his Norwegian colleagues urged Schmidt not to go public but in January 1880 Prof. F.A. Schmidt put out the first of a number of publications entitled Altes und Neues ("old and new"). The first publication was sent only to pastors and not to laymen. Schmidt gave the reason for publication in the forward of the first issue:

The publications of Missouri have given an anti-Scriptural and calvinizing view of the doctrine of election for the last few years.<sup>1</sup>

Schmidt would often quote statements of Walther and other Missourians in trying to show them to be wrong. At times, he even quoted them out of context. An example of this can be seen in this statement quoted by Schmidt:

If I do not belong to the elect, no matter how diligently I hear God's Word or am absolved of my sins or attend communion everything is lost.

Schmidt failed to add the first few words of the original text which read: "The afflicted ("Angefochtener") person will say..."<sup>2</sup>

The appearance of Altes und Neues has been described as a "theological bombshell," and that it was. The periodical claimed that its existence was necessary in order to counteract what it considered to be Missouri's antisciptural, anticonfessional, and crypto-Calvinistic view of election. Eugene Fevold writes:

It was somewhat ironical that Schmidt, hitherto an ardent Missourian with a reputation for unquestionable orthodoxy, should have been one of the chief leaders of the opposition to Walther.<sup>3</sup>

Because Schmidt accused Walther of Calvinism and crypto-Calvinism, Walther retaliated in Lehre und Wehre and Der Lutheraner by calling Schmidt a synergist. Many loyal Missourians rallied to Walther's side and

the rounds of articles were fired, back and forth. Beginning April 17, 1880, The Lutheran Standard began printing articles espousing the "intuitu fidei" point of view. These included articles by P.A. Peter, F.W. Stellinghorn, and G. Dillmann.<sup>4</sup> Among the Norwegians, whose pastors were trained by both Schmidt and Walther, heated arguments took place as the issue was debated in almost every congregation of the Norwegian Synod.<sup>5</sup>

#### MEETINGS ARE CALLED

Things were looking rather bleak and so the Missourians appealed to Prof. Lehmann, the President of the Synodical Conference and a member of the Ohio Synod, to call a special convention in order that the differences might be straightened out. Lehmann, who was sick and close to death, thought he was not authorized to call such a conference.<sup>6</sup> To strengthen and unite the Missourian cause, President Schwan called a special pastoral conference at Chicago, September 29 through October 5, 1880. At the conference, Walther and his views dominated the discussion. Yet, other Missourians did contribute, including Lange, Stoeckhard and Pieper.<sup>7</sup> Schmidt was not allowed at this meeting, but Allwardt, Stellinghorn and Krauss proved to be the chief contestants against Walther. At the conclusion of the discussions no agreement was reached and it became apparent that neither side would give. The meeting did strengthen Walther's leadership, united the Missourians and aroused further animosity against Schmidt, Allwardt, Stellinghorn, Krauss and others within the Missouri ranks.<sup>8</sup>

After Prof. Lehmann's death on December 1, 1880, Prof. L. Larsen, the Vice President of the Synodical Conference, arranged a meeting of all the faculties in the Conference at Milwaukee, January 5, 1881.<sup>9</sup> It was agreed that all discussions of the colloquy were to be based directly on Scripture and not on statements of dogmaticians or the Confessions. The

first passage to come to the floor was Romans 8:29:

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren.

The two parties reached a deadlock from the start, disagreeing over what the term "foreknew" meant. Walther maintained that this was "an effectual foreknowledge" for salvation while Schmidt stated that this was a mere "consciousness of a fact."<sup>10</sup> The Ohio men then suggested a truce be declared and discussions be continued at a later time. But, the delegates could not agree on the terms of the truce.<sup>11</sup> After five days, the Ohio representatives walked out of the colloquy. A proposal to meet again within the year and, in the meantime, to refrain from carrying on the controversy publicly, was rejected. Schmidt maintained that he had been commanded by God to carry on this war. Walther thereupon replied, "Be it so! You want war; you shall have war!"<sup>12</sup>

Each session of the Milwaukee Colloquy had been opened and closed with prayer, but at the last session, a Missouri man refused to pray with the "heretics" and the meeting closed with silent prayer. This was the first time that the Missouri Synod refused prayer fellowship to another Lutheran with whom they were discussing doctrinal problems.<sup>13</sup>

It was a very tense time for the Synodical Conference and Walther must have felt the need for some form of conciliatory action. In the February 1881 issue of Lehre und Wehre, Walther apologized for any harshness which may have appeared in his references to personalities or individuals. He also partially retracted some of the language he had used which may have possibly been misunderstood, but he did not retract or rescind any of his views.<sup>14</sup> Yet, Walther's apology was to no avail. That very same month, the Ohio Synod publicly aligned itself with Schmidt by publishing The Columbus Theological Magazine containing articles on

predestination opposing the doctrinal position of Missouri. Prof. Stellan, who was married to Walther's niece, attacked Walther and the Missouri Synod in that first issue of The Columbus Theological Magazine and then left the Missouri Synod, accepting a call to the Ohio Synod's seminary at Columbus.<sup>15</sup>

#### THE SYNODS MEET ALONE

Missouri felt itself in a very uneasy position.<sup>16</sup> It had *dissension* decension within its own ranks. It was being attacked by a member of the Norwegian Synod who had the support of the Ohio Synod (not to mention the Iowa Synod sitting on the side lines, cheering them on). The Norwegian Synod was suffering internal strife and unable to take a position either way. And, the Wisconsin and Minnesota Synods refused to take a stand at this time.

The leaders of the Missouri Synod first set out to unify their own body. Walther had published thirteen theses on the doctrine of election in Der Lutheraner, and at the May 1881 delegate convention in Fort Wayne, the Synod officially adopted this as their position on the doctrine of election. There were some in Synod who refused to accept this, but the overall majority gave full support to the Thirteen Theses.<sup>17</sup> Synod felt that the controversy had to be brought to a close at this convention. It was stated officially that those who disagree with Synod's position should seek fellowship elsewhere. The Convention maintained that it would not permit anyone to remain in synodical fellowship who had accused Missouri of false doctrine unless such a person give evidence of "sincere repentance." The convention also passed two resolutions of instruction for its delegates to the next Synodical Conference Convention:



1) You are not to sit in ecclesiastical consultation with any person who accuses us openly of Calvinism.

2) You are not to recognize any synod as a member of the Synodical Conference which, as such, makes the accusation of Calvinism against us.<sup>18</sup>

Immediately following the sessions of Synod, in May 1881, a special pastoral conference was held. Pastor Allwardt represented the opposition and declared that they were in basic agreement with Schmidt, Stelhorn and Loy. The opponents stated that they appreciated the benefits of Synod, but they could not condone the doctrine being propounded in Synod. Yet, despite the differences, the opponents wanted to stay in Synod and work things out. The large majority of the Missouri Synod pastors decided that these men could no longer be fellow-workers in Synod and that no president of Synod should permit them to remain. The conference adjourned with the resolution that the opponents should not be considered fellow-workers in Synod.<sup>19</sup> Because of this action, a group of pastors and congregations withdrew from the Missouri Synod, and at Blue Island, Illinois, organized a separate conference. Later this conference formed the Northwest District of the Ohio Synod.<sup>20</sup>

The Ohio Synod had been planning a general pastoral conference to be held in 1881 for the purpose of discussing the doctrine of election.<sup>21</sup> Yet, when Ohio heard that the Missouri Synod had instructed its delegates not to sit in convention with those who had criticized its position on election, the Ohio leaders called a special convention at Wheeling, West Virginia, September 8-13, 1881. At this convention, Ohio adopted its own Four Theses on election and resolved that the "intuitu fidei" position was the only view to be tolerated in its institutions, schools, publications and churches. When some of its members protested, Ohio replied:

Anyone who has an opposing doctrinal position surely cannot remain among us without being a unionist.<sup>22</sup>

Yet, the Ohio Synod went one step further. It resolved to withdraw from the Synodical Conference because Missouri had adopted a doctrine which Ohio could not accept and because Missouri had instructed its Synodical Conference delegates not to sit or confer with the majority of the Ohio Synod.<sup>23</sup> Because of this action, a group of Ohioans withdrew from the Ohio Synod forming the Concordia Synod which later merged with Missouri.<sup>24</sup>

III. END NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Roy Suelflow, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid..

<sup>3</sup>E. Clifford Nelson, ed., The Lutherans in North America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 316.

<sup>4</sup>Haug, pp. 495-535.

<sup>5</sup>Neve, p. 208.

<sup>6</sup>Baepler, p. 210. It should also be noted that Missouri seemed to feel that Lehmann refused to call a meeting because he didn't want to settle the dispute. Considering that Lehmann was sick at the time and died December 1, 1880, maybe this was too harsh of a judgment on Missouri's part. Still, it was well known that Lehmann lacked interest in the Synodical Conference and Walther felt that Lehmann had not done his duty when he failed to call a meeting or a colloquy. Roy Suelflow, p. 150.

<sup>7</sup>Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower, p. 76.

<sup>8</sup>Roy Suelflow, pp. 153-154.

<sup>9</sup>Baepler, p. 201.

<sup>10</sup>Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower, pp. 76-77.

<sup>11</sup>Roy Suelflow, pp. 155-156.

<sup>12</sup>Baepler, p. 201.

<sup>13</sup>Roy Suelflow, p. 156.

<sup>14</sup>Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower, p. 77.

<sup>15</sup>Baepler, p. 202.

<sup>16</sup>After a discussion on the "Foreknowledge of Faith" Walther grasped the hand of a former pupil and, looking into his eyes, said: "I ask you upon your conscience, in the presence of God, do you not believe that this controversy on Election will shiver our dear Missouri Synod into Fragments? Alas! what will become of us? How many will remain?" The pastor answered: "Dear Doctor, I do not believe any will leave us, excepting perhaps seven or eight who are not and have not been Missourians at heart, such as heed the Word only, though it be contrary to all reason...But in every controversy only this, what has God said?...and surely God will, this time also, strengthen you true and faithful to His Word in spite of all opposition." Walther fervently pressed the young man's hand, and as tears trickled down his cheeks, said: "God bless you for these words, my friend. Onward in God's name, for His honor and glory! The die is cast. We will confess unto the end!" C.L. Janzow, The Life of Rev. Prof. C.F.W. Walther, D.D. (Pittsburg: The American Lutheran Publication Board, 1899), pp. 42-43.

<sup>17</sup>Tietjen, p. 75.

<sup>18</sup>Roy Suelflow, p. 169.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 170-172.

<sup>20</sup>Neve, p. 209.

<sup>21</sup>Roy Suelflow, p. 174.

<sup>22</sup>Tietjen, pp. 77-78.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>24</sup>Nelson, p. 319.

#### IV. THE THEOLOGY OF THE PREDESTINARIAN CONTROVERSY EXAMINED

##### AS THE SUBJECT OF PREDESTINATION WAS DISCUSSED WITHIN CHRISTENDOM

The doctrine of election had been a point of controversy within Christendom long before American Lutherans focused their attention on the subject. In the Pelagian Controversy, Augustine held to an irresistible grace whereby man is rescued from his depravity. Augustine believed that, according to God's compassion in Christ, He elects some to salvation and so kindles faith in them by His grace. All others God, according to His justice, leaves in depravity and consigns to merited damnation. The reason why grace is accorded to only part of mankind lies in an eternal, holy, unexplicable, free decree of God.<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Martin Luther, in teaching on predestination, held closely to Augustinian doctrine trying to combat the Semi-Pelagianism of his time. Erasmus, urged by friends, took an open stand against Luther in his treatise De libero arbitrio (1524) and Luther responded in De servo arbitrio. Luther declared that, in matters of faith and salvation, man has no free will. He also held that foreknowledge and predestination are identical and absolute.<sup>2</sup> Although Luther did issue statements in De servo arbitrio which came close to double predestination, he later clarified his views in his work on Genesis.<sup>3</sup> It should be stressed that Luther and his followers took up the doctrine of predestination only as a side issue which at that time, seemed necessary for guarding "sola gratia" against synergism.<sup>4</sup>

While Lutherans emphasized God's grace in Jesus Christ, Zwingli and Calvin stress the sovereignty of God. Thus, predestination became a major part of their system. Zwingli stated:

It must be an unalterable canon that all things are ruled and directed by the providence of God...by the same ordering they are appointed unto eternal punishment. There you have my canon which fortifies me against all the Scripture passages adduced in favor of free will.<sup>5</sup>

In his Institutes on the Christian Religion, Calvin sets forth his position:

We call predestination God's eternal decree, whereby He has decided what He will have happen to every man. For not all have been created under the same condition: some are predestined to eternal life, others to eternal damnation. And inasmuch as a man is created to reach the one goal or the other, we say that he is predestined to life or to death.<sup>6</sup>

Double predestination emphasized that rejection also depends on God's eternal predestination. Calvin stressed that this double predestination is the Christian's ultimate guarantee of salvation by grace alone.<sup>7</sup>

Between 1556 and 1560 a Synergistic Controversy broke out among the Lutherans in Germany. Pfeffinger and Strigel taught the Semi-Pelagian views of Philip Melanchthon while Amsdorf and Flacius represented strict Lutheran orthodoxy emphasizing 'sola gratia.'<sup>8</sup> Because of this dispute and the emergence of Calvin's double predestination, the drafters of the Formula of Concord included Article XI, "Eternal Foreknowledge and Divine Election." The article was included, not to settle past disputes, but to be of service in avoiding future differences and conflicts.<sup>9</sup>

As double predestination became firmly established within Reformed orthodoxy in the Canons of Dort (1618-1619), discussions were once again revived among Lutherans, especially at the University of Wittenberg. Prof. Samuel Huber taught that election was only general, not particular, thus making the doctrine of election no more than the will of God to save all sinners. Prof. Aegedius Hunnius wrote against Huber and tried to steer between the absolute and immediate predestination of the Calvinists and the general election of Huber. Hunnius stated that God elected people "in view of faith" (intuitu fidei), or in view of the fact that God worked

faith in Christ in their hearts, or in view of the merit of Christ which is accepted through faith. This then became the terminology of the orthodox theologians in the 17th century.<sup>10</sup>

#### STATEMENTS FROM THE CONTROVERSY WITHIN AMERICAN LUTHERANISM

The pendulum that swings back and forth between synergism and Calvinism is hard to avoid. In doing so, one has the tendency of leaning one way or the other. Lutherans have always tried to maintain a middle ground, yet Missouri charged its Lutheran opponents with synergism while Iowa, Schmidt, and Ohio charged the Missouri Synod Lutherans with Calvinism. It is extremely difficult to present both sides fairly. First, there was an enormous amount of literature produced in the controversy and analyzing all of it is beyond the scope of this paper. Second, one cannot estrange himself from his own theological position, and this will undoubtedly play a part in the selection of material. Be that as it may, this paper will present selected statements from the individuals involved and then attempt to draw some conclusions.

In his Controversy concerning Predestination published in 1881, Dr. Walther stated what he considered to be the controverted points:

1) 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, consequently also to faith, repentance, and conversion; or 2) whether in His election God took into consideration anything good in man, namely the foreseen nonresistance, and the foreseen perserving faith, and thus elected certain persons to salvation in consideration of, with respect to, on account of, or in consequence of, their conduct, their non-resistance, and their faith. (Walther also adds in a note) There is indeed another, namely, whether a believing Christian can become and be certain of his salvation, and consequently of his election.<sup>11</sup>

Walther's position can best be seen in his report to the 1877 convention of the Western District:

The Lutheran Church teaches that it is false and wrong to teach that not the merit of God and the most holy merits of Christ alone, but that also in us there is a cause for the sake of which God has elected us unto eternal life...God foresaw nothing, absolutely nothing, in those whom He resolved to save, which might be worthy of salvation, and even if it be admitted that He foresaw some good in them, this nevertheless, could not have determined Him to elect them for that reason, for as the Scriptures teach, all good in man has its origin in God.<sup>12</sup>

Walther wanted to emphasize the sinful nature of man and that of himself, by his own thought, conduct or work, man cannot make himself worthy of salvation, nor of God's election. Walther rejected any speculations as to why some are elected and others are not. For this reason he rejected the "intuitu fidei" terminology of the 17th century dogmatists.<sup>13</sup> When accused of leaving faith and the merits of Christ out of justification, Walther stated:

For nowhere does it say in Scripture that we are saved on account of faith, that we are justified because we believe. Nothing like this can be found, but Scripture says that we are justified through faith. Thus we see, that the Scripture does not make faith the cause of justification, but the means for accepting it.<sup>14</sup>

Walther's opponents held that Article XI of the Formula of Concord taught "foreknowledge" only in a general sense. To this Walther replied:

In the first place, the difference between the eternal foreknowledge of God and the eternal election of His children to everlasting salvation must be accurately observed. For 'praescientia vel praevisio' that is, that God foresees and foreknows all things before they come to pass, which is called the foreknowledge of God extendeth to all creatures...But God's eternal election...doth not at once pertain both to the good and the wicked, but only to the children of God, who have been elected and ordained to eternal life, before the foundations of the world were laid...<sup>15</sup>

When his opponents taught that election is not the cause of salvation and faith, Walther stated:

But in the Eleventh Article of the Formula of Concord there stands written clearly and explicitly just the very contrary: that, namely,



on the contrary, election is a cause of our salvation and everything that belongs to the obtaining of the same, and hence, is also a cause of faith and of conversion, which the Formula of Concord among other things proves from Acts 13, 48., where it reads "And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed."

...Against this the advocates of that false doctrine oppose the following: The Formula of Concord calls election a cause of salvation, and hence, a cause of faith also, only because it takes the word "election" in another sense than our later Lutheran theologians, namely, in a wider, entirely general sense, to which also the general decree of salvation belongs, which pertains to all men...and you will soon see that according to God's Word and our Lutheran confession, election does not pertain to all men, but only to the elect children of God, who are elected and ordained to eternal life, before the foundation of the world was laid...1

To illustrate some of the differences between Walther and his opponents we must also look at a few of their statements. Whereas Walther affirmed that one cannot say why some people are saved and others lost because it lies within the hidden will of God. Prof. G.Fritschel stated:

the reason is that one resists the grace of God continuously, maliciously and intentionally whereas the other one lets his natural resistance be overcome by the Holy Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

That Walther made election the cause of faith has already been shown, yet Schmidt held just the opposite view:

When only one of two ungodly men is converted, there must have been a difference in their resistance, for if not, they would both have been converted.

Schmidt also commented:

I believe and teach now as before that it is not synergistic error, but a clear teaching of God's Word and our Lutheran Confession that 'salvation in a certain sense does not depend on God alone.'<sup>18</sup>

Prof. Loy of the Ohio Synod felt that the universality of God's grace and justification by faith were at stake in this "burning question" of predestination. For that reason, Loy stated:

It is believers who are elected to sonship and salvation, and as God knew from eternity who would be believers, He from eternity elected them in foresight of their faith...

Loy felt that Missouri's doctrine did not take faith into account and so it "endangered the great central doctrine of justification by faith."<sup>19</sup>

A book by C.H.L. Schuette entitled The Doctrine of Predestination sets forth Ohio's position very clearly:

9. Whence is faith and whose work is it? Ans. Faith is wholly and solely the work and gift of divine grace.

24. But God has elected only a few people unto salvation; now why not all? Ans. Simply because He foresaw that many would never permit Him to bring them to faith and salvation and hence He could not ordain them thereto.

33. How now would you briefly define God's gracious election? Ans. To be clear and exact, thus: Election is that eternal and unchangeable decree of God's grace in which God, for the sake of Christ alone, has ordained unto sonship and salvation all those persons of whom He has foreseen that they will finally believe in Christ Jesus.

34. You say, to be clear and exact: can you in still another way define election? Ans. Yes indeed, namely thus: Election is that eternal and unchangeable decree of God's grace in which God, for the sake of Christ alone, has resolved to give faith and, by faith, salvation to all those sinners of whom He foreknows that they will not maliciously and persistently oppose His gracious will.<sup>20</sup>

Concerning the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod, Schuette writes:

The new doctrine - old as it really is in other quarters, it is new among us Lutherans - which asserts that God has from eternity ordained unto faith and salvation a certain few people in exclusion of all others and in a manner mysterious to us; and which further asserts that a Christian can and shall become infallibly certain that he belong to that limited number; is a doctrine which we reject as contrary to all Scripture and as godless. May God preserve to us the old doctrine and keep us and our beloved Church in the old faith. Amen!<sup>21</sup>

In their 1881 conventions, both Missouri and Ohio issued official statements concerning their doctrines of election: the Thirteen Theses of Missouri and the Four Theses of Ohio. The complete text of these statements are located in the appendix of this paper.<sup>22</sup>

#### THEOLOGICAL CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING THE PREDESTINARIAN CONTROVERSY

As the Predestinarian Controversy unfolded within American Lutheranism, both sides claimed the support of the Formula of Concord and

both participants tried to show that their positions were loyally Lutheran, using citations and references from Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, and the theologians from the Age of Orthodoxy. There was also a tendency on both sides to draw extreme conclusions from the statements of the opposition.<sup>23</sup> Yet, major differences did exist and can be summed up in five points.

1) The Missouri Synod taught that Scripture speaks of two entirely distinct decrees of God: the general decree of universal grace and the decree of election. An analogy is not to be looked for between these two decrees because the Christian's reason is held captive to Scripture. The opponents of Missouri held that God's decree of election is also His universal counsel of grace revealed in the Gospel.

2) Missouri's opponents taught that the conversion of man and his preservation in faith is a result of God's general benevolent will and not the decree of election. They believed that God elected in view of foreseen faith. On the other hand, Missouri held that from a general benevolent will there would result, at best, only a temporary faith. A steadfast and saving faith could flow only from God's election and so God elects into faith.

3) Missouri held that it is a theological mystery why God has elected some men and not others. It is impossible to harmonize the doctrine of predestination with the universal promise of the Gospel. The opponents felt that it wasn't a theological mystery but rather an anthropological or psychological mystery. The reason why God chose only a few is because the majority of men willfully reject and resist the Holy Spirit.

4) Missouri charged its opponents with holding a synergistic view of conversion because its opponents left the decision of man's conversion

up to man. The opponents repel the charge on the ground that they teach conversion as the work of the Holy Spirit. They in turn charge Missouri with teaching an irresistable grace in conversion and Calvinism.

5) Missouri's opponents believed in a special "analogy of faith." That is, that all doctrines set forth in Scripture and summarized in the confessions can be harmonized through reason. Missouri held that this was rationalism. Certain doctrines must stand apart and cannot be put together by human reason.<sup>24</sup>

In view of all this, we must ask: Was Missouri guilty of Calvinism or were Missouri's opponents guilty of synergism? Abdel Wentz presented a very good defense of Missouri:

How is the position of the Missourians to be understood? Some opponents have charged that Dr. Walther and his colleagues in their teaching on predestination were really setting forth a disguised form of Calvinism. But the matter is not so simple. The Calvinist doctrine of predestination and election is clean and consistent and easy to fit into a system of thought, whereas the Missouri Lutheran doctrine is not concerned with system or logic but rests upon pertinent passages of Scripture, of Luther, and of the Lutheran Confessions. Consistent Calvinism teaches double predestination, not only the salvation of the elect but also condemnation of the others. Lutherans debated only concerning those who are elect and predestined to salvation.<sup>25</sup>

Both synergism and Calvinism are forms of rationalism; trying to harmonize doctrines set forth in Scripture by means of reason. Missouri was not guilty of any form of rationalism, but instead held its reason captive to the Word of God. Can one say the same for Missouri's opponents?

IV. END NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Erwin Lueck, ed., Lutheran Cyclopedia (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1975), p. 611.

<sup>2</sup>Haug, pp. 16-18.

<sup>3</sup>Chemnitz, Gerhard, Calov and Loescher held that Luther must be excused from some of his statements in De servo arbitrio because he used these strong statements without any Calvinistic connotations and before he was confronted with the double predestination of Calvinism. These theologians hold that Luther had not come to a full understanding at that time. A committee of the Missouri Synod decided that in De servo arbitrio Luther had spoken dialectically whereas in Genesis he had spoken popularly and instructively. Roy Suelflow, pp. 71-72.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>6</sup>Bengt Haeggglund, History of Theology, translated by Gene Lund (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), p. 261.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Unfortunately, Flacius went too far by saying that original sin became man's essential nature and that the image of God was replaced by the image of satan in man. Haug, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup>F. Bente, Historical Introduction to the Book of Concord (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1965), p. 195.

<sup>10</sup>Roy Suelflow, pp. 79-80.

<sup>11</sup>Dau, p. 411.

<sup>12</sup>Polack, p. 144.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>14</sup>Roy Suelflow, p. 112.

<sup>15</sup>Dau, p. 413.

<sup>16</sup>C.F.W. Walther, The Doctrine Concerning Election (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1881), pp. 42-43.

<sup>17</sup>Roy Suelflow, p. 106.

<sup>18</sup>Baepler, p. 206.

<sup>19</sup>Nelson, p. 318.

<sup>20</sup>C.H.L. Schuette, The Doctrine of Predestination (Columbus: J.L. Trauger, Agent, Printer, 1881), pp. 6-10.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>22</sup>The documents in the appendix are taken from Richard C. Wolf, ed., Documents of Lutheran Unity in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 199-204.

<sup>23</sup>Nelson, pp. 318-319.

<sup>24</sup>Neve, pp. 214-215.

<sup>25</sup>Abdel R. Wentz, A Basic History of Lutheranism in America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955, revised edition 1964), pp. ~~205~~<sub>212</sub>-~~206~~<sub>213</sub>.

V. THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE AFTER THE EXPLOSION OF THE PREDESTINARIAN  
CONTROVERSY

THE 1882 CONVENTION OF THE SYNODICAL CONFERENCE

In October 1882, the Synodical Conference held a convention in Chicago; its first meeting since 1879. The Minnesota District of the Norwegian Synod had elected Prof. F.A. Schmidt as an official delegate, which in turn stirred up protest from the Missouri, Wisconsin and Minnesota Synods.<sup>1</sup> Schmidt's opponents protested, not by reason of false doctrine, but because Schmidt had attacked members of the Synodical Conference with charges of false doctrine without taking the proper steps and had entered a Missouri Synod congregation in Oshkosh, Wisconsin without invitation causing disruption. Schmidt was ordered to willingly ask forgiveness without a hearing. In response to this, Prof. F.A. Schmidt said that he would retract where he had gone too far, but he wanted to be shown his error from Scripture. Yet, it must be emphasized that it was not Schmidt's doctrine but his actions which had been condemned without further hearing.<sup>2</sup> The convention refused to seat Prof. F.A. Schmidt and further resolved:

That we no longer acknowledge Professor Schmidt as our brother in Christ and cannot grant him seat or voice in this organization so long as he does not penitently recognize these his sins and make public apology.<sup>3</sup>

The Norwegian delegation submitted a special declaration agreeing with the Synodical Conference resolution against Schmidt, with only one delegate and one advisory delegate among the Norwegians refusing to sign. At the 1882 convention, the notice of withdrawal from the Ohio Synod was received and accepted. The convention also accepted into membership the Concordia Synod which was composed of pastors and congregations that had left the Ohio Synod because of its stand on election. In an attempt to

settle the issue on election, the Synodical Conference Convention of 1882 adopted the Thirteen Theses of the Missouri Synod as its own official position on the doctrine of election.<sup>4</sup>

#### MISSOURI AND WISCONSIN RELATIONS

When the Predestinarian Controversy broke into the open with the publication of Altes und Neues, the Wisconsin Synod refused to take a stand.<sup>5</sup> What statements they did make were usually criticisms of Missouri's phrasiology.<sup>6</sup> Because of this refusal to take a side, Missouri feared, and Ohio hoped, that Wisconsin would fall in line with those who taught election in view of faith. Wisconsin had already stood up to Missouri by rejecting the state synod and joint seminary plan. Yet, Wisconsin quietly sat back and studied the doctrines that were involved, asking atself two questions:

Are you willing to leave the entire matter of your salvation to the grace of God alone? And, are you willing to take you reason captive, and let the matter of election rest with the revelation of God in Scriptures?<sup>7</sup>

Wisconsin met in convention in 1881 and instructed its delegates to the Synodical Conference:

If the doctrinal controversy which has sprung up within the Synodical Conference should be applied as a test in the matter of seating delegates, and should threaten the further existence of the Synodical Conference then our delegates shall consider their mandate as terminated; but such withdrawal of our delegates shall not be construed as a withdrawal of our Synod from the Synodical Conference, nor as a final decision concerning the doctrine in question.<sup>8</sup>

The Synodical Conference did not meet that year, but a meeting was held at Wauwatosa, Wisconsin between Walther, Franz Pieper, Wyneken, Schwan, Hoenecke and Bading. These members of both the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods met for five days, after which Wisconsin supported Missouri.<sup>9</sup>



In 1882, both the Wisconsin and the Minnesota Synods met jointly in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, and under the leadership of Adolph Hoencke and August Graebner formerly approved the Missouri Synods doctrine of election.<sup>10</sup>

In his annual report, Wisconsin's President Bading remarked:

The father of lies and all heresies has split the Synodical Conference...and led great parts of the Synodical Conference into deplorable errors.<sup>11</sup>

As mentioned earlier, at the 1882 Synodical Conference Convention, Wisconsin and Minnesota joined Missouri in protesting Schmidt's being seated at that convention, and fully supported the Thirteen Theses on election. The years after the Predestinarian Controversy broke out were quiet ones for Wisconsin as it continued to feel unhurried in making changes. Relations between Wisconsin and Missouri improved as close communication was maintained within the Synodical Conference, and it became the custom for both synods to exchange greetings at their conventions.<sup>12</sup> Several tries at merger were attempted, even into the 1930's, but the men of Wisconsin were always reluctant.<sup>13</sup>

#### THE NORWEGIAN SYNOD WITHDRAWS

Following the 1882 convention of the Synodical Conference there continued a heated debate among the Norwegians concerning the doctrine of election. The Norwegian Synod dealt with the problem by holding a special pastoral conference in Madison, Wisconsin, April 25 - May 2, 1883. At the conference, attended by over 100 clergymen, five points dealing with the doctrine of election were adopted. The document proved to be very ambiguous because both Missouri and the opponents claimed the Norwegians supported their position. Because of this unsettled problem, and because of the language difference, the Norwegians decided to pull out of the Synodical Conference in 1883.<sup>14</sup>

Apart from Schmidt and his agitation against Missouri, the Norwegians had another problem. Because of their contacts with Missouri, the Norwegian Synod stressed the confessional character of the entire Book of Concord. Yet, they also held in high regard an explanation of the Small Catechism by Erik Pontoppidan entitled Truth unto Godliness. Pontoppidan's book held to an "intuitu fidei" position on election:

What is election? God has appointed all those to eternal life whom He from eternity has foreseen would accept the offered grace, believe in Christ, and remain constant in this faith unto the end.<sup>15</sup>

To say there was discention in the Norwegian Synod would be an understatement and Prof. F.A. Schmidt continued to insist that his Synod take a stand.

In 1884, a pastoral conference was held at which seventeen theses on election were adopted for presentation to the 1884 Norwegian Synod Convention as a peace declaration. Schmidt opposed the theses maintaining that they were ambiguous and continued to press the Synod to adopt his point of view. When he saw he could not succeed, Schmidt and his followers left the Norwegian Synod and formed the Anti-Missourian Brotherhood in 1887.<sup>16</sup>

With Schmidt and company out of the Norwegian Synod, the question was raised about relations with the Synodical Conference. The Norwegians sent representatives to the 1894 Synodical Conference convention to explain their position. They pointed out that there were still weak members within their church body who could not yet agree fully with the Missouri position on election. They also stated that the language difference was a barrier, but assured the Synodical Conference that they were doctrinally one with them and would continue to support their activities. The Norwegian Synod never returned to the Synodical Conference (except for a small group later called the Evangelical Lutheran Synod), but it continued to maintain fellowship relations with members of the Synodical Conference until it joined in the union of Norwegian Lutherans in 1917.<sup>17</sup>

The Norwegian union was based on a document called the Opgjoer, or the Madison Agreement of 1912, produced by a union committee made up of members from the different Norwegian church bodies. In order to facilitate union, both positions on election were allowed. This can be clearly seen in the first paragraph of the Opgjoer:

The Union Committees of the Synod and the United Church, unanimously and without reservation, accept the doctrine of election which is set forth in Article XI of the Formula of Concord, the so-called First Form, and Pontoppidan's Truth unto Godliness (Sandhed til Gudfrygtighed), question 548, the so-called Second Form of Doctrine.<sup>18</sup>

#### MISSOURI'S RELATIONS WITH OTHER LUTHERAN BODIES

Besides Ohio and the Anti-Missourian Brotherhood, other Lutherans took a position against Missouri. Iowa declared its opposition in the theses of St. Sebald in 1881 and the resolutions of Dubuque in 1882.<sup>19</sup> Eastern Lutherans generally followed a "hands off" policy during the controversy, yet their sympathies leaned mainly toward those who opposed Walther and the Missouri Synod. The organ of the Philadelphia Seminary, Opinion, disliked the use of the "intuitu fidei" phrase, yet on the whole was more favorable to Missouri's opponents. The Lutheran Free churches of Europe fully supported the Missouri Synod, but the majority of the contemporary Lutheran theologians in Europe were generally critical.<sup>20</sup>

After its initial outbreak in the 1880's, there were two more phases of the Predestinarian Controversy. At the turn of the century, the controversy centered around Scripture passages, some of which expressed the universal grace of God and others which spoke of the special election of a few. Missouri's opponents held that these passages could be harmonized by way of reason and that the decree of election was part of God's universal provision of redemption for all men. The Missouri Synod declared

that any effort at combining the two sets of passages was rationalism. The last phase of the Predestination Controversy occurred in the 1920's as intersynodical discussions were held to further the cause of Lutheran unity. Here again the controversy centered on the relation of predestination to man's conversion and the freedom of the will. Missouri continued to resist any position that opened the way for synergism.<sup>21</sup>

After the outbreak of the controversy in the 1880's, intersynodical conferences between Ohio and Missouri were not held until 1903. Four conferences were then conducted and, as mentioned above, the use of reason and the Scriptures in dealing with the doctrine of election was the main issue. No agreement was reached and the discussions terminated in 1906.<sup>22</sup>

In 1916, informal discussions among local pastoral associations were held at St. Paul, Minnesota. This gathering produced an unofficial set of theses which eventually obtained the approval of some 550 pastors in five different Lutheran church bodies. An Intersynodical Committee was formed by the Synods of Buffalo, Iowa, Ohio, Missouri and Wisconsin which sought to work out an agreement in doctrine as the basis for church fellowship and co-operation. In 1925, the committee presented the Intersynodical (Chicago) Theses to the various synods. Discussions and revision continued until 1928 when the document reached its final form.<sup>23</sup>

In 1929, both Missouri and Wisconsin rejected the Chicago Theses on the ground that they were ambiguous. Missouri's review committee stated:

After careful examination of the revised theses of August, 1928, your Committee finds itself compelled to advise Synod (1929) to reject these theses as a possible basis for union with the synods of Ohio, Iowa, and Buffalo, since all chapters and a number of paragraphs are inadequate. At times they are so phrased that both parties can find in them their own opinion; at times they incline more to the position of our opponents than to our own.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, it was also recommended that discussions be maintained so that

true unity may be accomplished. Thus, it was resolved:

1. That the Synod continue the discussions with the other synods and for that purpose again elect an Intersynodical Committee.
2. That it express its joy that these earnest attempts to get together with the other Lutheran synods are being made, as also the hope that by God's grace complete unity of faith may result.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the fact that the Chicago Theses were rejected by the members of the Synodical Conference, they were accepted by the Buffalo, Iowa, and Ohio Synods. On the basis of this agreement, these Lutheran bodies united in 1930 to form the American Lutheran Church.<sup>26</sup>

V. END NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 274.
- <sup>2</sup>Schmiel, p. 64.
- <sup>3</sup>Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 274.
- <sup>4</sup>Tietjen, p. 80.
- <sup>5</sup>M. Lenhinger and others, ed., Continuing in His Word (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1951), p. 79.
- <sup>6</sup>Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 273.
- <sup>7</sup>Lenhinger, p. 79.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 79.
- <sup>9</sup>Schmiel, p. 63.
- <sup>10</sup>Nelson, p. 321.
- <sup>11</sup>Lenhinger, p. 79.
- <sup>12</sup>Schmiel, p. 68.
- <sup>13</sup>Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 412.
- <sup>14</sup>Tietjen, p. 80.
- <sup>15</sup>William J. Schmelder, "The Predestinarian Controversy: Review and Reflection" Concordia Journal, January 1975, pp. 27-28.
- <sup>16</sup>Tietjen, p. 81.
- <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 82.
- <sup>18</sup>Schmelder, p. 29.
- <sup>19</sup>Neve, p. 209.
- <sup>20</sup>Nelson, p. 324.
- <sup>21</sup>Wentz, pp. 206-209.
- <sup>22</sup>Neve, p. 210.
- <sup>23</sup>Wolf, pp. 360-361.
- <sup>24</sup>Meyer, Moving Frontiers, p. 417.
- <sup>25</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup>Wolf, p. 361.

VI. AN ANALYSIS OF THE PREDESTINARIAN CONTROVERSY AND ITS EFFECTS  
ON MISSOURI SYNOD'S UNITY ATTEMPTS

FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UNITY

All true Christians are united in an invisible fellowship through faith in God as He has revealed Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ. This Son of God and Word made flesh is known to us only by the Holy Spirit working through Word and Sacrament. This same Spirit has given us a divinely valid witness to Christ in the apostolic and prophetic Word. Therefore, true unity and fellowship is sought in full and common obedience to the Holy Scriptures. According to God's will, the inward, invisible fellowship of true believers should manifest itself in outward, visible fellowship. Fellow believers are recognized in this outward bond of fellowship by their confession of faith based on God's Word.

It was on such grounds that the founders of the Missouri Synod sought fellowship and unity. The Lutheran Confessions became the 'norma normata' and the basis for uniting Lutherans in America:

For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word (AC, VII).

We believe, teach and confess that no church should condemn another because it has fewer or more external ceremonies not commanded by God, as long as there is mutual agreement in doctrine and in all its articles as well as in the right use of the holy sacraments... (FC, Ept. V, 6).

Missouri went at the task of unity with zeal and fervor, yet always with the principle of doctrinal agreement in mind. The Synod's very founding in 1847 is a beautiful example of this.

In establishing the confessional basis for unity, "free conferences" and colloquies were employed. It was only under these conditions that men could openly discuss their approaches to Scripture and the Confessions

and so come to an agreement.

One cannot ignore the fact that, at these "free conferences" and colloquies, prayer and some form of devotion was used to begin the talks. In contrast to the view later held by members of the Synodical Conference, the founders of this organization were willing to pray with any Lutheran who was openly willing to sit down and discuss his faith without malice or antagonism. It is true that joint prayer was refused to the Iowa Synod at a colloquy in 1867 and the opponents of Missouri at the 1880 Milwaukee colloquy, but this was only because Missouri had been publicly attacked. Prayer and devotions allowed the men to ask God's blessings on their discussions, and so furthered a spirit of openness.

Because of their emphasis on doctrinal agreement, Lutherans have traditionally regarded organization as of lesser significance; after all, ecclesiastical polity is an adiaphoron. Yet, once agreement had been reached and fellowship established, the way was open for arranging some formal organization. That the Synodical Conference was originally intended to be a mere stepping-stone for further unity can clearly be seen in Article III of its constitution.

Walther's dream was one united Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America. The basis for this unity was unequivocal subscription to Scripture and the Confessions. The means for this unity was to be the Synodical Conference. Had the state synod-joint seminary plan worked, much senseless competition would have been eliminated. It would have provided one or two seminaries where pastors could have been trained by the same faculties, sharing a common view toward Scripture and the Confessions. But, we do not live our lives looking back at "would have beens." We look back to learn from our mistakes so that we can move forward with a better understanding, and so we don't make the same mistakes a second time.



FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE DISRUPTION OF UNITY

To say with President Bading at the opening address of the 1882 Wisconsin and Minnesota Synod Convention that, "The father of lies and all heresies has split the Synodical Conference...and led great parts of the Synodical Conference into deplorable errors," would indeed be true and accurate. Yet, this might be an oversimplification. Surely the devil works on our old nature to cause strife, misunderstanding and error. But, as we watch for "our adversary", we must consider how, where, when and why.

Although President Bading undoubtedly made his statement in reference to the doctrinal error of the opponents, in a different sense, the statement can be applied to both parties in the Predestinarian Controversy (and in making that statement, I hope I'm not confronted with the same fate that befell Asperheim). In Proverbs we are told, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." To hold that any one man involved in the Predestinarian Controversy (or any man for that matter) could have conducted himself in a manner of total humility throughout would be tantamount to a denial of original sin. Many of the men involved had a very self-righteous attitude or were very derogatory towards their fellow Lutherans. Walther used harsh language against his opponents and apologized when it was too late. The Wisconsin Synod rejected and forestalled merger plans out of fear for her own identity. Schmidt refused to follow the proper channels within the Synodical Conference because of an apparent grudge. Sinful pride is a tool of the devil and something every man faces. It should be watched for, admitted to, and because of God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ and the strengthening power given through Word and Sacrament, sinful pride is something that we should try to overcome.

Another factor in the disruption of unity was agitation from outside the Synodical Conference. The attacks made by the Fritschel brothers in the late 1850's and early 1870's did not have an immediate effect on the Synodical Conference. Yet, the very same views that the Fritschel brothers projected were later adopted by Schmidt, Allwardt, Stelhorn and the Ohio Synod. One cannot help but wonder if Schmidt had remembered the anger stirred within Walther by the Fritschel brothers when he began printing his Altes und Neuse. The Iowa Synod did not further the cause of unity by declaring their opposition in the theses of St. Sebald and the resolutions of Dubuque.

Personalities undoubtedly played a major part in the Predestinarian Controversy, and probably the most predominant character was the Rev. C.F.W. Walther, D.D. That Walther's leadership and firm doctrinal stance was timely and of great benefit to the church is beyond question. Yet, Walther could be quite overbearing at times, which may have caused rebellion instead of obedience. Carl S. Meyer makes this quite clear:

In the controversy Walther must share some blame with his opponents. In his approach to the question of election he used tactics similar to those which he used in his approach to the question of slavery. He relied on personal authority to quiet opposition. It worked in the slavery issue, but 20 years later his opponents were not ready to yield simply because he opposed them.

It also seems significant that the men who stirred up the controversy within the Missouri Synod were all former students of Walther. Both Stelhorn and Allwardt studied under Walther at the Seminary while Schmidt, it seems, practically grew up at Walther's feet. That these men, once they had established themselves and their own identities, could have reacted in part to Walther's personality is not beyond possibility.

Another significant personality was Prof. F.A. Schmidt. Again recalling Eugene Fevold's comment:

It was somewhat ironical that Schmidt, hitherto an ardent Missourian with a reputation for unquestionable orthodoxy, should have been one of the chief leaders of the opposition to Walther.<sup>2</sup>

One can't help but ask, "Why the switch? What was the reason? What was the motive?" It seems that all of the evidence points towards a bitterness and feeling of rejection because Schmidt did not receive the Concordia Seminary position. Yet, there may have been other reasons as well. Maybe Schmidt was rebelling against the stern control of the man that he had studied under since confirmation classes. Possibly Schmidt, after serving an English speaking congregation and teaching in Norwegian schools, was put off by Missouri's parochial attitude towards language. It cannot be denied that Schmidt's theology actually did change; he was not merely putting on a facade to strike back at Walther and Missouri. What brought this change about is hard to say. It could have been the influences of either Asperheim, Allwardt, or Pontoppidan's Catechism. Still, the over-riding reason has to be that Prof. F.A. Schmidt carried a grudge and was, in fact, outright antagonistic toward the Missouri Synod. This seems further evidenced by the title which he and his followers chose -- the Anti-Missourian Brotherhood.

Theological differences proved to be the greatest factor in the disruption of unity. These have been pointed out in chapter IV of this paper; yet one theological difference must be especially emphasized because it is the very key to the Predestinarian Controversy and the disruption of the unity that existed. Abdel Wentz stated it well:

The issues have not yet been resolved. In last analysis the differences rest upon differing attitudes toward the Lutheran Confessions and the interpretation of Scripture.<sup>3</sup>

Lutheran unity was based on an unequivocal subscription to Scripture and the Confessions. When a divergence to this understanding occurred, true unity ceased to exist. The actual problem began when men

started applying their reason majisterially in relation to Scripture and the Confessions. Since reason cannot comprehend the two decrees of God as set forth in Scripture (concerning His gracious will and desire that all men be saved and His will that He elect some unto salvation), some have chosen to rationally synthesize the two so that their reason can comprehend it.

When this change occurred within the Fritschels, Schmidt, Allwardt, Stellhorn and the Ohioans is difficult to say. For most, it was a gradual process that did not become manifest until after the Synodical Conference was formed. From the quotes offered earlier, it is evident that the Fritschel brothers began stressing the psychological and anthropological over the theological in the late 1860s and early 1870s.

One must not get the impression that reason is here being totally discredited. Human reason is a wonderful gift from God. Yet, in connection with the normative authority of Scripture, the majisterial use of reason must never be used. Human reason was corrupted by original sin and cannot be placed over Scripture, nor can it comprehend the mysteries of God. Luther put it well:

Human reason is like a drunken man on horseback; set it up on one side, and it tumbles over on the other.

As time went on, Stellhorn and Allwardt developed their thinking and called it "the analogy of faith," saying that all doctrines of Scripture can be rationally harmonized. This, in turn, left an inroad for the introduction of the historical critical method and the totally historical view of the Lutheran Confessions. This approach toward Scripture has led The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to enter into a state of "fellowship in protest" with the American Lutheran Church at present. Missouri made itself quite clear in the FODT document of 1978:

...a less-than-complete commitment to the Scriptures, an uncertainty about their truthfulness, a hesitancy or disagreement with regard to some of their contents, will endanger the proclamation of the gospel. The question is not simply how far the Scriptures should be trusted in what they say about Christ, but really whether the Christ we confess is the Christ of Scripture or a Christ constructed according to some human standard.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to pride, personality characteristics and theological differences, other minor factors contributed to the disruption of unity. Missouri's zeal in expansion can only be contributed to a sincere desire to further Christ's kingdom. Yet, this zealousness did prove to be intimidating to the smaller Lutheran synods. How this could have been avoided is hard to say, but it was a factor in the disruption of unity.

The language barrier was another problem. Any hesitancy on Ohio's part in the state synod - joint seminary plan was due to the predominance of the German language within the Synodical Conference. Ohio was, and wanted to remain, an English speaking synod. Any discussion of merger had to take this into consideration. Missouri, on the other hand, was almost antagonistic toward the English language, as can be seen in her reluctance toward the English Lutherans of Missouri. After the Predestinarian Controversy broke out, Missouri continued to write in German while Ohio used Stelhorn as a translator. A similar problem befell the Missouri - Norwegian relations. Even after the Anti-Missourians had left the Norwegian Synod, the Norwegians were reluctant to join the "German" Synodical Conference because of the language barrier.

#### EFFECTS OF THE PREDESTINARIAN CONTROVERSY ON MISSOURI'S BASIS FOR FELLOWSHIP

The immediate effects of the Predestinarian Controversy on the Missouri Synod's basis for fellowship were minimal. Missouri continued to hold to a firm Scriptural and Confessional subscription as necessary

for true Christian fellowship. This position carried well into the 1930s. A good example is found in Article 28 of the "Brief Statement of 1932":

28. On Church Fellowship. Since God ordained that His Word only, without the admixture of human doctrine, be taught and believed in the Christian Church...all Christians are required by God to discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church bodies,...and, in case they have strayed into heterodox church bodies, to leave them....We repudiate unionism, that is, church fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God's command, as causing divisions in the Church...and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely...<sup>5</sup>

Yet, things started to change in the 1940s and 1950s, as can be seen when one carefully examines the "Common Confession." Missouri began to become less articulate in areas of doctrinal differences. Whether this was a late reaction to the conflicts of the Predestinarian Controversy or from the influence of other Lutheran bodies is difficult to determine. But, the Norwegian Opgjoer and the Chicago Theses did begin a trend for later unity attempts.

#### EFFECTS OF THE PREDESTINARIAN CONTROVERSY ON MISSOURI'S ATTEMPTS TOWARD LUTHERAN UNITY

Whereas before the Predestinarian Controversy, the Missouri Synod zealously strove for Lutheran unity, afterward she appeared much more reserved, almost to the point of being aloof. Even though it did take a number of years for the dust to settle from the controversy, Missouri did not begin any discussions with her opponents until 1903. As a young man, Walther had dreamed of one united orthodox Lutheran Church in America, yet he died on May 7, 1887 with that dream unfulfilled.

To say that Missouri did not learn from this situation would be a poor evaluation. The Missouri Synod remained unswerving in her dedication to Christ and His Word, and steadfast in her defense of the truth. Yet, instead of harsh polemics, abusive language and fierce accusations,

Missouri theologians learned to temper their comments with love and concern. Franz Pieper, Although quite polemical, refrained from much of the derogatory language that his teachers had used.

Because of the large volumes of material that had been written in the English language, Missouri was forced into changing her parochial attitude. With the acceptance of the English speaking Lutherans of Missouri (who later became the English District), the Missouri Synod began more outreach in the language of the United States of America.

The Synod continued to stress true unity in doctrine and practice through Confessional subscription. Missouri was not drawn into the unity attempts of the early 20th century because they were nothing more than agreements to disagree. When Missouri did engage in intersynodical doctrinal discussions, she continued to stress clear, precise language and a resolution of differences.

One thing became very clear because of the Predestinarian Controversy: confessional subscription meant different things to different Lutherans. Ohio was just as sincere in her subscription as Missouri, but Ohio interpreted Scripture and the Confessions differently. The controversy instigated the writing and adopting of additional documents to clarify positions and insure that there would be no further misunderstanding (Missouri's Thirteen Theses and Ohio's Four Theses). When documents were later employed to facilitate doctrinal agreement in unity attempts, they either had to incorporate both positions or were worded in such a way that either side would agree. This was clearly the case in the Opgjoer, the Chicago Theses and the Common Confession.

Because of this, some modern Lutheran theologians have discredited the need for additional doctrinal statements, holding that mere verbal subscription is enough in attempts toward Lutheran unity.<sup>6</sup> That the

Missouri Synod went along with this idea for awhile is evidenced from its joining with the American Lutheran Church in formal altar and pulpit fellowship in 1969. Supporters of this view feel that theological diversity is unavoidable and actually adds to the character of a church body. Disagreement is tolerable as long as one says he subscribes to the Confessions (whatever that means).

Dr. Franz Pieper states in the first volume of his Christian

Dogmatics:

God has given Holy Scripture such a form that the knowledge of the truth is not only possible, but that straying from the truth is impossible as long as we continue in the words of Scripture, as Christ so clearly testifies when He guarantees to us in John 8 the knowledge of the truth if we continue in His Word.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the Missouri Synod has again returned to this view and is presently attempting to clarify her position. Because of the different approaches to Scriptural and Confessional subscription that exist today, there is indeed a need for additional doctrinal statements; the Predestinarian Controversy has shown us that. These statements should not be given confessional status, but rather should continue to serve as clarification of a church bodies doctrinal position.

Probably the most important thing the Missouri Synod has learned from the Predestinarian Controversy is that one must hold his reason captive to the Word of God. This, more than anything else, proved to be the major difference between Missouri and her opponents. This is probably the major difference within Lutheranism today.

Hopefully, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod will continue to strive for Lutheran unity with the same zeal that her founders had. This unity must be based on an unequivocal subscription to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, true agreement in doctrine and practice. In this



endeavor, may our Synod continue to review her past in order to learn from her mistakes, to avoid a false sense of pride, to see where God has blessed her and so offer thanks and praise.

SOLA DEO GLORIA

VI. END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Meyer, Log Cabin to Luther Tower, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Nelson, p. 316.

<sup>3</sup> Wentz, p. 209.

<sup>4</sup> The Function of Doctrine and Theology in Light of the Unity of the Church (Lutheran Council in the USA, 1978), p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Wolf, p. 388.

<sup>6</sup> Besides members of the LCA and ALC, Dr. John Tietjen supports this position in his book Which Way to Lutheran Unity?.

APPENDIX A

Missouri's Thirteen Theses, 1881

Thesis I.

We believe, teach, and confess, that God loved the whole world from eternity, created all men unto salvation, no one unto damnation, and wills the salvation of all men; and we, therefore, reject and condemn the contrary Calvinistic doctrine with all our heart.

Thesis II.

We believe, teach, and confess, that the Son of God came into the world for all men, took away and atoned for the sins of all men, and perfectly redeemed all men, no one excepted; and we, therefore, reject and condemn the contrary Calvinistic doctrine with all our heart.

Thesis III.

We believe, . . . that God calls all men through the means of grace earnestly, that is, with the intention that through them they should come to repentance and to faith, be preserved also in faith unto the end and, thus, finally be saved, to which end God offers to them, through the means of grace, the salvation purchased by Christ's satisfaction, and the power to apprehend it in faith; and we, therefore, reject and condemn the contrary Calvinistic doctrine. . . .

Thesis IV.

We believe, . . . that no man is lost because it was not God's will to save him, because God had passed by him with his grace, and had not also offered to him the grace of constancy, and it was not his will to give this grace to him; but that all men who are lost, are lost by their own fault, namely, on account of their unbelief and because they pertinaciously resist the word and grace unto the end, of which "contempt of the word the cause is not God's *predestination* (vel *praescientia* vel *prdestination*), but man's perverse will, which rejects or perverts the means and instrument of the Holy Ghost which God offers to him through the call, and resists the Holy Ghost who wants to be efficacious and work through the Word; as Christ says: How often would I have gathered you together, and ye would not, Matth. 23, 37." (Art. XI. of the Formula of Concord, Part II, p. 713) We, therefore, reject and condemn the contrary Calvinistic doctrine. . . .

Thesis V.

We believe, . . . that the *subject of election of grace* or of predestination are only the true *believers, who truly believe unto the end of their life or, at least, at their end;* we, therefore, reject and condemn the Huberian error, that election is not *particular*, but universal and refers to all men.

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### Thesis VI.

We believe, . . . that the divine decree of election is *unchangeable* and that, therefore, no elect can become a reprobate and be lost, but that every elect one is surely saved; and we, therefore, reject and condemn the contrary Huberian error with all our heart.

### Thesis VII.

We believe, . . . that it is foolish and dangerous for the soul, that it leads either to carnal security or to despair, if one will become, or be, sure of his gracious election or his future eternal salvation *by means of searching the eternal divine, secret decree*, and we reject and condemn the contrary doctrine as a pernicious, enthusiastic error with all our heart.

### Thesis VIII.

We believe, . . . that a believing Christian shall seek to become certain of his election out of God's revealed will; and we, therefore, reject and condemn with all our heart the contrary papistical, erroneous doctrine, that one can become and be certain of his election or salvation only by a new immediate revelation.

### Thesis IX.

We believe, . . . : 1st, that the election of grace does not consist in a *mere divine foreknowing* of which men are saved; 2nd, that election of grace is also *not the mere purpose of God* to redeem and save men, so as to be a *universal* one and to pertain to *all men* in common; 3d, that election of grace does not concern *those believing for a time only* (Luke 8, 13.); 4th, that election of ~~grace~~ *grace* is not a *mere decree of God* to save all those who would believe unto the end. We, therefore, reject and condemn the contrary erroneous doctrines of the Rationalists, Huberians and Arminians. . . .

### Thesis X.

We believe, . . . that the *cause* which moved God to elect the elect, is only his grace and the merit of Jesus Christ, and not anything *good* foreseen by God in the elect, not even *faith foreseen* by God in them; and we, therefore, reject and condemn the contrary erroneous doctrines of the Pelagians, Semipelagians, and Synergists, as errors which are blasphemous and horrible, and which subvert the Gospel and, by consequence, the whole Christian religion.

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Thesis XI.

We believe, . . . that election of grace is not the mere divine foresight or foreknowledge of the salvation of the elect, but even a *cause* of their salvation and of all that which pertains to it, and we, therefore, reject and condemn the contrary doctrines of the Arminians, Socinians, and all Synergists, . . . .

Thesis XII.

We believe, . . . that "God has yet kept secret, and concealed, and reserved to his wisdom and knowledge alone, much of this mystery" of election, which no man can or shall search out, and we, therefore, reject it, if any undertake to inquire curiously into what is not revealed, and to reconcile with their reason what seems contradictory to our reason, whether this is done by Calvinistic, or by Pelagian-synergistic human doctrines.

Thesis XIII.

We believe, . . . that it is not useless, or even dangerous, but that it is necessary and salutary, publicly to set forth to the Christian people, also, the mysterious doctrine concerning election of grace, as far as it is clearly revealed in God's Word, and we, therefore, do not side with those, who hold that this doctrine should either be kept entirely secret, or, at most, only be discussed among the learned.

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APPENDIX B

Ohio's Four Theses, 1881

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Our Confession Concerning Election.

1. If by election we understand, as is done in the Formula of Concord, the entire "purpose, counsel, will, and ordination of God pertaining to our redemption, vocation, justification, and salvation," we believe, teach, and confess that election is *the cause* of our salvation and of everything that in any way pertains to it, therefore, also of our redemption and vocation, of our faith and perseverance in faith. Thus understood, election precedes faith as the cause precedes its effect.

2. But if by election, as the dogmaticians generally do, we understand *merely this*, that from eternity God elected and infallibly ordained to salvation certain individuals in preference to others, and this according to the universal way of salvation, we believe, teach, and confess that election took place *in view of Christ's merit apprehended by faith*, or, more briefly stated but with the same sense, *in view of faith*. According to this understanding faith precedes election in the mind of God, as *the rule*, according to which one selects, precedes the *election* itself, and thus election properly speaking, is not the cause of faith.

3. The mystery in election consists *not* in this, that we do not with certainty know from the Word of God according to what rule God proceeded in the selection of persons, but in this: (a) That no one except God *knows* who belongs to the elect; (b) That we creatures are unable to fathom and comprehend the wonderful guidance and dispensations of the grace of God towards individuals as well as whole nations.

4. The *certainty* of the individual that *he* belongs to the elect is, before his hour of death, *conditional* or *regulated* [*geordnete*] certainly, that is, bound to a certain condition or order; under this condition and in this order, however, it is infallible.

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