

DR. MATTHIAS LOY AND HIS ROLE IN THE ELECTION CONTROVERSY

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The mid-1900's were a sad period for confessional Lutherans in the United States because those years saw the largest Lutheran church bodies retreat from the confessional positions they had once held. By contrast, the mid-1800's saw just the opposite trend. Lutherans were becoming less liberal and more confessional. This trend was especially strong in the Midwest where it was led by Dr. C.F.W. Walther and the Saxon Lutherans in the Missouri Synod. Along with this desire for greater confessionalism came a desire for fellowship and union with other like-minded Lutherans. In the Midwest this desire bore fruit when the Missouri, Ohio, Norwegian, Wisconsin, Illinois, and Minnesota Synods formed the Synodical Conference in 1872.

One of the most gifted leaders of the Ohio Synod at that time was Dr. Matthias Loy, who served his synod as parish pastor, professor, editor, and synod president. He worked hard to promote confessional Lutheranism and took his stand firmly on the word of God and the Lutheran confessions. Concerning the Synodical Conference, he wrote: "The Ohio Synod joined in its formation, and I rejoiced in the attainment of a purpose which, in my sight, contained the promise of unspeakable blessings."⁽¹⁾ But the blessings Dr. Loy had hoped for failed to materialize because a controversy over the doctrine of election soon divided the Synodical Conference. Dr. Loy, who felt bound by God's word and his

conscience, led the Ohio Synod out of the Synodical Conference because they could not accept Missouri's doctrine of election.

Matthias Loy was born March 17, 1828, to poor German immigrants living in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. His father was Catholic but did not practice his religion nor prevent his Lutheran wife from instructing their children according to her faith. She tried hard to do this and took them to church whenever there was an opportunity. Loy's mother died when he was nine years old but his father soon remarried. At age fourteen Loy became a printer's apprentice, learning a skill that he would continue to make use of the rest of his life.

A short time later Loy's family moved out of Harrisburg but he found room and board with the Hummel family. They were devout Lutherans and in their company he became a regular church-goer. During his free time he attended the Harrisburg Academy where he studied Latin and Greek. His pastor, Rev. C.W. Schaefer, encouraged him to study for the ministry. Loy anticipated going to Gettysburg, the seminary of the General Synod, but circumstances prevented him from doing so.

Ill health forced him to temporarily abandon the printing business. After recovering he obtained a job with the United Brethren Publishing House in Circleville, Ohio. He was only there for a short time because a lawyer in Circleville named Joseph Geiger and the local Lutheran pastor, J. Roof, strongly urged him to enroll immediately at the Theological Seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Ohio, located twenty-five miles to the north in Columbus. These men also helped him to obtain an honorable

release from his printing contract and he enrolled at the Seminary in the fall of 1847.

At the seminary Loy's Lutheran convictions grew stronger. He became an avid reader of the Missouri Synod's Lutheraner and began to perceive that the Ohio Synod needed some strong confessionalism to oppose the tides of liberalism, unionism and doctrinal indifference.

In March, 1849, he graduated from the Seminary and was assigned to a congregation at Delaware, Ohio, and a smaller charge nearby at Middletown, now Prospect. Both congregations shared a church building with congregations of the German Reformed Church. When Loy arrived, he found two congregations characterized by laxity in doctrine and practice, promiscuous communion and liberalism. He worked hard, teaching his congregations to become more Lutheran. He tried to practice "close" communion and required converts from other denominations to take his adult instruction course. He met with some opposition within his own congregations and from the Reformed pastor, but his most vocal adversaries were the faculty of Wesleyan Methodist College, also located in Delaware. Nevertheless, his efforts for confessional Lutheranism paid off, for in 1853 his Delaware congregation dedicated its own Lutheran house of worship. Not long afterwards his Middletown congregation did the same.

Loy acquired a synod-wide reputation because of his ardent defense of confessional Lutheranism. He was even called a "Missourian" because he stood with Missouri on the doctrines of church and ministry and against unionism and membership in secret

societies. Through his efforts in behalf of confessionalism he became friends with Wyneken, Sihler, Schwan and Walther of the Missouri Synod. Although many in Missouri recklessly condemned Ohio's pioneer pastors, Loy had a more forgiving attitude toward them: "They were Lutherans of simple evangelical faith and if they erred, it was not because they had a spirit different from that of the Lutheran churches of old, but because their intellectual insight was defective."(2)

In 1860 Loy was elected president of the Joint Synod of Ohio. Four years later the synod appointed him editor of the synod's weekly newspaper, The Lutheran Standard. As editor he was also responsible to be the publisher and business manager of the periodical. In 1865 he resigned his call as parish pastor to accept a call as professor of theology at Capital University in Columbus, the synod's new college which he had helped establish. In 1878 he declined a call from the Missouri Synod to become English professor of theology at St. Louis.(3) During that same year he resigned as president of the synod because of ill health and because he had been asked to take on the presidency of Capital University. He was succeeded by Prof. W.F. Lehmann who died two years later at which time Loy was elected synod president again and served until 1892. In 1881 he started and edited the synod's first theological journal, The Columbus Theological Magazine. In his later years ill health forced him to resign these posts one after another. He retired as professor emeritus in 1902 and died in 1915.

Dr. Loy was a prolific writer, especially for his synod's

periodicals. He also authored the following books: The Doctrine of Justification, 1868; Essay on the Ministerial Office, 1882; Sermons on the Gospels, 1888; The Christian Church, 1896; and an autobiography, Story of My Life, 1905. He also wrote or translated a number of fine hymns, fourteen of which appear in The Lutheran Hymnal. WELS members will recognize his companion hymns on law and gospel, "The Law of God is Good and Wise" and "The Gospel Shows the Father's Grace."

The name Matthias Loy might have become more widely known in the Wisconsin Synod if it had not been for his role in leading the Ohio Synod out of the Synodical Conference because of the controversy over the doctrine of election. If that controversy could have been resolved peacefully his name might have become as familiar to us as the names Muehlhaeuser, Bading, Hoenecke, Pieper and Koehler.

Why was disagreement over the doctrine of election so divisive to the Synodical Conference? It all has to do with the question, why are some saved and not others? This can be restated in different ways: Why are some converted and not others? Why did God elect some to be saved and not others? The last question was the primary one in this controversy but the other two played in as well.

Theologians have always been troubled by these questions because the Bible doesn't answer them. In fact, it doesn't even raise them. In his word, God tells us everything we need to know for our salvation. On matters where the Bible is silent we ought not inquire either. But human beings are naturally curious and

have difficulty accepting the Bible's silence on these questions.

When man uses his own reason to answer these questions, the result inevitably is false doctrine. The Bible tells us that God wants to save all people (1 Tm 2:4) and alone is able to save (1 Cor 12:3). As for man, it says he is both unable to save himself (1 Cor 2:14) and is unwilling to be saved (Ro 8:7). Concerning the fact that some are saved while others are lost, man reasons that there is either a difference in God or in man. Either God doesn't really want to save all people as John Calvin taught, or man has some remaining ability to turn to God, to resist the Holy Spirit less, to cooperate with the Spirit in conversion or to perform works that earn God's favor. Those who see the difference in man are called Synergists or Pelagians. Calvin denied that God's grace is for all. Synergists and Pelagians deny that man is totally depraved as the result of original sin. Both teachings are contrary to Scripture.

In considering the doctrine of election, human reason comes up with the same two errors. Why does God elect some to be saved and not others? Scripture states that election is purely a matter of grace (Eph 1:4-6). Calvin taught a double predestination, that God arbitrarily chose to save some and to damn the rest. Scripture, however, teaches an election that is not arbitrary but of grace and it does not teach an election to damnation but only to salvation. Synergists, on the other hand, teach that God elected some to be saved because he saw something good in them. But Scripture teaches the doctrine of original sin, that there is nothing good to be found in man. F.A. Schmidt and his supporters

in the controversy taught an election "in view of faith" (intuitu fidei). This phrase can be understood correctly if one takes it to mean that God elects a person to salvation via faith, but that is not how Schmidt understood it. He believed that God elects a person because he foresaw from eternity that this person would believe. For him, God's grace and Christ's redemption were still the primary causes of election but faith was the cause sine qua non. Faith was the difference between election and non-election.

For several years Dr. Walther had been presenting essays to the Western District of the Missouri Synod on the theme: "The Lutheran doctrine of _____ is the correct Bible doctrine because it gives all glory to God." He might have suspected there was not unanimity within the Synodical Conference on the doctrine of election for in 1877 he read an essay on the subject to the convention of the Western District. He stated that because the correct Bible doctrine gives all glory to God, the phrase intuitu fidei can no longer be used. God does not elect a person to be saved "in view of his faith", i.e. because he foresaw that person would believe.

Not everyone agreed with Walther. Friedrich Schmidt of the Norwegian Synod and men like Henry Allwardt and Frederick Stelhorn of the Missouri Synod boldly criticized Walther's view on election. They thought they detected John Calvin's doctrine of predestination in statements like:

God has from eternity chosen a certain number of persons unto salvation; he has determined that these shall and must be saved, and as surely as God is God, so surely will they also be saved, and besides them none others.(4)

Men like Schmidt were not deliberately teaching synergism but were trying to rationalize what Scripture does not explain. Unfortunately they went beyond Scripture in doing so. Their error in election led them also to errors in the doctrines of conversion and original sin. If God elects "in view of faith" man must have some measure of self-determination, although small, in his own conversion. Because they knew synergism was contrary to Scripture they went to great lengths to minimize the ability of man to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in conversion. They developed the doctrine that there are two kinds of resistance to the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion. Some men resist with only a natural resistance. The Spirit can overcome this and they are converted. Others go beyond natural resistance and resist willfully, thereby putting up an obstacle the Spirit cannot overcome. But the Bible teaches that every man resists the Holy Spirit willfully (1 Cor 2:14, Ro 8:7). The error of intuitu fidei leads also to errors in the doctrines of conversion and original sin.

Walther and his supporters recognized this and testified against the error of intuitu fidei but their testimony was not accepted by Schmidt and his friends. They would not accept Walther's statements on election because they saw Calvinistic elements in them. But there was another factor that biased them against him. Within the Synodical Conference Missouri was perceived as having an attitude of superiority over against the other synods. One cannot excuse false doctrine for this reason. Nevertheless Missouri's superiority made the Ohioans fight harder

to defend their error and less willing to accept Missouri's well-intended admonition.

The Missouri Synod was the largest of the bodies composing the Synodical Conference so it is hardly surprising that its influence should reach beyond its own membership, especially since it zealously contended for pure Lutheran doctrine. Yet, the sinfulness of even right-minded men has a way of spoiling a good thing. Dr. Loy observed:

All the while there was something which had a depressing effect on a large portion of the membership [of the Synodical Conference]. The Missouri Synod dominated the Conference. It was numerically the strongest of the synods united in it, and it was the strongest in intellectual power and theological learning. ... But the great thing had its drawbacks. The Missourians were conscious of their superiority, and some were manifestly proud of it. Among them were not lacking weak brethren who manifested this in ways bordering on insolence, as though they would say, We are the people, but who are you? That was not the spirit of Dr. Walther and the chief men around him.(5)

Roy Suelflow, a contemporary Missouri historian, also pointed to this problem in connection with the election controversy: "The Missouri Synod of that time waged a zealous pursuit of pure doctrine. Even the possibility of error was abhorred as almost blasphemous."(6) Dr. Loy handled Missouri's "infallibility complex" by putting the best construction on it. Others were deeply offended and it became a real obstacle to solving the controversy.

Dr. Walther towered over all the other theologians of the Missouri Synod. Many outside his synod looked to him for leadership in the defense of confessional Lutheranism. The Ohio Synod even bestowed an honorary doctorate on him in 1878. Dr. Loy

was a friend and admirer of him: "As he was a man sincerely devoted to the Lord and to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, I was glad that we had him among us, and was thankful that God had given us so powerful an advocate of a cause so dear to my heart."(7) Dr. Loy appreciated Walther's great gifts but was also able to recognize the great man's weakness:

He was accustomed to have his doctrinal statements accepted as indisputably correct and his judgment assented to as decisive and final. He could brook no public contradiction when he had spoken. He had become a dictator by habit, without claiming to be this or to have any authority for it. This had the effect of inducing men to be silent when they should have spoken, preferring not to express their dissent when this might be followed by unpleasant situations.(8)

In Dr. Loy's autobiography, he relates the following incident to demonstrate Walther's weakness. At one Synodical Conference meeting an important topic of discussion was left in a form that did not satisfy Loy and several other men. They secured the appointment of a committee representing all the synods of the Conference to compose a paper to clarify the ambiguity that made them uneasy. They presented their paper to Walther who was acting as moderator. He glanced at it briefly but set it aside as not expressing what he wanted. No further action was taken nor was the paper presented to the Conference. Dr. Loy did not record this incident in order to put down Walther but to show that the great man had his faults and those faults hindered a settlement of the controversy.

The election controversy started out as a dispute between Walther and his opponents within the Missouri Synod such as Schmidt, Stellhorn, and Allwardt. As the controversy spread and

involved other synods of the Synodical Conference, the Ohio Synod tried at first to play the role of peacemaker. It endeavored to hold down the angry polemics that were being hurled back and forth. It recognized that there were real differences between the two parties but hoped that the Synodical Conference could serve as the arena in which these differences could be discussed and resolved in an evangelical manner.(9) The constitution of the Conference listed among its purposes the "furtherance of unity in teaching and practice, and the elimination of potential or threatening disturbance thereof."(10) In order to find an early settlement to the problem, Schmidt sought a conference to discuss the disputed points. A meeting was arranged to follow the regular Conference convention of July, 1879, at Columbus, Ohio. No settlement was reached but both parties agreed to avoid public polemics and to discuss the matter only in private.

Later that year Walther continued his presentation on the doctrine of election at another convention of Missouri's Western District. Schmidt was outraged because he regarded this act as a breach of the Columbus agreement and began publishing Altes und Neues, a theological journal in which he accused Walther of being a crypto-Calvinist and defended the use of the phrase intuitu fidei. Schmidt was originally from the Missouri Synod and had served as the Norwegian Synod exchange professor on the seminary faculty at St. Louis. At the time of the controversy he was serving on the faculty of the Norwegian Synod's new seminary in Madison, Wisconsin. By publishing his new journal, Schmidt made the dispute into a full-blown public controversy. Stelhorn and

Allwardt joined him in vigorous opposition to Walther.

One might have expected the Synodical Conference to act quickly before the rift between the two opposing sides became too wide to bridge but it failed to do so for several reasons. In 1879 the Conference had inexplicably resolved to begin meeting every other year instead of annually. Its president, W.F. Lehmann, a professor at the Ohio Synod's seminary in Columbus, was asked to call a special meeting of the Conference but declined to do so. In all charity, Lehmann might not have felt up to it for his health was declining and he died of cancer on December 1, 1881.(11)

No one stepped forward as leader so the member synods had to deal with the controversy themselves. President Schwan of Missouri called a general pastoral conference for the pastors of his synod. They met at Chicago from September 29 until October 5, 1880. An overwhelming majority at this meeting backed Walther. Those who adamantly defended intuitu fidei realized that they could not remain in the Missouri Synod. In 1881 Stellhorn and Allwardt left Missouri and joined the Ohio Synod. Stellhorn, who had been Missouri's exchange professor at Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin, accepted a call to Capital University in Columbus, Ohio, and later served as president of Ohio's seminary in that city.(12)

Beginning January 5, 1881, a conference of all the theological professors, district presidents and synod presidents of the Synodical Conference met in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for five days in order to discuss the doctrine of election. At this meeting all

discussions were to be based on Scripture alone and not on the Lutheran Confessions. Even this was not enough because the discussions stalled when a deadlock was reached over the proper interpretation of Romans 9:29. One side contended that "foreknow" meant to know in the sense of "know as one's own." The other side contended that "foreknow" meant only God's consciousness of a fact. Because of this impasse the conference failed to achieve its objective.(13)

After this time Dr. Loy, though a warm friend and admirer of Dr. Walther, felt bound by his conscience to oppose a doctrine he believed to be in conflict with Scripture. He also saw Calvinistic elements in Walther's statement of his doctrine. Perhaps he was sensitive on these points because of his earlier struggles when his congregations had shared their church building with a Reformed congregation. Perhaps Walther had not been as careful with his early statements as he might have been because he was not used to having his statements questioned or because he was so zealous in ferreting out the synergism he saw creeping into the Lutheran church through the use of intuitu fidei.

Dr. Loy was deeply concerned that Calvinistic errors were being introduced by Walther and started a new theological journal, The Columbus Theological Magazine, in order to oppose this error:

In the history of our Lutheran Church in this country we have reached a point at which the necessity is laid upon us to make the venture [of starting a new journal]. A doctrine of more than ordinary intricacy has been thrust into the foreground of discussion within our own organization. We are not at liberty to ignore it; the trouble has come, and it must be faced. But the discussion of such a subject in a periodical designed for general circulation among the people [The Lutheran

Standard] is a precarious matter. There is danger that many will become perplexed, disquieted, offended. We wish it were otherwise, but we see no way of performing what seems to us a duty, save that of establishing another medium of communication with those who are able and willing to study the doctrine now unhappily in controversy in the Lutheran Church.(14)

Dr. Loy was convinced that Missouri had erred but did not intend to use his journal for harsh and angry polemics. Rather, he had a nobler purpose, hoping that the truth might triumph. The pursuit of that goal would be the primary purpose of his new theological journal.

In Dr. Loy's first article he sets forth his conviction that Missouri was introducing a new doctrine into the Lutheran church. The phrase intuitu fidei had been used by Lutheran theologians for three hundred years. Those conservative theologians of the past had based their teaching on Scripture and had been able to defend it against all foes, especially those of the Reformed church. Dr. Loy quoted Conrad Dietrich whose catechism was widely used among Lutherans, who had written: "Election is that act of God by which ... he has, ... resolved to save all who steadfastly believe in Christ until their end."(15) Loy also quoted Quenstedt, one of the great orthodox theologians who had written: "Not all are elected, ..., but only some, i.e. those who believe in Christ until their end."(16) Dr. Loy made a strong case for his belief that intuitu fidei had been the established doctrine of the Lutheran church since the Formula of Concord but that doesn't prove it is the doctrine of Scripture.

In his first article, "The Burning Question, " Dr. Loy goes on

to state six reasons why he and the Ohio Synod oppose Dr. Walther's doctrine: 1) The new doctrine is "an outgrowth of philosophical speculation" and "a dangerous submission to the dictates of human reason." Walther has tried to solve the mystery of why some are saved and not others, but the Bible states that God wants to save all and those who are lost perish because they have rejected his grace. Walther has rendered God's revealed plan of salvation practically nugatory. 2) The new doctrine damages the revealed truth that God is love. His doctrine of predestination presents God as a cruel and heartless monster who is willing to let his creatures perish eternally although he is able to save them. 3) Walther's exegetical principles are faulty for he has introduced a doctrine that is irreconcilable with God's general will to save all men. The Bible does not contradict itself. 4) Walther's new theory endangers the doctrine of justification by faith by subordinating this central doctrine to the doctrine of election. 5) Walther's theory of election undermines the doctrine of the means of grace for it teaches that grace is irresistible in the case of the elect. In this way he has introduced Calvinistic elements. 6) Walther's new doctrine "is destructive of the comfort which the Gospel is designed to bring." His argument that the faith of a believer is evidence of election is not convincing because it is an argument a posteriori.(17)

In the next issue of Dr. Loy's journal, he began a two-part article in which he set forth his interpretation of Article XI of the Formula. Concerning the eight points (Thorough Declaration,

15-22), he wrote:

The view of predestination taken by our Confession is thus plainly set forth. We are not to regard it simply as a decree of God, naked and absolute, with regard to certain persons singled out indiscriminately from the perishing multitude, just as little as we are to consider it a mere divine foreknowledge of those who, by some fatality or by an exercise of natural power, shall acquire eternal blessedness. It does not consist merely in God's foreknowing who will live and who will perish, nor in His determining that this one shall be saved and that one shall be lost. It embraces the divine decrees establishing the order of salvation for all men, as well as the decree securing sonship and salvation to those who believe and persevere in faith. The eight points are not introduced as bearing upon election merely because the elect are saved in this order. Such an interpretation is impossible without doing violence to the words.(18)

Loy misinterpreted Article XI and in defense of his view accused Missouri of making the Formula virtually teach a limited atonement by declaring election to be a cause of salvation. He also believed that Article XI taught an election in view of faith. In later articles such as "Missouri Election Subversive of the Universality of Grace," (August 1881), Loy continued his attack on Walther's doctrine and his defense of intuitu fidei.

About this same time (May 1881) the Missouri Synod met in convention at Fort Wayne, Indiana. After much discussion the synod drew up and adopted thirteen theses representing its position on the doctrine of election. These theses specifically reject the Calvinistic errors of a predestination to damnation, a limited atonement, and denial of the means of grace. At the same time they assert that election isn't just God's foreknowledge or his purpose to save all and that it does not concern temporary believers nor is it a decree to save those who persevere in faith. The causes of election are to be found in Christ. Election is a

cause of salvation, a mystery we cannot penetrate, but a comforting doctrine that ought to be proclaimed.(19)

At this same convention Missouri reacted violently to the charge that it was guilty of intentionally introducing Calvinistic errors and instructed its delegates to the next Synodical Conference Convention to refuse fellowship with anyone who accused them of Calvinism:

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

You are not to recognize any synod as a member of the Synodical Conference, which, as such, makes the accusation of Calvinism against us.(20)

The Ohio Synod deeply resented the instructions Missouri had given its delegates to the Synodical Conference. It was plain that Missouri would refuse to recognize as members of the Conference any synod or individual that disagreed with her doctrine. This action upset President Loy and the Ohio Synod because they believed the Synodical Conference was the very place where such differences should be discussed in a spirit of brotherly love. Therefore, Dr. Loy called an emergency synod meeting to decide how the synod should respond to Missouri's actions. In his opening address he told the delegates:

At our session last autumn we did not suppose that our synod would be obliged so soon to give its decision on the question of election. We are not wont to act so hastily in such important matters. I have no doubt that most, if not all the members of our synod would be willing, if circumstances permitted it, in patience and love, to discuss the disputed points for years, in the hope, by God's grace, finally to effect unity of doctrine among us. Our relations, however, are of such a nature as to compel us, I think, to take a clear and decided position in the burning question. This would in no wise hinder us from patiently bearing with those of different

opinion among us so far as they do not feel themselves constrained to condemn our doctrine, and afterwards discussing with them the points of difference in brotherly love.

What in my estimation urges us to a decision is the action of the Missouri Synod in the present controversy. She treats the difference, if not in and of itself, yet in view of the accusations which among others, members of our synod also find themselves constrained to raise against her as a point of separation between churches, and therefore feels herself called upon to discontinue church-fellowship with her opponents. This is important for us in a twofold aspect. In the first place, we must decide whether we must refuse or welcome into our midst as brethren such pastors and congregations as can no longer remain in that synod and apply for admission among us. In the second place, we must decide in what relation we stand to that body after she has instructed her delegates to the Synodical Conference not to sit and confer with those who have raised against her the accusation of Calvinizing tendencies.(21)

... Neither ought we to ignore the fact that our synod has already chosen those as delegates to the Synodical Conference whom Missouri will no longer acknowledge as brethren. If we insist on our right to elect our delegates ourselves without permitting the Missouri Synod to dictate anything to us in this regard, she will thereby cease to recognize our synod, inasmuch as our delegates will not be recognized. The repulsion of our delegates would be a repulsion of the synod itself. ... The procedure of the Missouri Synod compels us to fix our position in the burning question as decidedly as she has done. (22)

Loy and the Ohio Synod did not want to act so hastily and would have gladly continued the discussion for years. But Missouri's actions forced their hand; they had to sever fellowship. After four days they realized they had no other choice and resolved to break relations with Missouri and withdraw from the Synodical Conference. They adopted three resolutions:

Resolved, I. That the Joint Synod of Ohio and other States, much as it regrets the step, herewith separates itself from the Synodical Conference of North America, because the honorable Synod of Missouri, which ... represents the great majority of the Synodical

Conference, has

1. Set forth and definitely adopted (last May) a doctrine concerning election which we cannot accept; and

2. Has definitely declared that it cannot confer with the majority of the delegates our districts have elected this year, because they felt it to be their duty publicly to declare that the above-mentioned doctrine is Calvinizing;

II. That we do not consider the difference which has thus far manifested itself in our synod in reference to the doctrine of election, to be of a church-dividing character;

III. That in the future as in the past we confess the old Lutheran doctrine, that the election of those persons who are infallibly saved took place in view of the merits of Christ apprehended in faith.(23)

By means of these resolutions the Ohio Synod reluctantly severed fellowship with the Missouri Synod and withdrew from the Synodical Conference. It was a sad day for them and their president. Nevertheless, they could not go against their conscience and accept a doctrine they believed was contrary to Scripture. Missouri had given them a ultimatum. The discussion went on for a week but in the end they followed the leadership of President Loy who had told them, "The procedure of the Missouri Synod compels us to fix our position in the burning question as decidedly as she has done."(24)

The Ohio Synod wanted to make it clear to all that she held firmly to the doctrine of intuitu fidei. They discussed it for several days and then adopted four theses as their confession concerning election. The theses acknowledge that there were two doctrines of election in the Lutheran Church and two interpretations of Article XI of the Formula of Concord. The second thesis makes it clear that the Ohio Synod would cling to election in view of faith:

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.(25)

The third thesis stated that only God knows which are the elect and this is a mystery into which we cannot inquire. The fourth thesis stated that an individual can only have conditional certainty of his election.

Ohio's withdrawal was not the only loss for the Synodical Conference. Soon the Norwegian Synod would leave in an attempt to reconcile the opposing views within its ranks by dealing with them privately.

The end of this controversy was a dark day for the Synodical Conference and confessional Lutheranism. The true Bible doctrine was upheld and all glory given to God, but many good men were left to retain their false view of election. Could they have been won over through patient Scriptural admonition? If Missouri had been as patient with Ohio in 1881 as Wisconsin was with Missouri in the 1950's, perhaps the Ohio Synod might have remained in the Synodical Conference.

Actually, the blame must be shared by both synods. Missouri's doctrine was correct but her pride and "infallibility complex" got in the way of regaining their erring brothers in Ohio. Refusing to seat Conference delegates from other synods was probably unconstitutional. Ohio, on the other hand, was holding to false doctrine in election and also in conversion and original sin. To their credit, however, Dr. Loy and his synod were willing and

eager to continue meeting with Missouri to discuss this doctrine. In comparing these churches with their modern liberal descendents we have to applaud both sides for believing that there can be no fellowship where there is no agreement in doctrine.

The doctrine of election touches on a mystery that God has chosen not to reveal. He does not tell us why some are saved and not others. But he is not silent when it comes to answering the related question, why am I a Christian? God makes it clear I had nothing to do with becoming his child, in fact, I was fighting against him all the way. Nor was it a matter of chance that I was born into a Christian home and exposed to the means of grace. God did everything necessary to bring me to faith. All the glory belongs to him.

Dr. Loy continued to be an able leader for the Ohio Synod until the end of his life. He erred in the doctrine of election but had the courage to stand up for what he believed even when he knew it meant Ohio would have to withdraw from the Synodical Conference, which he had such great hopes for.

There is much to admire in this man. He was dedicated to preserving Bible doctrine and promoting confessional Lutheranism. Not only his courage but also his "spirit" is worthy of emulation. He was not a vindictive man but dealt with his opponents in an evangelical way, putting the best construction on everything.

He was always ready to confess what he believed. He closed the final chapter in his autobiography with a confession of the faith that sustained him throughout his life:

So far as I can see, writing on the eve of the 77th anniversary of my birthday, my life's work is done. Maybe our dear Lord will enable me to render some little service yet before he calls me home from this land of pilgrimage, but my thoughts are directed to the mansions above. He will provide for the cause in which He was pleased to use my life, and I have no fear in regard to its ultimate success. And I have no fears, poor sinner that I am, in regard to my eternal future; for I have a Mighty Savior who has prepared a place for me, even for me, in His blissful mansions. Trusting in the merits of his blood that was shed for me, I have peace in believing. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift; and "surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."(26)

ENDNOTES

1. Matthias Loy, Story of My Life, (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1905), p 352.
2. Loy, op. cit., p 192.
3. Loy, op. cit., p 362,363.
4. Dr. C.F.W. Walther, quoted in E. Clifford Nelson, The Lutherans in North America, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), p 315.
5. Loy, op. cit., p 354,355.
6. Roy A. Suelflow, A Plan for Survival, (New York: Greenwich Book Publishers, 1965), p 168.
7. Loy, op. cit., p.355.
8. Loy, op. cit., p 355,356.
9. Suelflow, op. cit., p 169-172.
10. Richard C. Wolf, Documents of Lutheran Unity in America, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), p 196.
11. Suelflow, op. cit., p 169.
12. John P. Koehler, The History of the Wisconsin Synod, (Sauk Rapids, Minnesota: The Protestant Conference, 1981), p 157.
13. Suelflow, op. cit., p 169.
14. Loy, "Introductory--The Burning Question," Columbus Theological Magazine, I (February 1881), p 1,2.
15. Conrad Dietrich, quoted in Loy, op. cit., p 11,12.
16. Quenstedt, quoted in Loy, op. cit., p 12.
17. Loy, op. cit., p 12-28.
18. Loy, "The Formula of Concord on Predestination," Columbus Theological Magazine, I (April, June 1881), p 80.
19. Wolf, op. cit., p 199-203.
20. Suelflow, op. cit., p 171,172.
21. Clarence V. Sheatsley, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States, (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1919), p 173,174.

22.Wolf, op. cit., p 205.

23.Wolf, op. cit., p 206.

24.Wolf, op. cit., p 205.

25.Wolf, op. cit., p 203.

26.Loy, Story, p 440.

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