

## **Two Theses About the Religious Enthusiasts**

From Dr. Adolf Hoenecke

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*Note: It's been a hundred years now, since our teacher of the church, Dr. Adolf Hoenecke was born. Among the most profitable works of this true servant of our church are not in the least, the lectures that he so often held before synods and conferences. As an example of his clarity in the correct portions of the Word of God – it is called with good reason, qui bene distinguit, bene docet (he, who distinguishes well, teaches well) – these essays of doctrine are still today appropriate and noteworthy for us.*

*We are printing in these issues, the beginning of the essay about the spiritual enthusiasts, which Dr. Hoenecke presented before the whole synodical conference in the year 1894 in Milwaukee. Because there is a lack of space, we are not able to print off the entire work. Should there however be, as we expect, from the audience a lively interest for this such a significantly important article of doctrine, then we would gladly be ready to teach rightly the rest of this and supply the extremely good essay in the following issues.*

*The Editorial Office.*

### **Prelude**

More and more Christendom speckles and defaces through false doctrine. Where is an article of faith, against which no false doctrine has arisen? False doctrine was always harmful; it still is and will remain until the end of days. The harmfulness is not always corrected to its significant position; the one article of faith occupies the location where it is taught. The teaching of angels is not denoted as a central teaching. And however with the denying of the right doctrine regarding the angels, it was as if the door was opened to the Rationalists. Yes, the

father of German Rationalism, Dr Semler, has begun his teaching profession with a paper against the pure doctrine about the evil angels. Yes, the doctrine about the evil angels is usually not recognized by those who learn the fundamentals. And however, the denial of these teachings has been the beginning of a storm, with which the entire paper displaced out of Christendom.

In general, the setting is necessary, that an error, a false teaching therefore is more perishable, even more the article begins with particular concern; even more the disclaimed article of faith stands next to the kernel of saving doctrine; even more also a base error, a fundamental error, some kind of fundamental article is blessing or nullifying error.

Even more dangerous than the even designated principle error, are the fundamental heresies, that is what one has called a false directed principle. Without the expression to employ, Father Luther lamented to the Zwinglians in Marburg in 1529 a false directed principle with law and with the words: "You have a different spirit than us." It is warrantable, to set up three false directed principles of such a kind.

The first nullifies the essence of the Holy Scriptures or of the words in general. With these directed principles, the pertaining part on the name of Christendom no more has a claim. It is no more Christendom, as the Word of God is by itself. This directed principle is all and ever will be a direction, which really denies the teaching about the Trinity, thus also all the anti-trinitarians. The essence of the Scriptures is the divine truth, and before all things the divine truth about the God of the Trinity. Therefore, whoever denies the Trinity, nullifies the essence of the Holy Scripture, in spite of the Bible, pulpit, altar, and teacher's desk.

The second false directed principle is that, which nullifies the essence of the divine Word as not certain, but allows recognition of the triune God and the Scripture to stand as a supernatural revelation; but places the same false practice and through it the effectiveness of the

Word is most greatly harmed. That is the directed principle of aggregated words or mixture of words, when one in particular the principle teaching of the word, Law and Gospel, is mixed with one another, as the Pietists have done and still do.

The third false directed principle is that, which in fact nullifies the essence of the divine Word as not certain, at least for the most part nullifies that which is not around the words; but still robs the men of the fully blessed effectiveness of the Word in greatest fear of the wise, in that the Word actually sits not at all in legitimate practice and by that, which the Word should work, wait for some other working. This false directed principle is the spiritual enthusiasts or the *Schwarmgeisterei* (Religious Enthusiasts). The first and second false directed principles often are, probably also *ex professo*, dealt with in our circles, not so concerning the last. And still it is certainly well done, also once for the body of the three false directed principles to dissect and to dismantle its constituents.

### **Thesis I**

The religious enthusiast is verifiably at all times of the church a joint evil, before it also the church until the end of the day, it seems, surely never permits.

#### **1. What the religious enthusiast places his principle character upon.**

When we look at the principle character of the spiritual enthusiast, it is historically detectable, that they were one of all the common evils in the last times for the church. It has not been given a certain distinction, in which once distinct character always reoccurs in one appearance, which again and again the spiritual enthusiast was or was designated self-evidently with completely synonymous words for example in the church of the east and west of old time.

Spiritual enthusiasm is of such a type and nature, which recurs in many separate views. She is a mother with many daughters, which at first glance are often dissimilar, however all are similar in principle character to the mother. It gives a principle essence of the spiritual enthusiast, who recurs in great variety, with various names called organizations. And in these senses we say: the spiritual enthusiast is verifiably at all times of the church a joint evil – an always alive pestilence and plague – whenever not in the same anger and with the same external aggravating symptoms.

Regarding the term spiritual enthusiast is to say, that to us the Scripture certainly does not give a formulated definition of this idea, but in many places a description of the matter. Spiritual enthusiast is a church word. Luther, by whom one finds no enthusiastic vein, speaks most abundantly about the enthusiasts, spiritual enthusiasts, and enthusiastic spirit, also the spirit of enthusiasm. Also he brings out a characterizing course of conversation about the father of the church. So for example one of Basil the great: that the enthusiast swarms with tongues like bees. The old Greek and Roman doctrine of the church used a description of the people namely the word enthusiasts, also known as visionaries. The Romans also used the word fanatic. Both expressions naturally find themselves in the Latin clerical Scriptures of our Lutheran church. The Apology speaks on it, article 13 regarding fanatic men, who teach like the old enthusiasts. Likewise the three parts of the Smalcald Articles. As in the confessional writings, so also we find the expression used in the private writings. Luther also used equivalent expressions: gangs, spirit gangs, heavenly prophets, sacramentalists, Anabaptist; also even captains: Schwenkfeldtianer, Zwinglians, and so on. In his last confession about the holy Lord's Supper he points out, that he considers it essential. He says: "I count it all in a cake, that is, for sacramentalists and enthusiasts."

One can ask why does Luther refer well to the enthusiasts? It might appear as if he is referring to the great crowds, in which they dream about the world without a stronghold and base. As Luther says in one place, Paul lifts up 1 Corinthians 15:3 as diligently bringing forth the scripture, that he defends the romping spirits, and in this way defends the scripture and external sermon and for it seeks another heavenly revelation, “As it is now dream all about such spirits destroyed by such a spirit through the devil.” And in the interpretation of Matthew, chapters 5 and 7, he shows yes, also by way of a very distinct characteristic of the enthusiast and false preacher, that they without a firm parish, therein standing through godly profession, dreaming about in the world and creeping through every parish, “who are driven here without authority and command, are tramps. (Leipzig Augsburg IX, 307.)

Alone one with such an outward connection, yet well Luther does not give in earnestness to the “enthusiasts”. In the quote mentioned above in 1 Corinthian 15:3, we have only an occasional allusion. We have heard a short while ago, that Luther himself refers to the words of Basil regarding the enthusiast: “They swarm with their tongues like bees.” One has understood about the waves of emotion, about which the enthusiast is most moved; about the enthusiasts thoughts, which flirt like a swarm of bees through and among themselves.” Or it could even mean that Luther refers to the enthusiasts also as “spiritual flutter.” But when one hears, as Luther lamented it according to John 17:11 as the appalling mischief of the enthusiasts, that these same ones consort the fine writings either damnable or “more than that, flirting and running,” so one cannot be more clear, which connection Luther properly gives to the “enthusiast.” Namely, who are the enthusiasts with the tongues, like the bees, that prowl like the bees in the air and juggle about without a firm foothold and foundation. On that, the qualification of the enthusiast always comes out by Luther, that he also brought on so many other characteristics, he also states

the chief characteristic is always this, that they do not base the credit of the Spirit and the enjoyment of his gifts and the life from the Spirit on a steady united foundation.

This foundation is Scripture. Spirit is not without Scripture, and Scripture without Spirit; which are both principles, which Luther standing against the enthusiasts pointed out and proves from Scripture as a divine principle. Both are to be dismissed also by the enthusiasts on their own. Their antithesis is: Scripture without Spirit! The Scripture is a dead letter; the word is able at the most to point out and teach. But the word and Scripture do not give what they teach. Word and Scripture do not give the Spirit. Therefore, one also cannot receive it through the Scripture. Let us listen to Luther speak: "When such things clink in the ears, then the Holy Spirit goes with the word in the heart, where he wants; for he does not blow it to all; therefore, all will not grasp it. – nevertheless the word does not go away without fruit; one who always preaches the same must hear and act and drive, until the Holy Spirit comes once again. Apart from that, there is not other way to do it. That you sit in the corner juggling in conceit, gaping and waiting toward heaven, as you look for it to come. The word is several bridges and streams, through which the Holy Spirit comes to us. As one reads in Acts 10" (XI, 446).

The Acts of the Apostles will tell us, about the whole house of Cornelius: "Without fail, the Word was heard by them, the Holy Spirit fell on them." Here stands not one letter thereof, that we through the word of God only become stimulated, to us now to rise up, to penetrate, without the Word, in God. No, through Peter's preaching of the word came the Holy Spirit with his gifts on the hearer. And in the letter to the Galatians 3:2 it relates: "That alone will I learn about you: has it, the Spirit, been received through the law of works, or through the preaching of faith?" Through no one's own spiritually enthusiastic preparation, through no work, that we can

do at all, but merely through the preaching of faith we receive the Holy Spirit and his goodness as an undeserved gift.

The various methods of the enthusiast, to receive the Holy Spirit without the Word, are old and well known by Luther. He comes to speak more often about it, namely in his Scripture from the heavenly prophets. “The new prophets have now invented in place of the Word a new kind of spirit, a new vanity of the Word, with this they lead the common people with a fools rope... if one now hears the word, so will the Holy Spirit be given, who through the heart of faith purifies, according to Romans 10: The faith comes out of the preaching, surely not alone, to those who hear, rather to those whom God wills. Because the wind blows, where it wants, not where we want... These arrangements leave out the new prophets and tread in this way here. Firstly, they resort to matters of death. These they divide into many levels or weights, to which they give many kinds of names (correction of grossness, a wonderment, a study, a longing for, emptiness of creature.) And they give no one justice, then, unless through these levels has come the most perfect death, then they will be filled with the Holy Spirit, that they have the power over everything, know everything, and want everything. For the Holy Spirit comes to them not through the preaching of the word, which they proudly despise, but rather through mortification... therefore in this manner you see here publicly the devil at work, that they begin the mortification, which however should follow after the Word, faith, and Spirit, and despise likewise the Word, and that they end their matter on the spirit, which alone however should go beforehand” (IV, 159ff). In addition, if one but asks them: How does one arrive at the same lofty Spirit? Thus they point you not to outward gospel, but to the fool’s paradise, and say, stand in longing, like I have stood, so will you go; where the heavenly voices will come and God himself will speak to you. Do you say again after the boredom, they know no less about it than Dr.

Carlstadt knows about the Greek and Hebrew language (XIX, 186ff). And then Luther leads once again about those who give aid to the Spirit are obliged to religiously enthusiastic methods of mortification, which are a new meadow, which kills old men, and invents all here, a prevention of grossness, a study, a wonderment, a longing for, and more of the juggling works, about which not one word stands in the Scripture.” Now one hears freely what is meant by these things. Luther, himself, leads on more and more. About the correction of grossness, for example he says, “The monks have been called the working life (in contrast to the contemplative), which stands therein, that the man holds and forces evil desires and lust in his bridle and outwardly leads the life with good customs, through fasting and chastening of the flesh and so on... of which the spiritual ruffian, Muenzer<sup>1</sup> calls *entgroben* (correction of the coarser vices<sup>2</sup>). Muenzer said that through that, comes the real fear of God, How does God now come, how does the Spirit into the heart? Muenzer says about this, He comes down from above in a lofty wonderment. He even calls these things a longing for, a study, a temptation, a worded dismantling. Muenzer was well acquainted with the writings of the mystics. He said himself, that he has read Joachim of Floris, Suso, and Tauler. He is by himself above all more difficult to understand and more ambiguous than by his greatest decaying teaching in mysticism. What he calls a study, that is the meditation of his great teaching, one still has a moderate understanding of God and divine things. What he calls a longing for, is the contemplation of the mystics, where there is no sober thoughts, but instead has delights in the appearance of God. But the highest extent, which Luther

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<sup>1</sup> Lutheran Encyclopedia, 1984, p 561. s.v. Münzer, Thomas  
Tried to surpass M Luther as reformer; fanatical ascetic and Anabaptist; built religion on direct revelation; claimed enlightenment by inner light through visions, dreams, etc.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Müntzer, “*Deutsch-Evangelische Messe*,” *Schriften und Briefe*, ed. Günther Franz (Gütersloh, 1968), p. 162.

fully exhausted, is Muenzer's worded exposure, the mystics inner mortification, Molino's<sup>3</sup> so called inner abstraction, where one forbears thinking penetration of God and is conscious of practical desires toward God – the full rejection of self and so on – where one waits in an unconscious gaze, a description of someone whose worries keep them awake. Here God meets him without means. Oneness of God flows out to him as a simple light, as taught already by the Hesychasm<sup>4</sup>, who showed themselves to be dark, nakedness, nothing. In the dark, man loses all way and digresses as though wandering. In the nakedness (Muenzer's dismantling) man loses all sight and discrimination. The mystics and enthusiasts go through the exuberance of emotion with a sober mind. All of the Enthusiasts are snakes, where the one soon dazzles more beautifully than the other, but they are all poisonous snakes and finally half way agree in their false teaching: God is not without me, I am not without God. One can also bring up that the definitions of the dark oracles of the Enthusiasts are unclear, one can only repeat their visions and roughly determined meaning. Especially as a healthy Christian, who thanks be to God, is neither counseled in every mystical rebellion, nor standing in wait, as Carlstadt praised about himself, that he could without imagination produce these visions. The longing for which was spoken of before Luther described, "A spiritual ruffian runs to a spot, opens his mouth, must neither read nor listen, but wait until our Lord God speaks to him, and while waiting for the spirit says, O, this has to be learned from God" (IX, 590). And once again, are the spiritual enthusiasts, when they hear that is has been said here, 'if the father does not move you, then he is not able to come to you.' They outwardly despise the Word, will it certainly take away and let go, and render, that

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<sup>3</sup> Lutheran Cyclopedia, 1984. p. 553 s.v. Molino, Miguel de Quietist; Held that perfection consisted in union with and transformation into God; in this state external observances are a hindrance and means of grace unnecessary.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid p. 377 s.v. Hesychasm System of mysticism in Eastern Orthodox Ch.; propagated by monks of Mount Athos, Greece. Held that man, esp. through quiet of body and mind, could attain a vision of the Uncreated Light of deity (beatific vision), which was God's "energy," but not His essence.

man will not pay attention to the Word, that Christ himself has surely spoken with his own mouth; but man should crawl to a spot, grasp his head in his hands, speculate, and search for God, that they are nurtured for the Word and without the Word” (IX, 587).

All of the Spiritual enthusiast is contrary to Luther’s principle: The Spirit comes only through Scripture. “Do you see there the Devil, the enemy of divine order? How he comes to you with the words Spirit, Spirit, Spirit! The mouth is shut and still at the same time both bridges, web and path, conductor outlines all, through it the Holy Spirit is supposed to come to you, namely through the outer order of God in the christening of the body, signs, and oral Word of God and will teach you, not as the Spirit coming to you, but as you should come to the Spirit, that you should learn by ascending up into the clouds and riding on the wind, and still not saying anything, as or if, where or what, but should experience it yourself as they do” (XIX, 187).

How true this is: the Spirit is not without Scripture! Rightly as disciples of Luther, we should take it well to heart and guard ourselves against the least departure from it. It will also always arrive at this, that we direct our people toward the true Scripture, laying out the Scripture, truly bringing in the Scripture. Certainly it is a right teaching, that the Word of God existed in his being in accordance with the divine is truth. But the Word, as it is read in Scripture, and the truth belong together. Neither Word without doctrine – nor doctrine without Word.

It is still worth the pain to say, what is to be understood besides Spirit, when we say: Spirit is not without Scripture; Spirit is not without Word of God. Certainly the person of the Holy Spirit is meant by Spirit, the Spirit more than gift; but actually is not primarily and in any case not alone. Beneath the Spirit is understood his authority, his actions, his deeds upon individuals as on the whole, the edification of the individual men as the entire church. It relates itself here with the Spirit as by the sin against the Holy Spirit. This sin is surely not actually the

sin against the person, but against the authority and work of the Holy Spirit, so also here.

Beneath the Spirit is not understood only as the person and its indwelling as the Spirit of childhood, but what the Spirit works and creates. Luther also understands the principle, that we receive the Spirit through the Word. “Therefore, do you desire the gift of the Holy Spirit? Do you desire some improvement of your children and your household? Then go this way, listen carefully to the word of God, and hold to the Word, as you are commanded. Then the Holy Spirit alone heals and makes the heart healthy, as through sin, it becomes wounded and tainted. He heals however and makes healthy through the Word of the gospel, in which we are punished for sin, with justice and judgement” (VIII, 235). “Spirit means and is everything, so the Holy Spirit works in us” (XI, 154). “Also the spirit is a man, who inwardly and outwardly lives and works, who serves the spirit and future existence” (XII, 59). Also meant by the Spirit of God is driven to wage war on such a heart, who here gladly hears the Word of God and believes in Christ, that he has in himself grace and forgiveness of sins (XIV, 178). “Spirit means, what in the nature and human substance God creates in us, namely spiritual insight, light, understanding, so he reveals to us, through it we see God, and turn us to him, to take hold of his grace, and cleaves to it” (XIV, 25).

Of all of the members of our congregation it should be made clear, that the people, whom Luther called the Schwärmer (religious enthusiasts), are founded on a false directed base. That is for example a Lutheran bridegroom, who does not want to marry a Roman Catholic, but intends to marry a bride out of a reformed congregation, who is not however as dangerous for his faith life. There is a difference in teaching between the Reformed and Lutherans, but this is not as important. Thus the bridegroom thinks, because he does not recognize, that the Reformed and Schwärmer move in an entirely different direction than we Lutherans. The false doctrine, which

the Schwärmer gives, however does not run parallel with the doctrine of scripture. Is it the entire section or a part of the way? But they go the opposite direction, in direct opposition to the even path. Every false directed foundation must finally come there, where the first spiritual enthusiast, the Devil had come, namely to it, "Would God really have said?" According to the scriptures and rightly directed foundation is the foundation of salvation, that is the scriptures; according to the spiritual enthusiast it is not the scriptures. According to the Scriptures and the rightly directed foundation the Scriptures are the standard and touchstone of all doctrine and Spirit, according to the spiritual enthusiast it is not the Scriptures. According to the Scriptures and the rightly directed foundation, the Scriptures are the means, through which the Holy Spirit works all spiritual good. According to the spiritual enthusiast it is not the Scriptures.

Declaredly, the office of the preacher should not ever be reformed thus it is understood, as the pastor stands through the means of grace as the messenger of God before his congregation, but the reformed preacher is only the employee, who through his knowledge, experience, encouragement, and conversation, stands before the congregation and does a service for it.

Appropriately it is certain, that once spoken by the old Mystics, that one also is found in Lutheran intended circles by one precious, recovered mystic says, when one speaks of Tauler and others. Yes, the work of Luther will explain his supposed conclusion about the mystics. But Luther himself tells us, that he has dragged every doctrine probably twenty times through the Scripture. Therefore, we have not the Mystic or the religious enthusiast to thank, but to the Word and Scripture, for Luther's teaching and work. And now then we will remain Luther's student, if we seek the Holy Spirit and of the Spirit's work only in the Word of the Scriptures. Also, we should not be mistaken, that Luther just as Spener, the father of pietism, and Tauler had recommended the mystic booklet *German Theology*. Luther recommended the *German Theology*

and to Tauler, because in the same one still Christ is meant in that poor time, that one of the names and works of Christ is silent. But Luther felt nearly, that the poor Christ must have a more healthy bread than the *German Theology* and Tauler; and he therefore lays himself on the translation of the Bible and begins with the book of Psalms. Spener on the contrary has such an array of healthy Lutheran edifying literature before himself that it is surely to him an imminent evil, laying aside the healthy Lutheran edifying literature and to allow the mystics to advise.

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### **Zwei Thesen über die Schwarmgeisterei: Reaction**

I must begin by saying that I chose to do a German translation to use the skills that I had acquired in my previous years of school. The main benefit I was looking to get out of this experience was to use, or perhaps a better word, hone if you will my skills of translating from the German language, not to mention the theological aspect.

When I started out with this work of Adolf Hoenecke, I must admit that the work was slow going. This was due to the fact that I hadn't been in the language for a few years. Abilities aside, I found this paper of Hoenecke's to be very intriguing. What I mean by this is that his word use was quite picturesque. His illustrations and quotations taken from Luther were right on, and emphasized extremely well the point that he was making. Although he at times used large seemingly manufactured words, his style came across as being very easy to understand. It seemed as though at times that this was written to be spoken as a sermon. That however may not be the view of every reader. My point in saying so is to compliment Hoenecke on his orchestration of the first part the *Two Theses on the Religious Enthusiasts*.

In regard to the quotations that Hoenecke used, I translated them as my own. As they are Luther's, I took the liberty of translating them from the German and not using an already translated source. In cases where I didn't know what a word meant, I went to Luther's Works. If you look at the Xerox copy, you'll notice that Hoenecke used the Leipzig edition of LW. This presented a problem in looking for the Luther quotes that had already been translated. To make a long story short, after much digging, I finally was able to use the original Leipzig edition in the archives to cross-reference by book, chapter, and verse where the quote was located in the LW that we use now. It wasn't in Vogel's cross-reference. I only cross-referenced two of the quotes, only because I couldn't find a specific definition of a word. In any case, I certainly learned much interesting information about the many works (editions) of Luther.

In regard to issues pertaining to dogmatic or theological, I found it quite interesting to follow what the thinking was in that time as it pertained to the Holy Spirit. It is interesting that through the many years, that emphasis of the Holy Spirit working without the means of the word is really widely believed and that you just "run to a spot and wait" isn't all that far from what is going on in the world with some today. Everything now is spiritual, with an emphasis on the lower case "s". Yet, the real Spirit(ual) that should be referred to is not, because they base their spirit, though flighty as a swarm of bees on a "false directed foundation/principle."

One additional comment that I would add was the historical insight I received by translating this paper, especially regarding the different heresies and who was known to be behind them (i.e. Basil, Tauler, Spener, Münzer, et al).