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### The Development of the Itinerant Ministries in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod 1847-1865

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Short Title

ITINERANT MINISTRIES IN THE MO. SYNOD

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ITINERANT MINISTRIES IN  
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH--MISSOURI SYNOD  
1847-1865

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Historical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Sacred Theology

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by  
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May 1963

24498

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Need for the Investigation

Only recently attention has begun to focus on the problem of the German Lutheran immigrant in relation to the American frontier and the need for further study in this area.<sup>1</sup> This essay represents a small step further in this direction. The writer intends to examine one particular phase of one immigrant group's experience which centered largely on or near the frontier. The group is Die deutsche evangelisch-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten, founded in 1847 and today known as The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. The particular phase of this group's frontier experience under investigation is the matter of the various forms of itinerant ministries which the Synod adopted in response to its frontier challenge. That challenge was to meet the often desperate spiritual needs of thousands of forsaken Lutheran immigrants who lived scattered over whole states and territories of midwestern forest and plains out of touch with the church and the ministrations of regular, resident clergy.

More precisely this study is concerned with the effect the pressure to meet this need had on the traditional forms of ministry prevalent among Lutherans and the doctrinal ramifications and implications of forms adopted to meet these needs. In a general way, the problem of

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<sup>1</sup>Carl S. Meyer, "Lutheran Immigrant Churches Face the Problems of the Frontier," Church History, XXIX (December 1960), 440ff.

the itinerant ministries employed by the Missouri Synod may be expressed as a tension between stability on the one hand and mobility, or perhaps flexibility and adaptability, on the other. The stability was the traditional doctrine and church practice the German Lutheran immigrants had inherited and brought with them from the old country. The mobility was that required to adapt or accommodate the traditional forms to the new environment and a new set of circumstances. On the side of stability there was the centuries old tradition incorporated in the German Kirchenordnungen and what was understood by the German Parochialwesen. On the side of mobility was the widely scattered distribution of Lutheran immigrants across the frontier and not enough men nor the means to locate them and gather them into parishes of convenient and practical sizes. Again on the side of stability was the traditional concept of the ministry, which, especially for the Missouri Synod, stressed the derivation of the functions and authority of the office of the ministry from the congregation or the priesthood of all believers. On the side of flexibility was the need for a form of ministry which could reach and minister to groups where a congregation did not yet exist and could hardly be maintained. Further on the side of stability was the stress placed, particularly in the Missouri Synod, on what has been called congregational sovereignty or autonomy. On the side of adaptability in this particular issue was the limited effectiveness of a single local congregation to reach thousands of scattered people far beyond its boundaries and thus the need for a collective organization to carry on such work.

The history of home mission work in the Missouri Synod has been

the subject of various studies, particularly in the general histories of the Synod itself.<sup>2</sup> One of the earliest studies devoted to the subject of home missions particularly, and in fact to many of the same problems under investigation in this study, was a section of Theodor Büniger's essay at the 1901 convention of the Iowa District.<sup>3</sup> In more recent times several studies have been made which touch briefly on the matters of interest for this investigation.<sup>4</sup> Other than this, as far as the present writer is aware, no exhaustive research has been done in the particular area of concern for this investigation.

The study got under way, it might be noted, largely because of the writer's desire initially to inquire into the historical theological background of the doctrine of the ministry and the ecclesiol-

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<sup>2</sup>E.g., Christian Hochstetter, Die Geschichte der Evangelisch-lutherischen Missouri-Synode in Nord Amerika, und ihrer Lehrkämpfe von der sächsischen Auswanderung im Jahre 1838 an bis zum Jahre 1884 (Dresden: Verlag von Heinrich J. Naumann, 1885), esp. pp. 91-119. W. H. T. Dau, editor, Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod during Three Quarters of a Century (Augmented edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), esp. pp. 103, 108, 173-208, 332-391. Walter A. Baeppler, A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod, 1847-1947 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), esp. pp. 102, 107-116, 168f.

<sup>3</sup>Theo. Büniger, "Die Anfänge der Mission," part III of "Etliche Züge aus der Geschichte der Missouri-Synode," Sechzehnter Synodal-Bericht des Iowa-Districts der Deutschen evang.-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten, versammelt zu Lowden, Cedar Co., Iowa, vom 21. bis 27. August 1901 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1901), pp. 73-93. Hereafter all such official Proceedings of conventions are cited in the following abbreviated form: Missouri Synod, Iowa District, Proceedings, 1901, pp. 73-93.

<sup>4</sup>Meyer, op. cit., esp. pp. 446ff. Also August R. Suelflow, "Historic Patterns of Lutheran Settlement and Outreach," The Lutheran Parish in an Urbanized America with Special Reference to the Missouri Synod, ed. by Ross P. Scherer, Fifteenth Yearbook of the Lutheran Education Association (River Forest, Ill.: L. E. A., 1958), esp. pp. 29ff.



ogy of the Missouri Synod. This has remained a matter of interest throughout, though more and more as time went on and the research continued, the problem in its broader ramifications was taken into consideration. Thus as the study stands at present, the doctrinal issues attending the concept of the ministry are only one portion of the larger over-all problem of the itinerant ministries.

A word should also be said about the period of time covered by the study. Initial intentions were tentatively to survey the whole period in which itinerant ministries were employed, including the later years extending into the early twentieth century when the Reiseprediger were actually at the peak of their usefulness and activity. Indeed, some research of the official publications of Synod in the later period was conducted, particularly in the official Proceedings of conventions. But ultimately it was felt that even setting a terminus ad quem rather arbitrarily at say 1890 would make the subject so broad that there would be little hope of doing justice to the entire period. This would be especially true of the general expansion into new regions and the greatly multiplied number of Reiseprediger and part time itinerants from about 1870 on. What is more, the little study that was made of the later period led the student to the conclusion that the most significant developments, in doctrine as well as in establishing the practice, had taken place by approximately 1865. On the basis of the literature studied after 1865 there seems to have been little in the way of new developments or significant shifts in thinking about the role and raison d'être of the Reiseprediger. The year 1865, as will be demonstrated, is significant for the settlement

of the doctrinal issues and for the revival of the officially appointed office. An attempt has been made, however, in one chapter to note some of the results of the earliest itinerant ministries in terms of later developments.

This then is the process out of which the present study evolved, "The Development of the Itinerant Ministries in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1847-1865."

#### Organization

For the most part the material in this study is arranged chronologically, as far as it was possible to follow this order. The two chapters following the present introductory chapter are also of a somewhat introductory nature. Chapter II discusses the problems which gave rise to itinerant ministries, viz., the scattered distribution of the Lutheran settlers on the frontier and the supply of pastors in relation to the needs. Also discussed in this connection are a few of the solutions which may have been proposed for these problems together with their advantages and shortcomings. Chapter III takes up the question of whether the Missouri Synod in establishing its itinerant ministries was guided by any precedents or patterns borrowed from others. The three main classifications studied are (1) non-Lutheran denominations such as the Methodists; (2) other, earlier Lutheran bodies in America; and (3) the European mission societies.

Chapters IV through VII comprise the main historical development from 1847 to 1865. Chapter IV treats the office of Besucher, the itinerant appointed at the first convention of the Missouri Synod in 1847.

The position proved difficult to fill in precisely the way its founders had planned and by 1850, largely as a result of its apparent doctrinal implications, it seems, it was abandoned. The next chapter takes up what might be regarded as a successor to the Besucher, namely, the colporteur. The first man to actually fill the office was authorized in 1852. It was employed with some amount of success by the Missouri Synod for a number of years thereafter and later also by the districts. An official colporteur, for example, was still being authorized by the Western District in 1865. Chapter VI discusses the revival of interest in the itinerant ministry again as an official instrument of the Synod in the latter half of the 1850's. Highlights of this revival were a significant essay by August Selle in which he proposed what he referred to as an Evangelist, and the establishment in 1860 of a fund, administered by Dr. Wilhelm Sihler of Fort Wayne, to support those who did the work of itinerants. Chapter VII takes up the developments from about 1860, or shortly before, to 1865. These were mostly of a practical nature, the result being the expansion of the church into many new areas. Few itinerants, other than men who were asked to explore designated areas on a temporary basis, were official appointees of Synod or the districts during this period. Yet it will be shown that there were quite a few who were functioning as itinerants, usually as a result of local and private initiative. Events of this period were, however, tending in the direction of official action to recognize and authorize itinerant ministers.

Chapter VIII takes up an important step in this development, the settlement or final resolution of the doctrinal and theoretical issues

which the itineracy raised for the church's traditional doctrine and concept of church and ministry. Two important documents, one dating from 1863 and the other from 1865 are examined in particular detail. Chapter IX is an attempt by means of several highlights to show some of the results and consequences of what had been accomplished by 1865 in terms of later developments. A summary and conclusions are found in Chapter X.

### Terminology

A few terms, some of which have already occurred above, need explanation. One of these is "home," or "domestic" missions. The German for this is usually innere Mission, though occasionally it is einheimische Mission.<sup>5</sup> Confusion can result from the fact that the German innere Mission can sometimes refer to what might be more precisely translated in English as "inner missions." For innere Mission was used in this sense to refer to such philanthropic and eleemosynary enterprises as Wichern's Rauhe Haus in Hamburg and other such German societies. It was even used in this sense by the Missouri Synod's Eastern District in the first few years of its existence.<sup>6</sup> Ordinarily, however, innere Mission is best translated home missions, and as such

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<sup>5</sup>E.g., "The Missionary," Der Lutheraner, IV (8 February 1848), 95, col. 2 (second edition). The official German title of the General Synod's Home Missionary Society, founded in 1845, was Die einheimische Missions-Gesellschaft; see e.g., General Synod, (German) Proceedings, 1853, p. 86.

<sup>6</sup>Missouri Synod, Eastern District, Proceedings, 1855, pp. 17-20; idem, Proceedings, 1856, pp. 5, 21-26; idem, Proceedings, 1859, pp. 24f.

stands in contrast to Hussere Mission or Heidenmission.<sup>7</sup>

A similar opportunity for confusion lies in the use of the terms for the men who worked in these respective areas. The German Missionar, for example, has historically been reserved in the Missouri Synod for those who served in the area of Hussere Mission or Heidenmission. Thus the men who worked among the Indians in Michigan and later in Minnesota were Missionäre. The Missouri Synod, until rather late at least, used other terms for its home missionaries.<sup>8</sup> Other German background synods appear to have used the terms Missionsprediger and Missionar synonymously for what they meant by home missionaries.<sup>9</sup> By at least 1884 the word Missionsprediger also designated a home missionary in the Missouri Synod. It was so used, for example, in the statistical report prepared by Friedrich J. Sievers for the 1884 synodical convention.

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<sup>7</sup>See J. F. Köstering, "Geschichtlicher Verlauf der Mission," Der Lutheraner, XIX (21 January 1863), 83, col. 3. Also C. V. Sheatsley, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States, from the Earliest Beginnings to 1919 (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1919), pp. 137f., for a discussion of the English terminology. In the Missouri Synod Heidenmission always included missions to the American Indian.

<sup>8</sup>When Besucher Carl Fricke was asked to go out again in 1848 it was to be more "im Character eines Missionärs"; see below, p. 64. But this was precisely what led to doctrinal complications. Another possible exception is the fact that the headings to the articles on Friedrich Lochner's exploratory travel through Iowa in 1848 qualify the title Besucher by adding in parentheses: einheimischen Missionars. Der Lutheraner, V (6 February 1849), 93, col. 3; ibid., V (20 February 1849), 100, col. 2; ibid., V (20 March 1849), 116, col. 3 (second edition). This usage seems to be fairly unique, however.

<sup>9</sup>E.g., the Indianapolis Synod at its 1850 convention; "Auszug aus den Verhandlungen der fünften jährlichen Sitzung der evang.-lutherischen Synode von Indianapolis," Der Lutheraner, VII (29 October 1850), 38. Such men, of course, were by no means always itinerants. They were usually men who received official support, however, whether resident or itinerant.

Sievers used the term as roughly synonymous with Reiseprediger.<sup>10</sup>

This leads to a discussion of the terms specifically applied to itinerant missionaries or pastors. The first itinerant in the Missouri Synod was referred to as a Besucher. The term was employed in the description of his office in Synod's first Constitution.<sup>11</sup> This may have been its source as a technical term. It described a function, the duty laid upon a particular person to visit a particular place or places (einen Ort zu besuchen).<sup>12</sup> As such a descriptive term it also implied the real objective of the office. For the Besucher was not so much sent out to do the actual work of a public minister as he was to locate people who might be served, to explore new areas, and to survey the possibilities for organizing congregations and providing resident pastors.<sup>13</sup> The term Besucher was rather exclusively applied to the men who were appointed between 1847 and 1849.<sup>14</sup> When some ten years later attempts were made to revive some sort of an itinerant ministry, the term Besucher was no longer used, except to refer back

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<sup>10</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1884, pp. 66f. Sievers listed all "Missions- oder Reiseprediger."

<sup>11</sup>See below, Chapter IV, p. 56.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. "Auszug aus den Verhandlungen der . . . Synode von Indianapolis," op. cit., p. 39, col. 1.

<sup>13</sup>Aug. R. Suelflow has described the earliest itinerant of the Missouri Synod as principally a surveyor. Suelflow, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>14</sup>The closest thing to an exception in this regard is that the notice that the first Besucher, Carl Fricke, had accepted a regular call to a congregation referred to him as Besucher and qualified this with Reiseprediger in parenthesis. Der Lutheraner, IV (11 January 1848), 77, col. 1 (second edition). In general, however, the term Reiseprediger seems to have been withheld from these Besucher.

to the previous experience.<sup>15</sup> The former term may have been deliberately avoided because the institution it described had not been a particularly successful one.

The term colporteur may be found in any standard English dictionary and need not be discussed at length here. The colporteur was a traveling distributor and merchant of religious literature. Ordinarily he X was a layman, which was the chief advantage of the position when trained clergymen were at a premium. On occasion, however, regular clergymen could and did assume the work of colportage also.

Another term which had a short-lived existence in Missouri Synod X parlance was one which was introduced apparently at the 1856 convention of the Western District and used by August Selle in his 1857 essay at the general synodical convention. This was Evangelist. There may be some evidence that it was drawn from the use of a similar term for an office in the New Testament. Since the measures August Selle proposed in 1857 were not adopted as such, the term soon became extinct. But one thing is interesting about this term as well as the earlier term, Besucher, and that is that they both seem to have been deliberately chosen so as to avoid the use of the more common term, Reiseprediger. This suggests that there may have been something about the latter term, perhaps its association with Methodism and the circuit rider, which warranted its deliberate avoidance. This was the period, as will be brought out in Chapter III, of maximum conflict with Methodists and sectarians who employed such irregular forms of ministries.

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<sup>15</sup>See below, Ch. IV, p. 64, and Ch. VI, pp. 104ff.

Thus it may have been that the Reiseprediger for the men of the Missouri Synod signified the circuit rider and substitute terms were found in the early years to avoid any association with the evils of the Methodist system.

By about 1860, however, and in some cases even prior to this time, such reticence about using the term Reiseprediger no longer existed. And from this time on, particularly from the appointment of C. F. Liebe in 1865, Reiseprediger became the common designation for an itinerant. This shift in terminology will become clearer in the main presentation.

The definition of Reiseprediger or of what constituted a Reiseprediger was somewhat ambiguous. A Reiseprediger could be an official appointee, supported almost entirely by the Synod or a district. Or he could be a pastor acting mainly on local initiative, receiving only partial support from Synod or none at all. The Reiseprediger could be a full itinerant, that is, with no congregation of his own. Or he could be the pastor of a small group, with a regular call from this group, but also at the same time making a circuit of any number of other small, outlying communities. He could also be the pastor of a main congregation (Muttergemeinde), who also served one or more daughter congregations (Filialgemeinden). Asked to prepare a report on the number of Missions- oder Reiseprediger in 1884, Pastor Friedrich J. Sievers rather arbitrarily defined such a person as one who served at least four or more places. According to this definition the Central District had two Missionsprediger and even the Eastern District had one. Naturally, these figures were greatly exceeded by the more



western states.<sup>16</sup> Sievers' report indicated not only that the definition of a Reiseprediger was unclear, but also that by this time the distinction between Reiseprediger and home missionary or missionary-at-large was not altogether clear.

It might be noted that there was perhaps one other term, though it was somewhat of a colloquialism. Sometimes the sturdy frontier preacher was more or less affectionately referred to as Der Buschprediger.<sup>17</sup>

This still does not solve the problem of how to translate and preserve these distinctions in English. For the purposes of this study a relatively simple policy has been adopted for the most part. This is simply to use the original German term in most cases and not attempt to translate it. To call the Besucher a visitor would be misleading, and something like visiting pastor or visiting missionary would get rather clumsy and still very likely not preserve the real distinction. Evangelist might have been given its English equivalent but this too could be confusing. The same problem exists for Reiseprediger. This could no doubt be rendered home missionary or even missionary-at-large, though the latter might be somewhat anachronous in view of its more recent usage. But to translate one term and not others would involve one in inconsistencies. Therefore, the use of the originals has been followed throughout wherever precision was necessary.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1884, pp. 66f. Cf. above, pp. 8f.; below, Ch. IX, pp. 186f., Table 1.

<sup>17</sup>E.g., Der Lutheraner, XIX (1 May 1863), 142, col. 2. This could also, however, be a somewhat derogatory term.

<sup>18</sup>A somewhat related term might be mentioned, though it has little

## Limitations

A number of limitations both as to basic research and in subject matter must be mentioned in connection with this study. The investigation was limited to an extent in the scope of resources consulted. The basic sources used were the official publications of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. A comparatively exhaustive study was made of all synodical convention Proceedings from 1847 to 1896, and of all district Proceedings from the inception of the first four in 1855 to about 1880. Perhaps next to these in importance was the Missouri Synod's official publication for popular consumption, Der Lutheraner, which actually was first published by the Rev. C. F. W. Walther in 1844, three years before Synod was organized. An exhaustive study was also made of Der Lutheraner, but only from 1844 to about 1870. In addition to this Synod's official theological journal, Lehre und Wehre, was rather thoroughly combed from its beginning in 1855 to about 1872 for any possible references to the doctrinal issues associated with the itineracy. Research aids<sup>19</sup> and indexes, plus spot checking, were employed for both Der Lutheraner and Lehre und Wehre for the later period.

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bearing on the present subject. There is evidence that consideration was at least given on several occasions to the creation of an office of Reiselehrer. The idea seems to have been that the same man would teach in perhaps three different places over the course of a single year, spending around sixteen weeks at each place before moving on to the next. There may have been a terminological resemblance to the Reisepredigeramt, but hardly much more. See Missouri Synod, California-Oregon District, Proceedings, 1892, p. 42; Missouri Synod, Southern District, Proceedings, 1901, p. 82.

<sup>19</sup>E.g., Ernest Eckhardt, Homiletisches Reallexikon nebst Index Rerum (St. Louis: Success Printing Co., 1907-1917), passim.

It might also be mentioned in this connection that for the study of the doctrinal aspects of the subject the student had the benefit of two class term papers prepared in courses taken during the winter quarter, 1962-1963, at Concordia Seminary.<sup>20</sup>

Limitations in resources consisted mainly of the lack of unpublished sources consulted, though there may have been some which would have been enlightening. The other major limitation was that so much material was found in the primary published sources that very little study could be made of secondary sources. This might have been valuable, if for no other reason than that it would have afforded an opportunity for the student to have checked his own findings and the reliability of some of the secondary sources. What secondary sources were consulted were mainly general histories of the Synod and certain districts and whatever ones were needed to fill in gaps in understanding. These are found listed in the selected bibliography. The secondary sources were found useful for corroboration, supplementation and background information when they were consulted.

The study was also limited somewhat in scope and extent of subject matter. Primary concern was not given to a detailed study of biography, the particular exploits and accomplishments of the men who served as itinerants, or of everything that contributed to the home mission expansion of the Missouri Synod during the period. This was

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<sup>20</sup>Karl Wyneken, "Selected Aspects of C. F. W. Walther's Doctrine of the Ministry," mimeographed class report, Concordia Seminary, 1963; and "Later Developments in the Missouri Synod Doctrine of the Ministry, 1870-1900," mimeographed term paper, Concordia Seminary, 1963. Both documents have become the property of the Committee on Church and Ministry of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

particularly true of the survey study which was made of the period following the immediate period of concern. In fact, such detail would probably be prohibited in any paper of the dimensions of the present one.

The main area of interest was the earlier phase of home mission expansion and this mainly limited to what might then be considered to have been the frontier. This gave the background into which the most immediate problem was placed—that of the itinerant ministry. Thus home mission work under the particular facet of itinerant ministries would be another way of stating the subject of this essay. Missions to other racial groups and to the American Indians were not investigated, except insofar as they may have had a bearing on the frontier aspect of home mission work. Within the narrower limits of the subject of itinerant ministries particular attention was given to developmental features and perhaps even more so to doctrinal implications as reflected in the official pronouncements and deliberations of the Missouri Synod.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PROBLEMS

#### The Scattered Lutherans

If one practical concern dominated during the early history of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, it was for unseren verlassenen und zerstreuten Glaubensgenossen und Brüder—the vast number of Lutheran immigrants who came to America and many of whom settled on or near the sparsely populated frontier. There were good reasons for this concern. The problem of German—and in particular of Lutheran—immigration to America and its settlement on the frontier during the second half of the nineteenth century has been raised elsewhere and has received at least a preliminary treatment.<sup>1</sup> Already in the early years of the Synod its leaders exhibited an awareness of this problem. In 1860 Der Lutheraner was able to cite statistics from the 1850 census. At that time there was a total of 5,688,620 Germans, or twenty-four

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<sup>1</sup>Carl S. Meyer, "Lutheran Immigrant Churches Face the Problems of the Frontier," Church History, XXIX (December 1960), 440-62, esp. 443f. Meyer summarizes German immigration on p. 443 as follows: "The immigration from Germany, for instance, between 1838 and 1890, showed a steady rise between 1838 and 1851, three phenomenal years in 1852, 1853, and 1854, a decline thereafter until the end of the Civil War, increasing steadily after that and again reaching peak years in 1881 and 1882. In each of the years 1854, 1881, and 1882 the total number of German immigrants exceeded 215,000. In ten of the twenty-five years from 1850 to 1874 (inclusive) more than 100,000 German immigrants came to America each year. In only five of these years (three of them during the Civil War) were there less than 50,000 German immigrants to this country." Meyer cites Treasury Department, Bureau of Statistics, Tables Showing Arrivals of Alien Passengers and Immigrants in the United States from 1820 to 1888 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), Table No. 1, pp. 12, 20, 24, 28.

per cent of the population in America. The breakdown for the leading states was 1,132,733 in Pennsylvania, 930,781 in Ohio, 895,360 in Indiana, 800,000 in Missouri, and 526,428 in New York. The German population was anticipated to have grown to 7,461,724 by 1860.<sup>2</sup>

Again, by 1874, five years after official work among immigrants landing at New York harbor had been undertaken by the Synod, some statistics were quoted in a report of this immigrant mission. Between the time of the Synod's inception in 1847 until 1874, in New York City alone, 5,422,815 immigrants had landed, of whom 2,668,000 were Germans. The largest number of Germans, 176,986, had arrived in 1854 at this port and the smallest number, only 27,139, in 1861.<sup>3</sup> Here too, it is difficult to judge just how many of these were Lutherans, and particularly how many of these were sincerely concerned about maintaining their association with their church in their new homes. There is evidence that in some areas it was estimated that half of the German population would be Lutheran.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>"Die Deutschen in der Vereinigten Staaten," Der Lutheraner, XVII (21 August 1860), 7, col. 1. Figures were taken from The Missionary. Not all of these, of course, were Lutherans.

<sup>3</sup>Sechszehnter Synodal-Bericht der Allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten, versammelt als Erste Delegaten-Synode zu Fort Wayne, Ind., im Jahre 1874 (St. Louis: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten, 1874), p. 63. Hereafter all such official Proceedings of conventions are cited in the following abbreviated form: Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1874, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup>E.g., Pastor Michael Meyer who was the first permanent pastor of the Missouri Synod in Leavenworth, Kansas, estimated that of this city's 14,000 inhabitants, one third of them should be Germans, and half again of these, Lutherans. His results, however, subject of course to certain other factors, apparently did not validate his calculations. M. Meyer, "Hülfruf aus Kansas," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (9 July 1862), 190f.

Various factors--availability of land, geographical features and climatic conditions, and means of transportation--influenced the section in which the immigrant chose to settle. Perhaps one factor which proved particularly influential in the directions frontier population took during this period can be mentioned. This would be the Homestead Act of 1862, which offered settlers 160 acres of land if they would improve it and live on it for at least five years. There is some evidence that, at least in Iowa for example, the Homestead Act was a factor in German Lutheran settlement.<sup>5</sup>

For the most part, coming at the particular time that he did, the German immigrant of the second half of the nineteenth century followed what had already been the earliest wave of movement into the frontier areas of the Midwest. The period under study in this paper, 1847 to 1865, begins with the period when German immigrants were still coming in great numbers into such relatively eastern states as Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and Illinois, and ends after heavy movements had already taken place into Iowa and Minnesota, and at a time when the Missouri Synod was just beginning to notice the challenge of new mission fields in Kansas and Nebraska. The developments related in this paper in

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<sup>5</sup>E.g., it was a part of the unsuccessful scheme to develop a mission colony in Iowa around 1862. The first of promoter Friedrich Dörscher's points was, "Dass wir uns ansiedeln wollen, wo noch Congress-Land zu haben ist, von welchem jeder nach einem neulich erlassenen Gesetze 160 Acker unter gewissen Bedingungen unentgeltlich--ausgenommen 10 Dollar für Unkosten--sich zueignen kann." J. F. Dörscher and others, "Aufruf zur Gründung einer deutschen ev. luth. Colonie im Westen," *ibid.*, XVIII (9 July 1862), 191, col. 2. Dörscher got as far with his plan as actually selecting a possible site, in Humbolt County, Iowa. J. F. Dörscher, "Die beabsichtigte ev.-luth. Colonie betreffend," *ibid.*, XIX (10 December 1862), 63f.

subsequent chapters will give some idea of the approximate lines the frontier movement which involved the Missouri Synod followed.

This all too brief and general description will have to suffice for what might well be regarded as the fundamental problem which gave rise to the development of the itinerant ministry on the frontier. A fuller discussion would perhaps have to take into consideration such factors as the statistical distribution of the settlers, the religious and ecclesiological attitudes adopted by them on the frontier in terms of their old world training and background, and perhaps above all a statistical study which would relate the supply of trained clergy in relation to the membership, potential and real, with particular regard for the uneven distribution of the population in the more sparsely settled areas. Of interest would be the question of how well the German Lutherans were equipped, by training and background in the well-ordered, strictly controlled ecclesiastical environment of the old country, to be cast adrift, as it were, and made to shift for themselves in many cases on the American frontier. In other words, the whole problem of the Lutheran immigrant and settler raises the broader problems of ecclesiology and of the church's doctrine of the ministry. Did the concept of the church and its structure which the immigrants brought with them prove adequate for the American situation, particularly on the frontier? Did the ecclesiology of the Lutheran immigrants undergo any significant transformations or accommodations in the face of the American experience? These are questions for which no full answer can be given on the basis of this study. But they are nevertheless questions which one does well to keep in mind in an investi-



gation of the specific problems of the itinerant ministries. For these form the matrix for the problem of the itinerant ministries.

### The Lack of Trained Clergy

As alluded to above a statistical comparison of the supply of trained clergymen to the total potential membership of the church with special regard for distribution geographically would be a proper part of a study of the Lutherans on the frontier. Judging solely on the basis of contemporary reports and analyses, one would probably be forced to make the simple conclusion that there was never enough adequately trained manpower available to do the job. For groups such as the Missouri Synod, this was further complicated by the fact that what men there were often had to devote their time and energies to conducting elementary schools.<sup>6</sup> There may be reason to reconsider the over-simplified conclusions, however, which have been made in this regard.

For one thing, it should perhaps be noted that the simple ratio of pastors per members may not have been so disproportional as has been imagined.<sup>7</sup> It has been suggested, for example, that the Missouri

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<sup>6</sup>This particular problem was raised and discussed, for example, in a number of the earliest district conventions of Synod. Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1855, pp. 8f.; Missouri Synod, Central District, Proceedings, 1855, pp. 18-20. In 1858 this was one of the subjects again proposed for study at each of the district conventions; Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1858, p. 30; Missouri Synod, Northern District, Proceedings, 1858, p. 20; Missouri Synod, Central District, Proceedings, p. 26. Yet at the same time it was reaffirmed that teaching the children was indeed the ultimate responsibility of the pastor; Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1859, p. 79. X

<sup>7</sup>It must be admitted that this is more of an inference than a

Synod, thanks to the Saxons who had settled in Missouri in 1838 and 1839, actually started out in 1847 with a relative oversupply of ministers and candidates.<sup>8</sup> If it is kept in mind that the German Lutheran settlers were distributed and scattered, singly by families or often at best in small groups, over broad expanses of land, the problem takes on a somewhat different light. The problem of an insufficient supply of trained clergymen was greatly intensified by the uneven distribution and scattered condition of the settlers. It was thus a problem of optimum deployment of the men among the potential congregations. To make best use of the available men it was first necessary to gather the people into congregations of convenient size. It is true that there never seemed to be enough candidates. Yet when it is kept in mind that many of the vacant "congregations" which were constantly pleading with Synod to provide them with a candidate often consisted of a mere handful of people and that many groups scarcely larger were indeed being served by pastors, it becomes even more apparent that the problem was as much distribution as outright need.

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conclusion based on statistical study. Even if undertaken, such a study could hardly be conclusive, due to the unreliability of the few statistics available from the earliest period.

<sup>8</sup>The initial Missouri settlement had six ordained clergymen and nine candidates of theology for a group of approximately 612 people; X  
Walter O. Forster, Zion on the Mississippi: The Settlement of the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri 1839-1841 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1853), pp. 562, 563. For the entire group the figures, especially for candidates, were at one time even higher; ibid., p. 157. Cf. Aug. R. Suelflow, "Historic Patterns of Lutheran Settlement and Outreach," The Lutheran Parish in an Urbanized America with Special Reference to the Missouri Synod, ed. by Ross P. Scherer, Fifteenth Yearbook of the Lutheran Education Association (River Forest, Illinois: L. E. A., 1958), p. 26.

This problem is directly related to the problem of the itinerant ministry. For one thing, the very existence of an itinerant ministry seems to have been conditioned on the supply of candidates. Throughout its history the Missouri Synod itinerant was almost without exception a candidate just entering the ministry. In general, it would also seem that when there were not enough candidates, or when all the candidates had calls to regular congregations, the itinerant ministry suffered. The first officially appointed and commissioned itinerant of the Missouri Synod could be sent out because a candidate, Besucher Carl Fricke, was available.<sup>9</sup> Within several months Fricke had a regular call and the position went unfilled. For several years following Synod wanted to fill the position again, but had to be satisfied with sending out, or trying to send out, regular pastors who could take leaves of absence from their congregations.<sup>10</sup> As a matter of fact Besucher Fricke's position was never really filled again in precisely its intended form. There were Reiseprediger in the years from 1848 to 1865, but these were not official appointees and most of them were associated with a local congregation. The first real successor for Fricke, so to speak, was Reiseprediger Friedrich Liebe, sent out by the Western District in 1865.<sup>11</sup>

While it really lies beyond the period of immediate interest for

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<sup>9</sup>See below, Ch. IV, pp. 56ff.

<sup>10</sup>See below, Ch. IV, pp. 64ff.

<sup>11</sup>See below, Ch. IX, pp. 176ff. It must be kept in mind, of course, that the doctrinal issue and its settlement had also intervened in this period.

this study and cannot be conclusively demonstrated, the suggestion must be made that one of the reasons for the revival of the Reiseprediger system about 1865 and rapid growth thereafter was the relative over-supply of candidates. Of course, Synod had a natural interest in and sympathy for her lieben zerstreuten Glaubensgenossen and felt compelled out of regard for her mission imperative to do something for these spiritually impoverished brethren. Nevertheless, it is a question open to some doubt whether Reiseprediger would have been sent, at least in the quantity they were, had regular calls to well established congregations in the more eastern states awaited every candidate at graduation from the seminary.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, this is a rather hypothetical argument. But it would be fairly easy to document that a real tension did at any rate exist between meeting the needs of established congregations, often small and inefficient in terms of manpower, and meeting the needs of widely scattered Lutherans on the frontier.<sup>13</sup> The evidence indicates that the traditional deutsche Parochialwesen the immigrant church inherited from the old country, together with the Missouri

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<sup>12</sup>Of course, there are counter arguments to this, one being that established congregations were sometimes deliberately overlooked when candidates were matched with their respective calls. Thus it happened that a constant complaint in later years was that Reiseprediger were so often enticed away from their mission fields by calls to established congregations. But too often these congregations were small enough that they might have consolidated with another nearby (particularly if a regular teacher had been called instead of insisting that the pastor teach). See, e.g., Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1884, pp. 64, 65. Cf. [C. F. W.] W[alther], "Ein Capitel über Wegberufung und Versetzung der Prediger," Der Lutheraner, XL (15 August 1884), 121f. Whatever the final answer about the relative under-supply or over-supply of clergymen, it will remain largely a question of the optimum distribution and employment of the available supply.

<sup>13</sup>See, for example, below, Ch. VII, p. 141f.

Synod's own rather unique emphasis on congregational autonomy, may have contributed as much to a relative shortage of pastors as the actual lack of available candidates itself.

If this appraisal is at least partially correct, it means that another problem attended that of supplying men to the "scattered brethren." For even if there was, for example, a man available to go and serve a widely scattered parish which perhaps consisted of a total of several dozen families, in the majority of cases he would still need outside financial support. And in fact, it can probably be demonstrated that official concern for the support of itinerants was at least equally as great, if not greater than for the actual number of men available. There are indications, especially in the later period, that even more Reiseprediger could have and would have been sent out, if only the financial resources had been available.<sup>14</sup> This likewise suggests the related problem of Synod's initial reticence to support pastors and particularly congregations. A partial solution to the problem of support for itinerants came with the creation of the synodical home mission fund in 1860,<sup>15</sup> but direct financial support, or what later became known as church extension funds, for congregational building programs and the like had to await much later developments.

Further evidence that it was not the lack of candidates per se, but that this lack was attended by other interrelated problems, is

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<sup>14</sup>This problem perhaps became most acute after about 1884. See Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1887, pp. 59-62.

<sup>15</sup>See below, Ch. VI, pp. 111ff.

the fact that from the earliest days of the Missouri Synod vigorous steps were taken to provide the Synod with a well-educated ministry.<sup>16</sup> A majority perhaps of the candidates who entered the more remote frontier areas were trainees of the so-called practical seminary, first located in Fort Wayne, Indiana, moved to St. Louis in 1860, and still later located in Springfield, Illinois.<sup>17</sup> The Fort Wayne school, in fact, appears to have served as a sort of training center for home missions in particular. Dr. Wm. Sihler, its president, became administrator of the first synodical home mission fund in 1860.<sup>18</sup> Long time member of the faculty August Crämer was frequent recipient of letters from the early itinerants.<sup>19</sup> The last year before its removal to St. Louis, Dr. Sihler, now also president of the Central District, was able to report that in the preceding year seven of his Zöglinge had graduated and entered the service of the church in Indiana, Minnesota,

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<sup>16</sup>This matter has been amply investigated by others. E.g., Carl S. Meyer, "Secondary and Higher Education in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod 1839-1874," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1954, esp. Ch. III, pp. 74-132, and Ch. X, pp. 395-444. A more general survey is Arthur C. Repp, editor, 100 Years of Christian Education, Fourth Yearbook of the Lutheran Education Association (River Forest, Illinois: L. E. A., 1947), passim.

<sup>17</sup>A complete list of the men trained at Fort Wayne between 1846 and 1855, together with the present station they were serving, appeared in W. Sihler, "Das Seminar zu Fort Wayne," Der Lutheraner, XII (26 February 1856), 106f. A similar report on students who entered St. Louis between 1850 and 1855 also appeared about this time. Of a total of 94 who had entered the college department, 24 had matriculated, eight of these to enter the ministry. [Adolph] B[iewend], "Nachricht von dem Concordia-College zu St. Louis," ibid., XII (22 April 1856), 140f.

<sup>18</sup>See below, Ch. VI, pp. 111ff.

<sup>19</sup>E.g., below, Ch. VII, pp. 120ff.

Iowa, and Wisconsin.<sup>20</sup> In the early period candidates from the practical seminary were sometimes even "accelerated" and sent out with less than the usual training when the needs were particularly urgent.<sup>21</sup>

The Missouri Synod also had outside help in providing ministerial candidates for its mission fields. Already before the organization of Synod, Wilhelm Loehe had been active in recruiting young men for the ministry in America. In 1848 it was announced that the Mecklenburg Mission Society intended to supply ministers and teachers to the Missouri Synod.<sup>22</sup> The Western District in 1855 heard of a similar proposal for a Proseminar in Deutschland to be located at Leipzig.<sup>23</sup> But the most significant step came in 1860 when Pastor Friedrich Brunn of Steeden, Naussau, offered the services of a Proseminar he had founded to give interested young men in Germany a preliminary training for work in America.<sup>24</sup> The preparatory training was followed up with further education at one of the Synod's seminaries in the United States.

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<sup>20</sup>Missouri Synod, Central District, Proceedings, 1859, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup>E.g., at the request of Synod August Selle ordained two such candidates. August Selle, "Kirchliche Nachrichten," letter to Walther, Der Lutheraner, V (21 August 1849), 201ff. (second edition).

<sup>22</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1848, p. 15. Little in the way of tangible results seems to have come of this proposal.

<sup>23</sup>Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1855, pp. 9f.

<sup>24</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1860, p. 79. Cf. Der Lutheraner, XVII (16 October 1860), 38f.; ibid., XVII (19 March 1861), 121-23; ibid., XVII (6 August 1861), 202f., 205f.; ibid., XVIII (25 June 1862), 177f. See also Hermann Eikmeyer, "The Lutheran Proseminary in Steeden," trans. by J. T. Mueller, Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXIX (Winter 1957), 137-53.

The discussion of the needs for ministers, too, can only be partial for the present purposes. But it is likewise an important facet of the problems underlying the development of the itinerant ministries in the Missouri Synod.

#### Potential Solutions

A number of the possible solutions which were proposed and employed to alleviate the problem of the scattered Lutherans on the American frontier can at least be mentioned here. One "solution" to the problem which became fairly prominent in the thinking of various men although few practical results were achieved was to prevent, so to speak, the Lutheran immigrants from getting scattered in the first place. This type of solution had at least two phases. One was the so-called "Lutheran Colony" plan. This would create easily served congregations before the people had an opportunity to scatter. Or it would consolidate and bring together men and women and their families who were already citizens and who were looking for new locations in which to settle. Initially the plan had usually been associated with efforts to do mission work among the Indians also. Such had been the case with the Loehe directed colonies in the Saginaw region of Michigan. This was also true of a Missouri Synod plan to establish a colony in Oregon.<sup>25</sup> Even Loehe's projected colony for California

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<sup>25</sup>Missouri Synod, *Proceedings*, 1848, pp. 17f.; *ibid.*, 1849, pp. 11ff. Cf. *Der Lutheraner*, IV (4 November 1847), 35-37; *ibid.*, IV (8 February 1848), 94f.; *ibid.*, IV (27 June 1848), 174f.; *ibid.*, V (19 September 1848), 15f. and *ibid.*, V (3 October 1848), 24; *ibid.*, V (14 November 1848), 45, col. 1; *ibid.*, V (26 December 1848), 71, col. 2. The idea was most vigorously pursued by Hermann Fick in his capac-



was thought to have Heidenmission potentialities.<sup>26</sup> As late as 1856 Missionary E. G. H. Miessler of Bethany, Michigan, was advertising that land was still obtainable in his area for fifty cents an acre.<sup>27</sup>

In later years such colonies were proposed without reference to their Heidenmission possibilities. In 1855 an attempt was made to organize a colonization society in Detroit.<sup>28</sup> In 1862 came Reise-prediger Friedrich Döschler's proposal for a colony in Iowa, already referred to above. Döschler was particularly enthusiastic about the potential the plan had for consolidating Lutherans who would otherwise scatter all over the state and would have to be rounded up piecemeal.<sup>29</sup> Though eventually the plan came to naught, Döschler kept his eyes open and even got to the point where he had a suitable site located. It would be in Humboldt County, Iowa, about twenty miles from Fort Dodge, where as much as 11,200 acres of free Congressland was still available. Wooded land was not so easily obtained, but could be had for five to ten dollars an acre, and substitute building materials were plentiful anyhow.<sup>30</sup>

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ity as chairman of the synodical mission board. The initial enthusiasm appears to have worn off after the massacre of Marcus Whitman and his party in 1848.

<sup>26</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1852, p. 23. Only the Heiden in this case were the Chinese.

<sup>27</sup>Der Lutheraner, XII (2 January 1856), 79, col. 3.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., XI (14 August 1855), 207f.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., XVIII (9 July 1862), 191, cols. 2f.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., XIX (10 December 1862), 63f. This appears to be the last report by Döschler on the subject.

A slightly new direction to the movement was suggested by Pastor H. P. Dicke of Dodge County, Wisconsin, in 1863. Dicke was critical of the way most of these colony plans had been carried out in the past. The besetting problem had been that poor locations had been selected and the colonies had fallen on hard times. Yet he granted that something probably ought to be done, (since the average immigrant simply was not giving enough attention to his spiritual care when he selected a site in which to settle.) Nor was the whole solution an itinerant ministry:

Die Meisten [immigrants] haben nie Aussicht, dass sich je ein Prediger bleibend unter ihnen niederlassen kann und wenn es geschieht, so haben sie vielfach zu wenig davon, indem er fast wie ein Reiseprediger von einem Orte zum andern ziehen und nicht nur meist bald die Gesundheit des Leibes opfern, sondern auch seine geistigen Kräfte zersplittern muss.

Dicke's own suggestion was that existing German settlements where land was still available should do more to attract new settlers. They could use advertisements in Der Lutheraner, Die Abendschule, and even Brunn's Missionsblatt for the purpose.<sup>31</sup> Dicke's article, interestingly enough, seems to have been the signal for just such a campaign. Over the next several years notices in Der Lutheraner appeared about Minneapolis and other areas of Minnesota,<sup>32</sup> Missouri,<sup>33</sup> and Kansas.<sup>34</sup> How much these

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<sup>31</sup>H. P. Dicke, "Etwas über Colonization," ibid., XIX (15 April 1863), 133f.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., XX (15 May 1864), 138f.; ibid., XXI (1 June 1865), 146-48; ibid., XXI (15 August 1865), 191, col. 3.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., XXII (15 September 1865), 16, col. 1. For Benton and Lafayette Counties in Missouri.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., XXI (1 June 1865), 151, col. 2, though not a clear-cut example; ibid., XXII (1 October 1865), 24, cols. 2f.

notices accomplished is difficult to ascertain. Such efforts to consolidate the scattered Lutherans may have been of some aid in alleviating the problem.<sup>35</sup>

A related idea--in that it, too, hoped to help locate immigrants where there would be churches to serve them and thus to prevent their scattering--was the immigrant mission founded first in New York in 1869 and later also in Baltimore.<sup>36</sup> One of the functions of the immigrant missionary was to direct immigrants to locations where they could settle near an existing church. This was very likely an even greater help, once the agency was fairly under way, in solving the problem of the scattered fellow believers.

If the scattering process could not be entirely prevented, there were still other things that could be done. One of these, in the face of the shortage of pastors, was to combine congregations in such a way that the various social units--the town or village, the group with common ties to the old world, or the group which was simply too remote to consolidate with another--could all be served by one pastor while still retaining their separate congregational identities. This was a most common phenomenon in the early history of the Missouri Synod, both in frontier areas and in the more settled regions. In the cities a carefully ordered association, known as the Gesamtgemeinde, was some-

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<sup>35</sup>As late as 1896, for example, a full-scaled colony plan for California was brought to the floor of the Missouri Synod convention. Synod recognized the idea as having value and encouraged its promoters, but declined to enter officially into the enterprise. Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1896, p. 132.

<sup>36</sup>Idem, Proceedings, 1869, p. 102.

times attempted.<sup>37</sup> Sometimes no specific regulations covered the association. It was simply that one or more Filialgemeinden were served by the same pastor as their Muttergemeinde. This multiple parish system was even recognized by the first Constitution of Synod.<sup>38</sup>

The multiple parish also had implications for home mission work and expansion. Often it was the only way mission work was carried on in an area. The Muttergemeinde in a given area would start a branch congregation--or in the cities it was often a branch school--which would be supported by and dependent upon the Muttergemeinde for a period of time. The next step would be to call a Gehülfe or Hilfsprediger (or Hilfsprediger) who would have the main responsibility for the Filiale.<sup>39</sup> In time the Hilfsprediger would often receive a call to the Filialgemeinde, which would then become for the most part indepen-

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<sup>37</sup>This was the case, for example, in St. Louis and in Chicago. In 1848 the two churches in St. Louis affirmed publicly that they were one congregation. "Die lutherischen Kirchen in St. Louis, Mo.," Der Lutheraner, V (17 October 1848), 31, col. 2 (second edition).

<sup>38</sup>Article III, Section 1, stated that one minister and a delegate from each Pfarrgemeinde had a seat in Synod. A gloss on Pfarrgemeinde read: "Eine Pfarrgemeinde ist entweder eine einzelne Gemeinde oder die Summe der einzelnen Gemeinden, die der Pfarrer bedient, gleich wie in Deutschland das Gebiet, innerhalb dessen er an verschiedenen Orten sein Amt zu verwalten hat, Kirchspiel oder Kirchsprengel heisst. Möge also der Pfarrer hier zu Lande 3-4 oder noch mehr räumlich getrennte Gemeinden bedienen, so sind sie wesentlich in Bezug auf ihn immer nur eine Gemeinde und haben daher zur Synode einen gemeinschaftlichen Deputierten zu senden." Die Verfassung der deutschen evangelisch-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten, nebst einer Einleitung und erläuternden Bemerkungen (St. Louis: Weber & Olshausen, 1846), p. 5; cf. Der Lutheraner, III (5 September 1846), 3, col. 2 (second edition).

<sup>39</sup>E.g., the two congregations served by F. W. Husmann in Allen and Adams Counties, near Decatur, Indiana, called Zögling Andreas Fritze as their Hilfsprediger in 1848. Der Lutheraner, V (9 January 1849), 76, col. 2 (second edition).

dent of the original congregation. This has aptly been referred to as "the fission type of expansion."<sup>40</sup> The Hilfsprediger himself is a factor which must also be taken into consideration in connection with itinerant ministries. In many cases they were merely used temporarily, especially the hastily educated Zöglinge from the practical seminary, to gain experience for themselves or perhaps to teach school. But in many cases they were used primarily as missionaries and sometimes they functioned, for all practical purposes, as itinerants. This became particularly true in the cases of the first two men sent into Iowa to assist Pastor Düscher about 1861.<sup>41</sup> In fact these Hilfsprediger were publicly referred to as Reiseprediger.

The multiple parish system, or "fission type of expansion," was an important factor in early Missouri Synod growth. For one thing, it made for better use of the available supply of ministers. But most important, it was probably the most effective method the Synod had for pursuing home mission work without violating the principle of congregational sovereignty or autonomy. For quite a period of time, from about 1850 to 1860 when no official Reiseprediger were sent out, it was probably the only effective home mission instrument which Synod had. The practice had one major shortcoming--its range was relatively short, especially when whole states and territories became open to settlement

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<sup>40</sup>Aug. R. Suelflow, "Historic Patterns of Lutheran Settlement and Outreach," *op. cit.*, pp. 32f. Suelflow borrows the terminology from Sharvey G. Umbeck, "The Social Adaptations of a Selected Group of German-background Protestant Churches in Chicago," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Divinity School, University of Chicago, 1940, pp. 17f.

<sup>41</sup>See below, Ch. VII, pp. 125 ff.

virtually overnight. It simply could not cover the ground fast enough. A type of ministry even more mobile than the relatively free Hilfsprediger (or in some cases, the regular pastor freed from his duties by the assistant) would be necessary. But the multiple parish system with the assistant pastor was a close relative of the itinerant ministry, both in objective and sometimes in the means employed to gain that objective. And when Synod was hesitant about sending out men who would not be attached to a regular congregation, the multiple parish system still made it possible for a type of itinerant ministry, covering large territories and embracing any number of small congregations, to function. This was one solution to the problem of ministering to the scattered brethren on the frontier.

(Another possible solution to the problem of the scattered fellow believers without pastoral care was to encourage the laity under the emergency circumstances to perform what functions of the ministry they could. With the exception of certain Norwegian groups which at least initially encouraged lay-preaching, most Lutherans in America remained skeptical about allowing the laity too much freedom to shift for themselves spiritually.<sup>42</sup> This was also true of the Missouri Synod. The question of whether a layman could administer communion was raised, but it was either answered in the negative or the one who posed the question was referred to the traditional answers.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, there

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<sup>42</sup>See, e.g., Carl S. Meyer, "Lutheran Immigrant Churches Face the problems of the Frontier," op. cit., pp. 445ff.

<sup>43</sup>"Luthers Antwort auf die Frage: Ob ein Laie das h. Abendmahl in gewissen Fällen sich und den Seinigen insgeheim in seinem Hause selbst reichen solle oder dürfe?" Der Lutheraner, IV (16 November 1847), 46

were occasions when actual controversies arose over the question of whether an elder could even lead in public prayer in the absence of a pastor.<sup>44</sup> But the opposition to public prayer by laymen may have come mainly from observing the abuse of this practice in other denominations, the lack of ability on the part of some who prayed, and the irreverence which resulted.<sup>45</sup> On the whole, however, provisions were generally made to allow some capable laymen to read a sermon and conduct the worship (Lesegottesdienst) when no pastor was available for prolonged periods. This was, at best, a temporary solution to the problem.)

The other major solution to the problem of ministering to the forsaken, scattered Lutherans on the frontier was the one which is the main subject of this investigation. Here only a few of the main advantages and disadvantages of the itinerant ministry need be mentioned. An itinerant minister, particularly if by this is meant one who was in no way associated with a permanent congregation but was free to make a circuit of any number of small groups, had the advantage of being able to cover a large area and to minister at least periodically to a greater number of people than would otherwise have been possible. But there were also disadvantages. This gave little opportunity for the sound indoctrination and relatively firm church discipline (strenges Kirchen-

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(second edition). Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1869, p. 107.

<sup>44</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1850, p. 32; ibid., 1852, p. 25. The dispute arose in congregations in the vicinity of Milwaukee. The issue was apparently whether ex corde prayers by laymen were allowed.

<sup>45</sup>See Th. Wichmann, "Kirchliche Zustände der Stadt Cincinnati," Der Lutheraner, VII (18 February 1851), pp. 102f., where the German Reformed are criticized for this abuse.

zucht) held in such high regard by the Missouri Synod. It placed an emphasis upon quantity but not quality. What is more, it smacked strongly of the looser, less regulated ministries of other denominations such as the Methodists. But perhaps the greatest objection of all was that it seemed to violate the doctrine of the autonomy of the congregation. The charge was frequently made against the Methodists and others that their ministers did not have valid calls.<sup>46</sup> Yet as time went on the demand grew from within Synod itself that there should be some form of ministry which could function on a more mobile, less congregationally oriented basis.

This matter will be taken up in greater detail in subsequent chapters. But the problem in its broader perspectives can be outlined here. Basically it may be viewed as a tension between stability and mobility. The stability was the traditional well-regulated ecclesiastical doctrine and polity which Lutheranism had inherited from its German homeland.

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<sup>46</sup>E.g., J. A. Hügly [sic; or Hügli], "Dass Niemand in der Kirche öffentlich lehren, oder predigen, oder Sacramente reichen soll, ohne ordentlichen Beruf," Der Lutheraner, XV (2 November 1858), 41-43; ibid., XV (16 November 1858), 49f.; ibid., XV (30 November 1858), 58-60; ibid., XV (14 December 1858), 67f.; ibid., XV (28 December 1858), 74-76. It was stated, however, that a special call was not needed to teach privatim, zu Hause. There was a further exception: "Es darf und soll ferner ein jeder Christ, der dazu fähig ist, an einem Orte, wo lauter Heiden wohnen, ohne weiteren Beruf öffentlich auftreten und ihnen von Christo Jesu predigen; denn das wäre ja wider die Liebe, wenn man solche Menschen verloren gehen liesse, so man ihnen doch helfen könnte." But with regard to Methodist preachers it was not a case of one of these exceptions: ". . . es handelt sich auch nicht darum, ob jeder gemeine Christ, der die nöthigen Gaben dazu hat, nicht durch das Gesetz der Liebe verbunden sei, seinen Nächsten privatim über die göttlichen Wahrheiten, so viel als möglich, zu belehren." Ibid., XV (30 November 1858), 59, col. 1. These exceptions are important for the Missouri Synod doctrine of the ministry as it related to the subject of itinerant ministries.



The mobility was that required to meet the challenge of ministering to the spiritually destitute of the American frontier. It could also be described as a tension between freedom and order. There were times when the requirements of good ecclesiastical order seemed to win out momentarily. But always there was the practical necessity of the forsaken brethren urging greater freedom, if for no other reason, simply for the sake of love and because love outranked all order and regulations. The basic problem of the itinerant ministries in the Missouri Synod was this tension of mobility amid stability.

## CHAPTER III

### PATTERNS AND PRECEDENTS

#### Non-Lutherans

This chapter will examine a few of the possible antecedents which may have influenced and set patterns for the Missouri Synod itinerant ministries to follow. Mere similarity does not necessarily mean an inter-relationship. Faced with more or less identical situations one or more American church bodies could well have adopted similar measures to meet certain needs, while remaining far apart in their thinking and the reasons they adopted the measures. For example, the American Bible Society may have used lay colporteurs simply because the use of a layman in this capacity was a practical thing to do. The Missouri Synod, however, may have deliberately chosen to operate through the colporteur, for a time restricting its officially appointed itinerant ministry to this agency, because this seemed to meet best the requirements of its concept of the public ministry and the congregational call. Perhaps nowhere is such a similarity without dependence clearer than in the case of the influence of the Methodist itineracy upon the Missouri Synod.

If the Missouri Synod had borrowed ideas for its itinerant ministries from any American denomination, it would very likely have been the Methodists. Yet there were fundamental differences, particularly in initial presuppositions, which kept the two far apart in their thinking. The entire early American Methodist ecclesiology and church life

was geared to and revolved about an itinerant ministry. (In the Missouri Synod, on the other hand, any type of itineracy was always subordinate to and derived from the regular, resident pastorate.) The differences become even clearer upon closer examination of the Methodist concept of church and ministry.

American Methodism in its earliest period followed the basic pattern which had been set in England. The Methodists remained, so to speak, a church within a church. They gradually developed a genius and uniqueness of their own yet in some respects remained dependent upon the established Church of England. So too, initially the American Methodists remained dependent upon the Church of England, for example, for a valid ministry and sacraments. Up to 1784, says William Warren Sweet, "none of the Methodist itinerants had been ordained nor did they consider their societies real churches."<sup>1</sup> This brought considerable opposition, naturally, on the part of the regular clergy. More than anything else, Sweet credits the adaptability of the Methodist system and the polity which it was forced to adopt under the circumstances for its remarkable success and phenomenal growth in America.

The Methodist itineracy turned out to be made to order for the American situation.<sup>2</sup> The early Methodists virtually had no resident clergy. What resident leaders there were—the class leader, the exhorter, the local preacher—all were under the supervision of the

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<sup>1</sup>William Warren Sweet, The Methodists, Vol. IV of Religion on the American Frontier, 1783-1840 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1946), pp. 6, 12. Most of the discussion about the Methodists is based on Sweet's introduction. See esp. pp. 31-50.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 42ff.

circuit rider.<sup>3</sup> The system John Wesley had intended as a spark of life for the deadness of the established church, seemingly could hardly have been designed better for the American frontier. An important function of the Methodist itinerant was also the distribution of literature:

Every Methodist preacher throughout the country was a distributor of religious literature. In fact, that was one of his most important functions. . . . This was a part of the circuit-riders' duty, and they were encouraged in it by the fact that they received a percentage on their sales.<sup>4</sup>

It was only with the passing of time that the predominant itinerant form of ministry gradually gave way to the resident pastorate in the more settled regions.

This brief examination should make clearer some of the basic and fundamental differences between the Methodists and Lutherans such as those of the Missouri Synod. The Methodist ecclesiology was individualistic and in reaction to some extent against the organizational church which it knew in England. Missouri Synod ecclesiology, though perhaps somewhat tinged by Pietism, retained its appreciation for the collective features of Lutheran ecclesiology. While it may have been at odds with the organized state-church system in Germany it was not primarily a revolt against the prevailing concept of the church and its regular clergy. Thus the initial grounds and the ecclesiological presuppositions of Methodism and German Lutheranism differed radically. The Methodists could easily accede to a type of ministry which accommodated itself to frontier mobility and adaptability. For the Missouri Synod,

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 47ff.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

however, such an accommodation went counter to good church order (Ordnung) and violated the traditional congregational system its members had grown up with in Germany (das deutsche Parochialwesen). The Methodist system could easily be made to imply that the ministry made the church, or that in some way the church, at least, depended upon the ministry for its existence. Lutheran ecclesiology, particularly in the thinking of the Missouri Synod theologians, demanded that the church makes the ministry.

If now the question is posed of whether the Missouri Synod may have borrowed from the Methodists some of the ideas that went into its itinerant ministry, the answer is somewhat clearer. Because of the basic conflict between the two theologically, there is little likelihood that the Methodist itineracy was borrowed by the Lutherans, at least not directly. If anything, the influence the Methodists exerted upon the Missouri Synod was extremely negative.<sup>5</sup> Thus a strong case can be made for the contention that the Methodists actually hindered and delayed the development of Missouri Synod itinerant ministries, much more than they contributed to the development.<sup>6</sup> Finally, it must

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<sup>5</sup>Examples of polemical exchanges with the Methodists could be multiplied at length. (Particularly abhorrent to Missouri Synod leaders were the Methodistic revival practices.) These were even spoken against in a notation added to the first Constitution; Die Verfassung der deutschen evangelisch-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten, nebst einer Einleitung und erläuternden Bemerkungen (St. Louis: Weber & Olshausen, 1846), p. 13; cf. Der Lutheraner, III (19 September 1846), 9f. For other examples of early polemical exchanges see ibid., II (25 July 1846), 96, col. 3; ibid., IV (5 October 1847), 24; ibid., IV (22 February 1848), 103f.; et passim.

<sup>6</sup>The negative effect of Methodism may account in part for the unique terminology selected for early Missouri Synod itinerants. The first one was called a Besucher. Later August Selle proposed an Evangelistenamt. Reiseprediger may have been studiously avoided at first (although it

be noted that by 1847 and thereafter, the leaders of Synod could hardly have been dependent upon the Methodist itineracy for a precedent because the idea was common enough by then that it really belonged to no group in particular. Any conclusion that the Missouri Synod borrowed from a group such as the Methodists for its concept of the itinerant ministry is quite tenuous.

#### Other Lutherans in America

The same question of possible precedents must be asked about the other Lutheran synods which existed prior to the Missouri Synod in the United States and whose work might have come to the attention of Missouri Synod leaders. An interest in some form of organized home mission work among the earlier Lutheran bodies dates back to the early part of the nineteenth century. In some cases, forms of itinerant ministries were indeed employed. Naturally, these could ultimately be traced to the very earliest missionaries, such as Heinrich Melchior Muhlenberg, of the preceding century. But the concern here is for the type of men who were officially appointed and supported by the later synods, and whose activities immediately precede the formation of the Missouri Synod.

The official beginnings of home mission work in the Maryland Synod, for example, date from 1822 when the Synod's third convention authorized the appointment of Abraham Reck. Reck began by traveling into destitute sections of Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. One

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was used occasionally), because it was the German term for a Methodist circuit rider. See, for example, Lehre und Wehre, III (March 1857), 95. Reiseprediger was contrasted to Localprediger in statistics of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

or two such traveling missionaries were regularly appointed nearly every year for some time thereafter.<sup>7</sup>

The beginnings of official concern in the Ohio Synod (founded in 1818) may be dated from a five-page appeal in the Synod's convention report of 1823. This led to the appointment of David Schuh, whose report on the activities of his first year appeared in the 1824 Proceedings.<sup>8</sup> C. V. Sheatsley has described the predominant method of sending out itinerants in the early Ohio Synod as what might be called the "leave of absence" or "vacation" method. Because there were no men to devote full time to missionary journeys and because the system saved on expenses, he stated: "Many of the pastors serving established congregations were given leave of absence for a month or two each year to labor among the scattered brethren."<sup>9</sup> In 1830 three men were thus engaged, each for one month and each at a salary of fifteen dollars.<sup>10</sup> In 1837 the Eastern District of the Ohio Synod formed a mission society, primarily for foreign work, but also to include home missions. This society, typical of many such formally independent, auxiliary organizations of synods, supported, among others, a German Lutheran missionary in Pittsburg, Frederick Heyer. In 1849 Ohio's Western District followed

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<sup>7</sup>Abdel Ross Wentz, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Maryland of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1820-1920 (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: The Evangelical Press, 1920), pp. 102ff.

<sup>8</sup>C. V. Sheatsley, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States, from the Earliest Beginnings to 1919 (Century Memorial Edition; Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1919), p. 139.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid. Sheatsley also refers to this as a "vacation."

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

suit by organizing a "Society for the Supplying of our Neglected Brethren of the Faith with the Means of Grace of the Church of Christ."<sup>11</sup>

The districts of the Ohio Synod maintained such home mission work through their respective auxiliary societies until the Joint Synod took over the work in 1872. The resolve of the Ohio Synod to consolidate its work, however, had to wait for implementation until the Synod withdrew from membership in the Synodical Conference in 1884.<sup>12</sup>

The Synod of West Pennsylvania dates its official interest in an

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 140ff.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. 143ff. This brings to mind the fact that the Ohio and Missouri Synods were directly associated at one time in the Synodical Conference. It also raises an interesting point, though it lies somewhat beyond the period immediately under investigation. One of the potential areas considered for joint work by the first convention of the Synodical Conference in 1872 was home missions. A six man committee gave its recommendations which were favorable toward having the Conference engage in the work collectively for greater coordination among its members. But this proposal was rejected by a majority which considered it premature. Some wanted to wait until the pending matter of synodical boundaries according to state lines was settled, or until conditions generally were more opportune for such joint efforts. They felt that the individual synods could still best carry out the work so as to avoid confusion and possible conflict of interests. Verhandlungen der ersten Versammlung der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synodal-Conferenz von Nord-Amerika zu Milwaukee, Wis., vom 10. bis zum 16. Juli 1872 (St. Louis: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten, 1872), pp. 69ff. Hereafter all such official Proceedings of conventions are cited in the following abbreviated form: Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1872, pp. 69ff.

Sheatsley implies that the Ohio Synod was induced to suspend its work temporarily while joint work by the Synodical Conference was pending. Of course, this may have been simply to wait with the dissolution of the auxiliary societies temporarily and that Ohio's work, while temporarily at a standstill, was not adversely affected. Whatever the case may be, it is clear that the Missouri Synod was hardly standing still during this same period. The 1870's brought a great increase in the number of Reiseprediger sent out. In 1878 it was necessary to form a synodical home mission board. Ohio apparently had the mechanics of such an agency already in 1872 but delayed putting it into operation until 1884. There is at least a possibility that the whole matter may have engendered resentment in the Ohio Synod toward Missouri.



itinerant ministry from its second convention in 1826 when one of its licentiates, Mr. Nicholas Sharretts, was appointed missionary to a number of counties in Indiana. Sharretts had been directed to spend three months in the field, but actually spent fifteen weeks. During the next few years the Synod appointed a number of men, usually licensees.<sup>13</sup> C. F. Heyer became Sunday School missionary of the Synod in 1830.<sup>14</sup>

The first collective effort to engage in home missions by the eastern Lutheran synods was the short-lived and not too effective Central Missionary Society. A "Missionary Convention" assembled at Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, immediately following the regular sessions of the General Synod in 1835. This led to the organization of the Central Missionary Society of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States, as an auxiliary society of the General Synod. The Society considered cooperation with the American Home Mission Society. It comprised members, on a voluntary basis, from ten of the Lutheran synods, but largely from the West Pennsylvania and Maryland Synods. C. F. Heyer also worked under its auspices. The Society was never very effective because of its loose organizational structure and soon passed out of existence.<sup>15</sup>

In 1836 the Pennsylvania Synod followed the same pattern by found-

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<sup>13</sup>Adam Stump and Henry Anstadt, editors, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of West Pennsylvania of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1825-1925 (Chambersburg, Pennsylvania: J. R. Kerr & Bro., 1925), pp. 94f.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 95f. Cf. Wentz, op. cit., pp. 108-110.

ing a branch, or auxiliary, also--the Society of the Pennsylvania Synod for the Propagation of the Gospel. Much, perhaps even a pre-dominance, of this Society's efforts was directed to foreign mission work, in India to begin with, but home mission work was also included.<sup>16</sup> The same year that the Society was founded the synodical convention also heard two detailed reports from missionaries. One was the Missions-Bericht of Johann H. Bernheim of upper Canada.<sup>17</sup> The other was the Reise-Prediger-Bericht of H. Haberstich who had made a nine month Dienstreise through Kentucky, Southern Illinois, and Missouri. Cities on his itinerary had included Louisville, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh.<sup>18</sup> Haberstich's journey seems to have been of a largely exploratory nature. Two years later, for example, another similar report was brought to the mission Society following the convention which met in 1838 by Reiseprediger Daniel Kohler who had traveled through Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri.

Then in 1839 this same Society of the Pennsylvania Synod for the Propagation of the Gospel received a report by a Reiseprediger who was to become famous as the "father of home missions" in the Missouri Synod. Friedrich Conrad Dietrich Wyneken had been given his instructions for work under the auspices of the Society at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on

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<sup>16</sup>Helen E. Pfatteicher, The Ministerium of Pennsylvania: Oldest Lutheran Synod in America, Founded in Colony Days (Philadelphia: The Ministerium Press, 1938), pp. 55ff. Cf. Pennsylvania Synod, Proceedings, 1836, pp. 14, 24-26, for its founding and first constitution.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 10ff., and esp. 52-60.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., esp. pp. 34-51.

<sup>19</sup>Idem., Proceedings, 1838, pp. 36f.

16 August 1838. He dated the actual beginnings of his work from 10 September. His report was dated 25 February 1839. In it he listed the various places he had visited, mostly in northern Indiana and southern Michigan. As of 11 January 1839 he had preached 53 times, baptized 68 children and two adults, confirmed one, administered communion to 180, had married one couple, officiated at one funeral, and had collected \$16.50.<sup>20</sup> The work and activity of Friedrich Wyneken as a Reiseprediger may have had quite an effect upon the later development of the itinerant ministry in the Missouri Synod. Wyneken was president of the Missouri Synod from 1850 to 1864.<sup>21</sup>

The formation of a more durable auxiliary Home Mission Society was effected by the General Synod in 1845. It met the afternoon following the adjournment of the regular convention of that year in Philadelphia. The constitution urged all pastors to join the Society on a voluntary basis. Life membership dues were set at \$10.00 and annual dues at \$1.00. An executive committee was to apportion

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 7-16. A reprint of the English version of this report appeared in Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XX (October 1947), 124-35. On Wyneken's designation as "father of home missions," see, e.g., Christian Hochstetter, Die Geschichte der Evangelisch-lutherischen Missouri-Synode in Nord-Amerika, und ihrer Lehrkämpfe von der sächsischen Auswanderung im Jahre 1838 an bis zum Jahre 1884 (Dresden: Verlag von Heinrich J. Naumann, 1885), pp. 91ff., and Theo. Bünger, "Die Anfänge der Mission," part III of "Etliche Züge aus der Geschichte der Missouri-Synode," Missouri Synod, Iowa District, Proceedings, 1901, p. 73.

<sup>21</sup>In spite of Wyneken's obvious reputation any direct influence he exerted in developing itinerant ministries in the Missouri Synod lacks documentation and must be inferred, on the basis of the present study. Wyneken's great contribution was in drawing attention to the mission needs of America and in securing aid from various sources in Germany.

funds, both to traveling and to resident missionaries.<sup>22</sup> By 1848 the Society had supported seventeen men in seven different states at a total expense of \$1059.00, thus ministering to the needs of some 4000 people. By 1850 fourteen of these original seventeen men had become self-sustaining with resident pastorates. Between 1848 and 1850, another nineteen men had been commissioned by the Society and three of these were already supported by the churches they had founded. This 1850 report also listed the number of men who had served during the past two years by states: there were five in Maryland, five in Illinois, three in Indiana, three in Pennsylvania, one in Kentucky, and five in Ohio. Total disbursements for the biennium had been \$2040.00.<sup>23</sup>

The Society, though hardly more than an independent auxiliary of the General Synod as far as official status was concerned, was able to commission the men it sent out, usually for a specified period of time such as one year. Apparently, no doubts or questions were raised over its authority to do this. As soon as possible, of course, its missionaries were to associate permanently with local congregations. The enterprise seemed to pay for itself almost:

Our experience is that, by an average expenditure of \$100, we can secure the services of a faithful minister in building up the waste places of Zion for one year, and, in many instances, he requires no help the second year.<sup>24</sup>

By 1853 the General Synod was also able to do something about providing

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<sup>22</sup>General Synod, Proceedings, 1845, pp. 80-82.

<sup>23</sup>Idem, Proceedings, 1850, pp. 45, 47, 51. The 1848 Proceedings consulted in this study had the same report appended, with identical pagination.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 1850 (or 1848), p. 47.

money directly to churches, for building programs and for paying off debts and the like. In that year another auxiliary, the Church Extension Society, was approved at the General Synod convention. It could lend a maximum of \$5000, without interest, to a qualifying congregation.<sup>25</sup> The Home Missionary Society, meanwhile, had fared so well by 1855 that the members were ready to appoint a special salaried superintendent.<sup>26</sup> However, the position went unfilled for several years with no taker, and when it was filled finally around 1858 the man who took it quit after seven months, claiming that the position was really not needed.<sup>27</sup> In 1857, thirty-five men were drawing support: ten in Illinois, five in Iowa, seven in Ohio, six in Indiana, three in Texas, four in Pennsylvania, one in Michigan, two in Minnesota, and one in Wisconsin.<sup>28</sup> By 1859 a grand total of 237 men had been supported by the Society at one time or another since 1845 and the Society was at the point of considering work in San Francisco.<sup>29</sup> In 1869 this independent Society was dissolved into the General Synod and thus home mission work thereafter was officially incorporated into and administered by the Synod itself.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 43f., 114-16.

<sup>26</sup>Idem, Proceedings, 1855, p. 55.

<sup>27</sup>Idem, Proceedings, 1859, p. 80.

<sup>28</sup>Idem, Proceedings, 1857, p. 55.

<sup>29</sup>Idem, Proceedings, 1859, pp. 80, 81. It is of interest perhaps that 1860 was the year that the Missouri Synod's J. M. Böhler began work in San Francisco; see below, Ch. VII; pp. 112ff.

<sup>30</sup>Wentz, op. cit., p. 110.

How much was the Missouri Synod influenced and perhaps inspired by the work of these other synods? The idea of an independent auxiliary organization as a vehicle for carrying on mission work seems hardly to have occurred to anyone within the Missouri Synod.<sup>31</sup> The synodical literature demonstrates at least some acquaintance with the home mission endeavors of other bodies. This is particularly true, for example, of the Indianapolis Synod.<sup>32</sup> Later on Missouri began taking cognizance of the work of itinerants, for example, sent out by the Wisconsin Synod.<sup>33</sup> But the attitude toward Wisconsin remained quite critical because of Wisconsin's associations with mission societies whose orthodoxy was questionable.<sup>34</sup> The same objection was raised against the Michigan

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<sup>31</sup>This is an interesting point which might be noted for its relevance to another issue. In spite of its congregational polity and apparent hesitation about committing itself wholeheartedly to a synodical organization, the Missouri Synod seems to have had sufficient structural unity and cohesiveness to render the formation of such independent organizations for the most part unnecessary.

<sup>32</sup>There were fraternal exchanges with the Indianapolis Synod which help account for this. See esp. "Die Synode des Westen," Der Lutheraner, III (19 September 1846), 11, col. 1 (second edition); "Auszug aus den Verhandlungen der fünften jährlichen Sitzung der evang.-lutherischen Synode von Indianapolis," ibid., VII (29 October 1850), 38f. The Indianapolis Synod had a Missionsbehörde, but its functions were curtailed for lack of funds. Its Missionsprediger, or Missionäre, were not really itinerants, but more on the order of resident missionaries. In 1850, for example, its mission board gave candidate W. Gustav Polack, a graduate of the Mission Seminary in Berlin, who later joined the Missouri Synod, the assignment "den Ort Weisseichen zu besuchen." Ibid., p. 39, col. 1.

<sup>33</sup>F.g., Lehre und Wehre, IV (October 1858), 285.

<sup>34</sup>F. Lochner and F. Steinbach, "Wisconsinische Angriffe auf vermeintliche missourische Eingriffe," Der Lutheraner, XIX (10 December 1862), 59. Cited was the fact that Wisconsin had an arrangement with the Pennsylvania Synod, a part of the afterlutherischen General Synod, whereby it drew money from Pennsylvania's Mission Society for the support of its pastors. Likewise Wisconsin had associations with such

Synod missionaries and itinerants.<sup>35</sup> Thus the principal objection to the work of these synods appears not to have had so much to do with the employment of itinerant ministries per se, but more with the unionistic and liberal theological principles their employment entailed.

One feature commonly associated with itinerant ministries in the other eastern synods--the so-called licentiate or licensing system--the Missouri Synod very firmly rejected. G. D. Bernheim has given a good description of this practice which had been adopted to meet the crying need for clergy:

Few ministers came or were sent from Germany, and no university or college had as yet been established for the education of candidates for the ministry by the Lutheran Church in this country; it was, therefore, thought expedient to license persons who could exhort and catechize, to take charge of the vacant churches, at the same time making it the duty of the ordained ministers residing in the vicinity to administer the sacraments as frequently as possible in those congregations. These exhorters were called catechets. A course of study was prescribed for them in Latin, Greek, and theology, to be studied privately or with some of the older ministers; as soon as they stood a fair examination, they were advanced in their ministerial standing and received license, to be renewed every year, to administer all the ordinances of the Church. They were called candidates, and were obliged to continue their studies, report their ministerial acts to Synod, bring a written sermon annually for examination, and, whenever they passed a good examination on their studies, character and ministerial usefulness, were solemnly ordained to the gospel ministry. They were then called pastors, enjoying all the privileges of the older ministers. This arrangement was regarded as an educational one, and not as having established different grades or orders of the ministry.<sup>36</sup>

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unirt mission societies as those of Barmen, Langenberg, Berlin, and Basel. The Sendlinge it had received were more unirt than old Lutheran. Cf. ibid., XXI (1 October 1864), 23, col. 2.

<sup>35</sup>"Die Michigansynode," ibid., XX (1 October 1863), 21, col. 3. At its last convention the Michigan Synod had applied to the Basel or any other interested evangelical mission society in Germany to send one or more Reiseprediger.

<sup>36</sup>G. D. Bernheim, History of the German Settlements and of the

Conrad Bergendoff agrees with Bernheim's analysis that it was "an American measure and the newer immigration in the nineteenth century did not take to it."<sup>37</sup>

(The Missouri Synod from its very beginning as a Synod stood solidly against the licentiate. In fact, even before the organization of Synod the practice had been observed and denounced by the Saxon theologians.<sup>38</sup> It was deemed important enough to be included in two special explanatory remarks to the Synod's first Constitution. The chief argument against it was that it detracted from the divine honor of the call. The custom of accepting a pastor on a probationary basis resulted, it was explained, from the fact that congregations had had so many unfortunate experiences with imposters and charlatans. However, the practice was simply unscriptural and detracted from the divine honor of the office.) Congregations could, of course, depose a minister for false doctrine or wicked living or for both, in accord with Matthew 18:15-17. (One of the purposes of Synod was to provide for and to examine candidates. But X the call by the congregation was lifelong (auf Lebenszeit). "Nur ein solcher von der Gemeinde ausgehender Beruf ist ein ordentlicher und

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Lutheran Church in North and South Carolina (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Book Store, 1872), pp. 426f. Quoted in Conrad Bergendoff, The Doctrine of the Church in American Lutheranism (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956), pp. 22f.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 23. The reference to Bernheim is not given.

<sup>38</sup>Th. Brohm, "Vom ordentlichen Beruf zum Predigtamt," Der Lutheraner I (5 April 1845), 61f., and ibid., I (19 April 1845), 65f. (second edition). Brohm himself denounces the "temporary call," p. 65, but even stronger is the "Nachbemerkung des Herausgebers" (C. F. W. Walther) which immediately follows the article, p. 66.



rechtmässiger."<sup>39</sup> In a later article of the Constitution it was specifically stated that so-called licenses would not be issued in the Missouri Synod. A second explanatory remark at this point claimed that adequate examination by Synod could accomplish the same purpose, together with church discipline when necessary, and would be more Scriptural and apostolic. This would also obviate the element of distrust between pastor and people which accompanied the licensing system.<sup>40</sup> The licentiate was likewise rejected in the revised Constitution of 1854.<sup>41</sup>

The official policy of the Missouri Synod seems also to have been against the trial sermon (Probepredigt, or Gastpredigt). Yet there is evidence that the rejection of this practice may not actually have been so firm and strict.<sup>42</sup> But the rejection of the licentiate was thorough and consistent.<sup>43</sup> The Indianapolis Synod at first observed the practice,

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<sup>39</sup>Die Verfassung, pp. 5, 11; cf. Der Lutheraner, III (5 September 1846), 3, col. 2, and ibid., III (19 September 1846), 8f. (second edition).

<sup>40</sup>Die Verfassung, pp. 8, 12; cf. Der Lutheraner, III (5 September 1846), 4, col. 3, and ibid., III (19 September 1846), 9, cols. 1f. (second edition).

<sup>41</sup>Die Neue Verfassung oder Constitution der deutschen evangelisch-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio, u. a. Staaten (St. Louis: Druckerei der evang.-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. St., 1855), p. 8. A draft of this Constitution also appeared in Der Lutheraner, IX (21 June 1853), 145-51.

<sup>42</sup>This from the fact that Der Lutheraner accepted advertisements from vacant congregations for prospective ministers to do this very thing. Ibid., IV (8 August 1848), 200, col. 3; ibid., V (9 January 1849), 80, col. 3; ibid., V (23 January 1849), 88, col. 3; ibid., V (6 February 1849), 95 (all second edition); ibid., X (13 September 1853), 15, col. 3; ibid., XI (19 December 1854), 71, col. 1.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., III (9 February 1847), 69f. But cf. ibid., III (6 April 1847), 88, col. 3 (second edition).

but in 1850 abandoned it.<sup>44</sup> Licensees were referred to by Missouri Synod writers as Miethsprediger and Zeitprediger.<sup>45</sup> Gradually the practice was either abandoned or at least called into question by many of the synods which had practiced it. These developments were carefully observed and noted in Lehre und Wehre.<sup>46</sup>

The evil features of the licentiate, in other synods often associated with itinerant ministries, may have been one factor among a number which caused skepticism about precedents which had been set by the other synods prior to Missouri's existence. There is no positive evidence, it would seem, that the idea for an itinerant ministry was taken over from earlier patterns and precedents set by these other bodies. There may have been contributing factors but on the whole the other synods seem to have had nothing to offer which Missouri could not have arrived at easily on its own.

#### The European Mission Societies

Another valid question is whether the Missouri Synod derived any

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., IV (16 November 1847), 48 (second edition); ibid., VII (17 September 1850), 38, col. 2.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., VII (27 May 1851), 156, col. 2.

<sup>46</sup>E.g., Lehre und Wehre, II (November 1856), 349; ibid., II (December 1856), 378, 379(bis); ibid., III (March 1857), 95; ibid., III (August 1857), 252; ibid., III (September 1857), 284, 285; ibid., V (January 1859), 30; ibid., VI (August 1860), 251; ibid., VIII (February 1862), 60; ibid., XV (July 1869), 220. In sum these reports show that the practice was at one time or another still retained in the synods of East Pennsylvania, Virginia (later rejected), Iowa, Illinois, and tabled once by the Pennsylvania Synod. Among those rejecting the practice were the Joint Synod of Ohio, the synods of Wisconsin, Virginia (later), Augustana, and North Carolina.

impulse for its itinerant ministries from the mission societies such as were rather prominent in Germany at this time. The basic idea of the mission society itself seems not to have occurred to Missouri for possible use, though there may have been a connection between the German societies and the auxiliary societies of other synods as have been referred to above. The objections to some of the German societies on the grounds that they were unionistic has also been noted above. Nevertheless, in at least one case, an attempt by one of the German societies to promote itinerant ministries in America may have been of consequence for the Missouri Synod later. This was the work of Wilhelm Loehe and the mission society of Neuendettelsau, Bavaria, Germany.

One of the men Loehe sent over (Boten, or Sendlinge) was a lay colporteur. He was Johann Georg Zwerner.<sup>47</sup> His directives, or instructions, were published in Kirchliche Mittheilungen.<sup>48</sup> Not much seems to be available about his activities other than that he arrived 29 July 1844 in America and at least as late as the end of that year was working in the vicinity of Columbus, Ohio.<sup>49</sup> But Zwerner was at least a possible predecessor, if any was needed, for one of the itinerant ministries, the

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<sup>47</sup>W. G. Polack, Jr., "The Loehe Missioners Outside of Michigan," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XII (January 1940), 110f. A biography of Zwerner up to the time of his departure from Germany appeared in the mission journal published by Loehe and Johann Friedrich Wucherer, Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-America, [II] (1844), No. 7, [cols. 4-8]. Information in brackets supplied because Kirchliche Mittheilungen (hereafter referred to as such) lacks volume numbers, dates, other than year, and pagination.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., [II] (1844), No. 8, [cols. 1-4].

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., [III] (1845), No. 4, [col. 4], is a report on Zwerner entitled "Columbus." Der Lutheraner, I (11 January 1845), 40, col. 2 (second edition), listed Zwerner among seven men sent thus far by Loehe.

office of colporteur, employed by the Missouri Synod. Because of the association between Loehle's men and the Missouri Synod in the earliest years, it is highly likely that Missouri's leaders were acquainted with the work of a man such as Zwerner and with the results of his work. This does not mean, however, that Zwerner was the only precedent the Missouri Synod had on which to pattern its own office of colporteur.

Another of Loehle's Sendboten, Andreas Saupert, had a set of directives, also printed in Kirchliche Mittheilungen, which appear to have earned him the designation of Reiseprediger.<sup>50</sup> According to these directives Saupert was to serve an area where he could travel a circuit outward from a central home point. Interestingly, there are indications that Loehle may have sensed the implications of this for good church order and the validity of the call. Instruction 6 read: "Da man nicht sine titulo ordinirt werden kann, so müssen Sie erst einige zerstreuten Familien gefunden haben, welche Sie zu ihrem Pastor annehmen wollen."<sup>51</sup> Apparently Loehle was concerned that Saupert be properly authorized as soon as possible. This problem, and the method of solving it, by having the itinerant associate with some particular group as soon as possible, were much the same problem and solution, which the Missouri Synod faced later. Saupert arrived in New York on 19 October 1844<sup>52</sup> and made his

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<sup>50</sup>This was precisely how Der Lutheraner, listing him along with Zwerner and the five others, referred to him while he was still studying in Columbus prior to assuming his duties at Evansville: "Saupert, als Reiseprediger bestimmt, jetzt noch in Columbus, Ohio." Ibid., I (11 January 1845), 40, col. 2 (second edition).

<sup>51</sup>"Einer mehr im Kreise unserer jenseitigen Freunde," Kirchliche Mittheilungen, [II] (1844), No. 12, [col. 4]. The entire Instructions include cols. 2-7.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., [III] (1845), No. 1, [col. 8].

way to Columbus where he was first to finish his studies.<sup>53</sup> He then accepted a call to Evansville, Indiana, and vicinity. Here he tried to put his instructions to work. His main church, it seems, was actually in nearby Lamasco, while he also served an additional five country churches (Landgemeinden) within a radius of about ten miles around Evansville.<sup>54</sup> Strife and discord presently broke out in Saupert's congregation and may have hindered the progress of his work.<sup>55</sup> Eventually he and his church in Evansville became members of the Missouri Synod.

Although not a great deal is known about the work of these two Loche emissaries to America, it is difficult not to conclude that their work and experiences may have had an effect on itinerant ministries adopted later by the Missouri Synod. Reiseprediger Saupert's directives are particularly interesting from the standpoint of the pattern they may have set. These two men, Zwerner and Saupert, were very likely the closest thing the Missouri Synod had to go on for precedents and a pattern, if indeed it needed any, when establishing its itinerant ministries.

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., [III] (1845), No. 2, [col. 7], item 6.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., [III] (1845), No. 11, [cols. 3, 4], item 28.

<sup>55</sup>Polack, Jr., op. cit., pp. 111f.

## CHAPTER IV

### FIRST OFFICIAL ATTEMPT—THE BESUCHER

#### The First Besucher

The first Constitution of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod made provisions for a form of itinerant ministry. Article V, paragraph 8, spoke first of providing doctrinal instruction through a publication, then continued:

Desgleichen hat die Synode sich über die Bedürfnisse unserer kirchlich verwahrlosten Glaubensgenossen zu besprechen und zu Abhülfe derselben solche tüchtige Männer mit Rath und That zu unterstützen, welche es aus freier christliche Liebe unternehmen, die verlassenen Lutheraner aufzusuchen, um unter ihnen die Gründung ordentlicher Gemeinden vorzubereiten. Solche Besucher sind zur Ausrichtung ihres Geschäfts auszubilden, vor ihrem Ausgang zu prüfen, mit einer Instruction zu versehen und mit feierlichem Gebet und Segenswunsch zu entlassen. Der Besuchende hat ein Tagebuch zu führen und dem Präses auszügliche Berichte einzusenden, welche dieser der Synode in seinem Jahresberichte vorzulegen hat.<sup>1</sup>

These directives were acted upon at the first convention of the Synod, which met at Chicago in 1847, when Candidate Carl Fricke was authorized to fill this position.<sup>2</sup> The report read:

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<sup>1</sup>Die Verfassung der deutschen evangelisch-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten, nebst einer Einleitung und erläuternden Bemerkung (St. Louis: Weber & Olshausen, 1846), p. 7. Also printed in Der Lutheraner, III (5 September 1846), 4, cols. 1f. (second edition).

<sup>2</sup>Some confusion has arisen about the correct spelling of Fricke's name, resulting from the fact that apparently he changed it himself in later years to Frincke. See Otto F. Hattstädt, Geschichte des Süd-Wisconsin-Distrikts der Ev.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1928), p. 28. This change appears to have been made about the time Fricke moved from Indianapolis to Baltimore. Verhandlungen der vierzehnten Jahresversammlung des Mittleren Districts der deutschen evang.-luth. Synode von

Auf die Eingabe des Candidaten C. Fricke beschloss die Synode, denselben als Besucher auszusenden, und ernannte in dieser Absicht eine Committee zur Entwerfung einer Instruction für den Besucher, die an ihrem Ort mitgetheilt werden wird.<sup>3</sup>

Carl Fricke had been one of the first two students in the practical seminary at Fort Wayne, first under F. C. D. Wyneken and later under Wilhelm Sihler.<sup>4</sup> The directives for carrying out his office were spelled out in some detail:

Instruction für einen von der Synode empfohlenen Besucher

1. Er hat zunächst die deutschen Ansiedlungen aufzusuchen und daselbst die Lutheraner zu erkunden; auch bei seiner Durchreise durch englische Ansiedlungen nach einzelnen deutschen Familien zu fragen und sie zu besuchen.
2. Es liegt ihm ob, die lutherischen Haushaltungen aufzusuchen and daselbst Nachfrage zu thun:
  - a. ob die Familien aus Deutschland oder aus dem Osten Amerika's in den Westen eingewandert und wie lange sie bereits hier seien;
  - b. ob der Hausvater und die Hausmutter auch wirklich beide lutherisch seien;
  - c. wie viele Kinder und sonstige Hausgenossen vorhanden; ob alle getauft und wie viele etwa confirmirt seien;
  - d. ob sie von reisenden Sectenpredigern zuweilen besucht worden und noch werden, und auf welcherlei Weise, im Fall des Besuchs, letztere an ihnen handthieren;
  - e. ob englische oder deutsche Schwarm- und Rottengeister

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Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten im Jahre 1868 (St. Louis: Druck von Aug. Wiebusch u. Sohn, 1868), p. 11. (Hereafter all such official Proceedings of conventions are cited in the following abbreviated form: Missouri Synod, Central District, Proceedings, 1868, p. 11.) Cf. Missouri Synod, Eastern District, Proceedings, 1868, p. 10. Three spellings, including "Frinke," appear in W. H. T. Dau, editor, Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod During Three Quarters of a Century (Augmented edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), pp. 59, 75, 103, and elsewhere. During the period under consideration in this study the name appears consistently as "Fricke."

<sup>3</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1847, p. 5. Cf. Der Lutheraner, III (10 August 1847), 137, col. 1 (second edition). The report in Der Lutheraner does not give the impression that Fricke volunteered.

<sup>4</sup>Dau, op. cit., pp. 59, 75.

in ihrer Nachbarschaft regelmässige Predigtplätze haben, und ob die lutherischen Ansiedler dieselben besuchen;  
 f. ob und wie viele Katholiken, Reformirte, Unirte u.s.w. in der Ansiedlung wohnen, und ob diese irgendwie von Predigern ihrer Confession bedient werden;  
 g. ob die lutherischen Ansiedler Bibeln, den kleinen Katechismus Luthers, gute Gesangbücher und vielleicht alte rechtgläubige Gebet-, Predigt- und Erbauungsbücher im Hause haben u. regelmässigen Gebrauch davon machen.

Findet der Besucher zwar gute Bücher, aber keinen ordentlichen Gebrauch derselben vor, so hat er die Leute freundlich zu ermahnen, diese Schätze nicht unbenutzt liegen zu lassen, und ihnen guten Rath zu ertheilen, einen gesunden Hausgottesdienst anzuordnen;—findet er dagegen ungläubige oder falschgläubige Bücher im Hause und überdies im Gebrauch, so hat er die Leute aus Gottes Wort zu überzeugen, dass solche Bücher wider die heilige Schrift, mithin der Seele durchaus verderblich seien, also dass, ob Gott will, die Leute alsdann von dem Gebrauch derselben ablassen.

3. Obige Nachfragen sind natürlich nicht in der Form eines Examens, sondern gesprächsweise und mit Vermeidung alles Scheins der Zudringlichkeit zu thun.

4. Er hat so viel wie möglich den herrschenden Zustand theils der verschiedenen Familien, theils der einzelnen Glieder derselben in geistlicher Beziehung genau kennen zu lernen; und hiebei liegt ihm ob, nach dem Vermögen, das Gott darreicht, mit und nach dem Worte Gottes zu lehren und zu ermahnen, wie es die Nothdurft erfordert.

5. Es ist seine Pflicht, die Leute mit Ernst und Liebe anzuregen, das heil. Predigtamt unter sich aufzurichten. Findet er also einzelne grössere oder benachbarte kleine Ansiedlungen vor, die da willig werden, sich einen lutherischen Prediger zu berufen, so hat er ihnen Anleitung zu geben, wie sie zur Erreichung dieses Zwecks die geeigneten Schritte zu thun hätten.—Ist dagegen die Anzahl der besuchten lutherischen Familien in einem grössern Umkreise zu klein, um alsbald einen ständigen Prediger zu berufen, so hat er die Leute zu ermahnen, sich an die nächste lutherische Gemeinde, die einen treuen Prediger hat, also anzuschliessen, dass sie von letzterem doch dann und wann besucht und mit Wort und Sacrament bedient werden,—in der Zwischenzeit aber sich also zu halten, dass sie Sonntags sich lieber aus einem guten Predigtbuche erbauen, als die Gottesdienste der Schwärmer besuchen.

6. Er hat die Hausväter zu berichten und anzuleiten, zumal bei grossen Entfernungen von regelmässig bedienten lutherischen Gemeinden, die Kinder in Todesnöthen oder sonst dringenden Fällen lieber selber zu taufen, als von durchreisenden Sectenpredigern taufen zu lassen.—Doch hat er auf besonderes Erfordern seiner Glaubensgenossen ihnen nicht nur zu predigen, sondern auch ihre Kinder zu taufen.



7. Es liegt dem Besucher auch ob, die Kinder, die im schulfähigen Alter stehen, hie und da in einzelnen Häusern, zumal in den Abendstunden, vorzunehmen, und zuzusehen, ob sie mehre oder minder lesen können, vom Katechismus etwas wissen, auch vielleicht diese und jene guten Liederverse und Gebete, und insonderheit die heil. zehn Gebote, den christlichen Glauben und das h. Vaterunser auswendig können, auch sie selber, soweit es die Zeit und Gelegenheit leidet, in den Hauptstücken des christlichen Glaubens zu unterweisen.
8. Er hat, vornehmlich, wo er die Kinder verwahrlost findet, die Eltern ernstlich und freundlich zu vermahnen und ihnen dafür Anweisung zu geben, das Unterrichts ihrer Kinder, und zumal in den Spätherbst- und Wintermonaten sich anzunehmen, und sie möglichst dahin zu bringen, dass sie lesen lernen, und die Hauptstücke aus der heil. Geschichte unsers HErrn Jesu Christi, so wie den kleinen lutherischen Katechismus allmählig in's Gedächtniss bekommen.
9. Er hat für diesen Zweck und auch zur Belehrung der Erwachsenen eine Anzahl zweckmässiger kleiner Schriften, so wie auch Bilder aus der h. Geschichte bei sich zu führen.
10. In der Führung seines Tagebuchs hat er darauf zu sehen, dass seine Aufzeichnung von Zahl, Ort, Umgebung, Aussen und innern Verhältnissen seiner besuchten Glaubensgenossen genau und bestimmt seien, auch dass er nicht versäume, besondere einzelne Erlebnisse in Bezug auf den Zweck seines Besuchs niederzuschreiben.
11. In seinem Berichte an den Präses hat er alle zwei Monate die statistischen Ergebnisse seiner Besuchsreise ganz speciell einzusenden, aus seinen sonstigen Erfahrungen aber das Wichtigste auszüglich mitzutheilen.
12. Er hat sich ernstlich zu hüten, dass er nirgends in ein fremdes Amt greife, selbst wo dasselbe von einem Ketzer oder Falschgläubigen verwaltet wird.
13. Er hat der Synode Rechnung abzulegen in Beziehung auf seine Reisekosten.<sup>5</sup>

These directives were never implemented, at least not in the early years, precisely as their formulators envisioned them. Yet they are rather significant for the light they shed on early thinking in

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<sup>5</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1847, pp. 13f. English translation in Appendix A, pp. 202-205.

the Missouri Synod about the use of an itinerant ministry and about home mission work in general. Points (1) and (2) illustrate the common method for doing home mission work: (1) look for Germans; (2) locate the orthodox Lutherans. These directions also shed light on the thinking that went into the establishment of this first itinerant ministry: the Besucher was to be principally an explorer. He was himself not even equipped to function in the full capacity of a minister of the Word. The first Besucher, Carl Fricke, was solemnly commissioned (feierlich entlassen wurde) by the same convention which created his office,<sup>6</sup> but was not ordained into the ministry or installed anywhere until he resigned the office of Besucher later the same year and accepted a call to White Creek, near Columbus, Bartholomew County, Indiana.<sup>7</sup>

The Besucher's main function was to gather advance information which might lead to the organization of a congregation in a particular area. His pioneer work would enable groups sufficiently large to organize and to call a regular pastor, in accord with the Lutheran doctrine of the call and the office of the ministry. The first Besucher was hardly more than a layman himself, working among fellow believers (Glaubensgenossen). He could preach and teach, distribute literature, and advise about organizing "reading services" (Lesegottesdienst) and family devotions, but could perform functions such as baptism only in emergencies or other extraordinary circumstances, and this only upon special request. There were to be slight changes in detail as time

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<sup>6</sup>Der Lutheraner, III (27 July 1847), 133, col. 1 (second edition).

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., IV (11 January 1848), 77, col. 1 (second edition).

went on, one being that such explorers would usually henceforth be ordained clergymen, but this action of the 1847 convention set the pattern.

Apparently, no special board or commission, apart from the general mission board which was to deal primarily with missions to the Indians in Michigan, was designated to look after the affairs of the Besucher. The only specific directive this general Missions-Commission had about the Besucher was that its treasurer, in addition to his regular duties relating to foreign (Indian) missions, was to provide for home missions also: "Auch hat er die Casse für innere Mission in gleicher Weise zu führen."<sup>8</sup>

Not a great deal of information about Fricke's travels is readily accessible. As noted above, he soon accepted a call to a congregation and had to forsake his position as Besucher. The report at the second Missouri Synod convention in 1848 stated that he had traveled through eastern Wisconsin, northern Illinois, and a few regions of Indiana and Ohio. On the whole Fricke's findings had, it seems, turned out rather disappointingly. Results in northern Illinois and southeastern Wisconsin had not justified the high hopes which had been held for the church in these areas.<sup>9</sup> He had actually found far fewer German settlements than had been anticipated. Nevertheless, a few opportunities to meet with fellow Lutherans and to conduct services had presented themselves.<sup>10</sup>

The evidence is rather certain that Fricke got at least as far

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<sup>8</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1847, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup>C. F. W. Walther's presidential address, Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1848, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

north as Sheboygan and Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin. Some two years later August Selle, then in Chicago, was authorized to make a preparatory trip for Candidate Mikolas Volkert to Calumet Village in Fond du Lac County. Apparently Fricke had encountered opposition from a sort of a universalistic society in the area. Two years later the local people still recalled, as Selle reported:

Mit grosser Freude erzählten sie mir, dass das saubere Kleeblatt dreier Studenten, die, drei verschiedenen Confessionen angehörend, eine Allerwärtsvereinigung, oder vielmehr eine "Lichtfreundliche" Gemeinde wollten, und die unserm lieben Besucher vor zwei Jahren seinen Aufenthalt dort so verbittert hatten, zerrissen und wenigstens in drei Winde der Welt zerstreut sei.<sup>11</sup>

It does not seem, however, that Fricke had himself been instrumental in founding the congregation in Calumet Village which Selle was organizing and which Volkert started serving in 1849 but soon had to abandon.

It is known that Fricke did keep a diary, as his directives had stipulated. Otto F. Hattstädt referred to it in his history of the South Wisconsin District in 1928, explaining that it was found quite by accident in California in 1925. Hattstädt gave no further details which would assist in learning the present whereabouts of this document, but his account at least gives an itinerary for Illinois and Wisconsin.

Am 7. Mai machte er sich von Chicago zu Pferde auf und zog über Dunkleys Grove und Dutchmans Point [today Niles?] am Michigansee entlang nördlich nach Wisconsin. Er kam nach Southport (dem heutigen Kenosha), Racine, Milwaukee, Mequon, Cedarburg, Grafton, Port Washington, Sheboygan, Sheboygan Falls, Calumet, Fond du Lac und von da wieder südlich nach Cedarburg und Grafton und dann westlich an Watertown vorbei nach Nashotah, Delafield, Waterford und Burlington und gelangte endlich über Wheeling nach Chicago.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>August Selle, "Kirchliche Nachrichten," letter to Walther, Der Lutheraner, V (21 August 1849), 202, col. 3.

<sup>12</sup>Hattstädt, op. cit., p. 28. Unfortunately Hattstädt was inter-

Hattstadt indicates that the diary substantiates the disappointing results reported to the convention in 1848.

#### Doctrinal Issues Raised

A committee of three was designated at the 1848 convention to deal with the report of the Besucher.<sup>13</sup> The committee proposed sending Carl Fricke out again, even though he had taken a call and was now pastor of a congregation. If his office could be delegated temporarily to one of the neighboring pastors near White Creek, Fricke should try to spend at least two months on this trip. He was also to consider the state of Missouri a part of his field. Moreover, he would have a somewhat different status, for it was proposed

endlich dass der Besucher im Character eines Missionärs ausgehen möge, damit er in den einzelnen Ansiedlungen längere Zeit bleiben und alsbald Gemeinden gründen könne.<sup>14</sup>

At this point a doctrinal concern was expressed, apparently raised by those who opposed letting the Besucher assume more functions of the ministry:

Die Frage nun, ob die Synode zu dem Zwecke förmlich zu berufen, dass er die zerstreuten Lutheraner dieses Landes aufsuche und sie mit Wort und Sacrament bediene, wurde Gegenstand langer und vielseitiger Besprechung. Während einige dieses Recht für die Synode in Anspruch nahmen, wurde von anderer Seite darauf aufmerksam gemacht, dass der Beruf zum Predigeramt unter bereits Getauften die Gewalt gebe, die Rechte des geistlichen Priestertums der Zuhörerschaft im öffentlichen Amte auszuüben, dass daher eben nur die betreffenden Zuhörer, entweder selbst oder durch dazu von ihnen eigens Beauftragte, einen gültigen Beruf zur Amtsverwaltung unter ihnen geben könnten;

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ested only in Wisconsin and does not indicate whether the diary included places visited in other states, such as Indiana.

<sup>13</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1848, p. 14.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

The two points of view were temporarily reconciled by agreeing that:

ein Besucher dürfe daher nur so weit sich zur Arbeit unter den zerstreuten, verlassenen Lutheranern berufen ansehen, als ihm dazu das Gebot der Nächsten- und Bruderliebe und der Auftrag der Synode, diese auch ihr obliegende Pflicht an ihrer staat erfüllen zu helfen, Beruf gebe.<sup>15</sup>

This issue may have been engendered partly as a result of the conflict which was beginning between the Missouri Synod and the Buffalo Synod. Roy A. Suelflow has even maintained that the Buffalo Synod registered a specific complaint about Carl Fricke's activities in Wisconsin; this however seems to be an inference.<sup>16</sup> The issue voiced in the 1848 convention was principally one which arose from within Synod's own ranks, though naturally the discussion may have been affected by the official position Synod had taken in the controversy with the Buffalo Synod. The controversy with Buffalo may have heightened the interest shown in the doctrinal implications of the itinerant ministry, but it cannot be demonstrated that there was any immediate connection between the two. The doctrine of the ministry to which the Missouri Synod had

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid. Emphasis in original.

<sup>16</sup>Roy A. Suelflow, "The Relations of the Missouri Synod with the Buffalo Synod up to 1866," S. T. M. dissertation, Concordia Seminary, 1945, printed in Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXVII (October 1954), 104. Suelflow cites the same sources as above from the Missouri Synod Proceedings and, in addition, Grabau's Kirchliches Informatorium, II (15 July 1852), 3. This, however, postdates Fricke's activity by nearly five years and is against Missouri's home mission work in general, with no specific mention of Fricke. Grabau equated the term missionary with apostle and was therefore contending that the office no longer existed as such in the church. This is not the only evidence for a general antipathy on the part of J. A. A. Grabau toward mission work; cf. Der Lutheraner, VIII (30 March 1852), 125f. It is more likely, however, that Grabau's doctrinal standpoint influenced his attitude toward Missouri's practice than that the practice resulted in a critical attitude toward Missouri's doctrine.

committed itself would have raised questions about the itinerant ministry, regardless of the course of the debate between Buffalo and Missouri.

Another problem which beset the Besucher enterprise very early in its history was of a more practical nature. Carl Fricke's first travels had come to an end when he accepted a call to the White Creek congregation. Sending out an unordained, unattached candidate had proved impractical. In 1848 a new tack was tried--that of commissioning a man who already was pastor of a congregation who would then try to take a "leave of absence" if it could be worked out with his congregation.<sup>17</sup> As already noted, the lot fell again to Carl Fricke for this position. In addition two other pastors were named: J. F. Bünger of St. Louis was made a Besucher with activities to center in Cincinnati, Ohio, and for the western settlements Adam Ernst was to cover especially the states of Illinois, Missouri, and Iowa. As it turned out none of these three men was able to get away from his congregation. Fricke appears never to have even seriously considered this second appointment. Later in 1848 a replacement was found for Bünger and Ernst when the St. Louis Pastoral Conference commissioned Friedrich Lochner as Besucher to make an exploratory trip into Iowa and parts of Illinois.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>The "leave of absence" or "vacation" method was employed, for example, as early as about 1825 in the Ohio Synod; C. V. Sheatsley, History of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio and Other States (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1919), pp. 139f. Cf. above, Ch. III, pp. 42ff.

<sup>18</sup>"Protokoll der St. Louis Distrikts-Prediger-Conferenz," Der Lutheraner, V (14 November 1848), 45, cols. 1f. (second edition). Cf. Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1849, pp. 8, 11.

Some nine years later, in an essay to the 1857 convention of Synod urging the establishment of an itinerant ministry, August Selle would explain the early failures of the Besucher plan:

In einem Falle war der Besucher, weil nicht berufener einer Gemeinde, nich bevollmächtigt, alle Amtshandlungen zu verrichten, was seiner Wirksamkeit hindernd in den Weg trat, und zudem wurde er schon nach gar kurzer Zeit durch einen festen Beruf an eine bestimmte Gemeinde aus dieser seiner ursprünglichen Wirksamkeit herausgerissen.

Then, referring either to the second type of itinerant as a whole or possibly to Lochner specifically, he would add:

Ein zweiter Reiseprediger unsrer Synode war schon Pastor einer Gemeinde, so dass er nur einige Male dieselbe zeitweilig verlassen konnte.<sup>19</sup>

Hence not single factor accounts completely for the virtual failure of Synod's first effort at the itineracy. The doctrinal issue was perhaps partly to blame. This in turn, since it more or less dictated the form of itineracy adopted by Synod, may have led to its practical failure. In other words, there may have been too much doubt and uncertainty about the validity of the position to make possible the whole-hearted support and interest which it needed to keep the enterprise alive. Then, too, the first Besucher had brought back a rather discouraging report. But before the effort was allowed to lapse completely for a time during the 1850's at least one significant success was recorded.

#### Lochner's Exploration into Iowa in 1848

In its session of 13 October 1848, the St. Louis Pastoral Confer-

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<sup>19</sup>August Selle, "Beilage K. Das sogenannte Evangelisten-Amt," Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1857, p. 107.



ence, in view of the failure of the appointed pastors Bünger and Ernst to carry out their directives, authorized Pastor Friedrich Lochner of Pleasant Ridge, near Collinsville, Illinois, to make an exploratory trip into Iowa and portions of Illinois. His directives mentioned Quincy, Burlington, Bloomington, and if possible, Galena and Dubuque. An appeal for pastoral services had been received from Quincy. Lochner was ready to go provided his congregation gave its permission. The conference resolved to send a letter to his congregation requesting the necessary permission and to ask the president of Synod, Walther, to see to it that Lochner's expenses were provided for out of the synodical treasury.<sup>20</sup>

Lochner, in letters addressed to Walther written enroute and published in three installments in Der Lutheraner, reported on his travels and findings in some detail. This appears to be the first published account of an officially authorized itinerant of the Missouri Synod. It is worth reviewing at some length, mainly for the light it sheds on emerging methods of carrying on such mission work.

Leaving St. Louis 7 November 1848, Lochner proceeded by steamboat up the Mississippi River to Galena, Illinois, where he arrived 13 November. In his letter he expressed his personal regrets that while on board the boat he had been unable to preach effectively when he had the opportunity because he knew so little English. In Galena he had been referred by Walther to a contact, Tischlermeister Neefe, formerly of Altenburg, Missouri, but the man had only recently moved

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<sup>20</sup>"Protokoll der St. Louis Distrikts-Prediger-Conferenz," op. cit., p. 45, cols. 1, 2.

again to Wisconsin. Upon further inquiry Lochner was directed to a recently arrived German pastor by the name of Behrendts; he however was Reformed. Nevertheless, Lochner and Behrendts had a gentlemanly discussion. Behrendts was being supported by the American Home (einheimischen) Mission Society. He referred Lochner to a pastor by the name of Flury in Dubuque, which was next on Lochner's itinerary. Arriving in Dubuque Lochner followed this advice, but his visit was poorly timed: Flury's wife was on her deathbed. When Lochner inquired about Lutherans in the vicinity and further north, Flury's response was anything but pleasant. As a result, Lochner determined not to venture any further north, and now turned toward Davenport.<sup>21</sup>

Lochner's second letter was mainly a description of his trip—and its discomforts and hazards—by stage from Dubuque to Davenport. His traveling companions were an Irish Catholic and an educated American freethinker. In Davenport he began by walking the streets, listening for the German language. Having successfully made a contact by this method, he was directed to the elder of the local German congregation which consisted of some 200 families from Holstein. These people, however, and particularly their school teachers, proved to be rather too much under the influence of German rationalism to suit Lochner. This became especially apparent when he attended a funeral with them

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<sup>21</sup>Fr. Lochner, "Briefe des 'Besuchers' (einheimischen Missionars) der deutschen ev.-luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. St. an den Redakteur," letter to W[alther], from Dubuque, Iowa, 16 November 1848, Der Lutheraner, V (6 February 1849), 93f. (second edition). An account of Lochner's itinerary is given in Geo. A. W. Vogel and Walter S. Wendt, Seventy-Five Years of God's Grace: A History of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in Iowa, 1879-1954 (Ogden, Iowa: Ogden Reporter Print, 1954), pp. 10-14.

in a neighboring settlement. Nevertheless, they had invited him to preach for them and he had accepted. This second letter was written the Saturday evening prior to this service.<sup>22</sup>

Under date of that Sunday, 19 November, Lochner described his preaching engagement among these Holsteiners. Someone had tried to hinder his preaching by seeing to it that the courthouse door remained locked that morning. Fortunately, the local Presbyterians saved the day by lending him their building for that afternoon. About this time Lochner found out that there was a Lutheran pastor in the community, a Holsteiner and brother of one of the teachers. The people did not seem too interested in this man, whom Lochner identified only as "St." They wanted a polished, well educated man and one who would agree with their inclinations toward religious indifference. Apparently this "St." did not meet these requirements, and himself was hesitant to undertake organizing a congregation for the same reason that Lochner despaired of success in such an effort.

Lochner tried to organize a congregation, but without success. A small group seemed interested, but felt that they would have to have support from the Missouri Synod until they were larger. Lochner reported that this had possibilities, since more immigrants were due to arrive soon.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, he resolved to move on to Bloomington,

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<sup>22</sup>Lochner, *op. cit.*, letter to W[alther], from Davenport, 18 November 1848, *Der Lutheraner*, V (6 February 1849), 94f. (second edition).

<sup>23</sup>Such support, though mentioned here, hardly seems to have been considered as a possibility by Synod as a body. Lochner may have had in mind the private solicitations common in *Der Lutheraner* for aid for indigent congregations.

Iowa.<sup>24</sup>

While in Bloomington Lochner made a side trip for a few days to Iowa City. There he met a widow, who related the distasteful experiences she had had with spiritual vagabonds, but who nevertheless was interested and gathered some friends to let Lochner conduct services. For want of a Lutheran minister she had been forced to attend Methodist services, and her daughter had recently even joined the Methodist church. From Iowa City Lochner also visited a settlement seven miles distant, where he distributed literature and preached. A man in the community took Lochner's and Walther's addresses, asked for a Synodical constitution, and expressed interest in organizing a congregation. Lochner urged the establishment of a more or less regular itineracy:

Wie nothwendig wäre es, dass diese wenigen Leute durch einen reisenden Prediger unserer Synode von Zeit zu Zeit besucht würden, damit sie nicht ganz entfallen "von des rechten Glaubens Trost," und so endlich mit dem Städtchen ein lutherisches Gemeinlein erblühte, das gewiss mit der Zeit wachsen würde, da Iowa City seiner Lage nach sich in kurzem wohl bedeutend vergrössern wird.

Meanwhile the Methodists and Roman Catholics were reaping the harvest. Bloomington had an Evangelical pastor, a brother of the Pastor Ries in St. Louis. This apparently was the reason Lochner did little work there and soon left. He did not want to create the impression of causing Winkelschleicherei, and being a rival missionary, even though Ries was not an orthodox preacher.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Lochner, op. cit., letter to W[alther], from Davenport, 19 November 1848, ibid., V (20 February 1849), 100 (second edition).

<sup>25</sup>Lochner to W[alther], from Bloomington, 26 November 1848, ibid., V (20 February 1849), 100f. (second edition). For this attitude toward

After a sooty steamboat trip from Bloomington to Burlington, Lochner first looked up a watchmaker to whom someone in Bloomington had referred him. This man turned out to be a freethinker, but had the courtesy to direct Lochner to other Germans. There was a congregation which had been served by an Evangelical pastor in Burlington, and was now being served by a product of the Rauhe Haus in Hamburg named Eppens. Eppens was a surly, unpleasant sort of fellow. "Als ich ihm das mir von der Synode mitgegebene Empfehlungsschreiben zeigte, äusserte er, dass ein jeder Landläufer sich selbst ein solches ausstellen könne," and before Lochner had even suggested any such thing, Eppens forbade the use of his church, scornfully giving Lochner "permission" to preach to those who were not his members. Lochner debated for a while whether to remain and was finally prevailed upon by some who did not care for Eppens to stay and preach for them. Meanwhile, in a second encounter, Eppens behaved somewhat more sociably and, when the time for Lochner's service came, was even present himself. After the service the people held a meeting to discuss the organization of a true Lutheran congregation. Lochner seemed to think that the prospects for this were good in Burlington.<sup>26</sup>

From Burlington Lochner went by stage--on the trunk, in a snow

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heterodox ministries, see also the twelfth of the "Instructions for the Besucher," p. 60 above, and the sixteenth of the twenty-eight theses on the Reiseprediger, Western District, Proceedings, 1865, pp. 64f. This hesitation apparently applies only to active proselytization of souls already committed to the care of a minister, orthodox or heterodox.

<sup>26</sup>Lochner to W[alther], from Burlington, 28 November 1848, Der Lutheraner, V (20 February 1859), 101f. (second edition).

storm—to Keokuk. On the return trip over the rugged terrain, he later learned, this same stage had an accident and several people were injured. In Keokuk he met the brother of a man he had met in Burlington, both of whom were from his own home town of Nürnberg. He preached in Keokuk, then for some Bavarian settlers out in the Busch, to whom he had been referred by the townspeople, and in Warsaw, Illinois. In both cities the people were enthusiastic about organizing congregations. Several of the people from the Busch wanted to go along with him to Warsaw so that they could hear him preach again as long as he was still in the area. Lochner's proposal in this report was that one man should serve the entire area: Warsaw would be the Pfarrsitz and Keokuk, which showed less promise for growth, the Filiale. He abandoned his plans to visit Quincy, because he had learned that two Lutheran pastors were already active there. This concluded his itinerary.<sup>27</sup>

Friedrich Lochner was perhaps the most successful Besucher, or explorer, sent out, even though little in terms of permanent results came from his work. After Lochner the Besucher as an official appointee of Synod or of a group within Synod soon passed out of existence. If in the years following 1848 such explorations continued, they were limited largely to men acting on private initiative, and without venturing nearly so far afield. It was to be some time before Synod or a constituent part of Synod, as such, would again commission an official appointee such as Friedrich Lochner had been. Yet Lochner's experiences in 1848 were typical of a technique for home mission work which was to become

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<sup>27</sup>Lochner to W[alther], from Keokuk, 5 December 1848, ibid., V (20 March 1849), 116f. (second edition).

standard procedure in later years. His letters shared many features common to the later reports: the first thing the exploring pastor did was to look for Germans, then more particularly for Lutherans (unsere lieben Glaubensgenossen), and ultimately for pure, confessional Lutherans. Aside from purely physical hazards and distresses, the greatest foes he encountered were sectarian denominations, religious quacks, frontier materialism, religious syncretism, or just plain indifference. In many respects Lochner's trip was unique, and would remain so. Yet there were features of his work which shared in and perhaps contributed toward the over-all development of an emerging home mission methodology. Interest in a synodically appointed itinerant would flag and the Besucheramt would be abandoned; but Friedrich Lochner in November and December of 1848 had demonstrated that an exploratory itinerant ministry was possible and that certain benefits could result from it.

Lochner's efforts were not, apparently, altogether without immediate results. Some four months after his return, Der Lutheraner was able to report that a parish consisting of Warsaw, Illinois, and Keokuk, Iowa, had been supplied with a pastor. A candidate from the German province of Holstein, Dr. [?] Stibolt, had passed an examination for entry into the ministerium of the Missouri Synod and, having accepted the call to Warsaw and Keokuk, had been ordained by Pastors Walther and Büniger at Trinity Church in St. Louis, 28 March 1849. Stibolt was most likely the Lutheran minister Lochner had unexpectedly met in Davenport and whom he identified in his report merely as "St."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., V (2 April 1849), 127, col. 3 (second edition). The identification is an inference from circumstantial, but by the same token

No really permanent results were obtained, however, from Lochner's exploration, even in Keokuk and Warsaw. Iowa was to remain virtually virgin territory for the Missouri Synod for a number of years to come. Not until 1856 was there to be a regular pastor of the Missouri Synod stationed in Iowa—Heinrich Grätzel in Bremer County—and he for only about two years.<sup>29</sup> Efforts with lasting results had to await the endeavors of August Selle from Rock Island, Illinois, in 1858 and 1859, and the arrival of Friedrich Düscher in Iowa City in the fall of 1859.<sup>30</sup>

#### The End of the Besucheramt

At the third convention of the Missouri Synod, in 1849, the failure of Bünger and Ernst to make journeys was reported, but encouraged perhaps by Lochner's pinch-hit performance, two men were again named to fill the positions. And again, Carl Fricke was one of the men nominated. He was

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rather substantial, evidence: The first two letters of the name agree; in both references he is said to be a Holsteiner; his ordination follows closely upon Lochner's contact with him; he accepts the call of a parish organized by Lochner and in the same general area as Davenport. Presumably Stibolt had remained reluctant to try organizing a congregation in Davenport. Cf. ibid., V (20 February 1849), 100, col. 2. But what became of Stibolt, as well as of his new parish, seems to present a mystery. The only other reference to him encountered in this investigation was a notice of ordination, similar to the one in Der Lutheraner, in Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1849, p. 7. Neither notice of his ordination identified him by first name. The Proceedings of the same convention at which his ordination was reported, and which met 6-16 June 1849, did not list him among members—present or absent—of the synodical ministerium. This was less than three months after his ordination.

<sup>29</sup>Der Lutheraner, XIII (7 April 1857), 135, col. 3; ibid., XV (22 March 1859), 127, col. 3.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., XIV (27 July 1858), 199, cols. 2f.; ibid., XVI (13 December 1859), 71, col. 2. See below, Ch. VII.



to visit Cincinnati, while the second nominee, Pastor J. M. Johannes of St. John's congregation, Sulphur Springs (Arnold, or Beck), Missouri, was to go to the western states. A written request for permission was to be submitted by the Synod to their respective congregations. In addition, this report on home missions also mentioned a potential mission field in New Orleans. As a result Synod empowered the vice-president to send the next capable candidate who would come from Germany to New Orleans in order to try to organize a congregation there. This report also, more so perhaps than previous such reports, concerned itself with matters of supplying vacant congregations and examining candidates. It was decided, in view of the pressing needs, to hurry along the examination of more advanced pupils at the Fort Wayne seminary. This problem of supplying enough pastors for existing congregations seems to have become the overriding concern at this time in any consideration of home mission work.<sup>31</sup>

As it turned out, neither Fricke nor Johannes were able to discharge the duties committed to them at the 1849 convention. Apparently,

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<sup>31</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1849, p. 11. Three "accelerated" candidates were mentioned: Eirich, Stubnazi (Stubnatzy?), and Volkert. An interesting account is given in Der Lutheraner, V (21 August 1849), 201-203, by August Selle of how he ordained and installed Wolfgang Stubnatzy at Coopers Grove, Cook County, Illinois, and made an exploratory trip to Calumet, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin, to prepare for Nikolas Volkert's call and ordination there. In this capacity, Selle was acting on the order of an itinerant, organizing a congregation where none really existed previously and no regular call had been issued. He also stopped off at Neu-Holstein, Wisconsin, on his return trip to Chicago to explore the possibilities there. Volkert was ordained in Chicago, an agreement Selle had made with the new congregation in Calumet in order to save on traveling expenses for the ordaining clergymen. The efforts in Calumet soon had to be abandoned, ibid. VI (23 July 1850), p. 192, cols. 1f. (second edition).

no suitable candidate was found for New Orleans, either.<sup>32</sup> However, a substitute had been found to go to Cincinnati, Ferdinand Sievers of Frankenmuth, Michigan. In Cincinnati, Sievers found that one pastor, Th. A. J. Wichmann, was protesting against unionistic practices and had left his former Zion congregation to organize the new Trinity congregation. Other than the close association Sievers had formed with Wichmann and the fact that the mission potential among the numerous Germans of Cincinnati was great, Sievers had little to report.<sup>33</sup>

Although no one had been able to venture into the western regions, J. H. Ph. Gräbner of Frankentrost, Michigan, had also done some mission work in the vicinity of Lansing and Grand River, Michigan. In Lansing he had encountered indifference and had learned that the Germans in Grand River were Catholics, so he had returned home disappointed.<sup>34</sup>

Again at the 1850 convention the main concern was for supplying enough candidates and for caring for newly arrived immigrants. Three resolutions were passed. The first was that a "Church Directory" (Kirchlicher Wegweiser für einwandernde Lutheraner) be published, which would warn of the dangers of America's sects, give a brief explanation of their identifying marks, and tell where teachers and congregations of the pure Confession were to be found. Secondly,

Anstatt der bisher alljährlich ausgesendeten Reiseprediger sollen zwei Colporteurs, einer in N. Orleans angestellt werden, denen zugleich zur Pflicht zu machen, sich an solche Männer in Hamburg,

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<sup>32</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1850, p. 20.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 20f. Wichmann was once associated with the Indianapolis Synod, later joined Missouri.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

Bremen und Havre zu wenden, die willig sind, ihnen von uns übersandte kleine Tractate u.s.w. unter den Auswanderern zu verbreiten.

Finally, each individual pastor was urged to make it his business to work for the extension of the church in his own area, by preaching, distributing literature, and so forth. This would ease the over-all burden so that no one pastor or congregation would have to do all the work, would spare the Synodical budget traveling expenses, and would obviate the difficulty that mission congregations were often left too isolated, with no mother congregation to depend on.<sup>35</sup>

The early idea of an itinerant ministry, the Besucher, gradually was abandoned during the 1850's. For one thing the traveling distributor of literature, the colporteur, was tried as a replacement. This position did not require the services of an ordained clergyman. The stress during this period was on filling the congregations which already existed—meeting the existing needs, not looking for new oppor-

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 21. This raises the broader issue of the best policy and method for carrying on home mission work in general: Is this best left up to individual initiative at the local congregational level, or can a group of congregations such as a Synod do effective work from its level by sending out full time missionaries-at-large and other workers? The Missouri Synod answer to the question has probably been a combination of both, although particularly in the early years the burden remained on the initiative of individual pastors and the local congregation. This type of mission work, particularly in cities, has aptly been named the "fission type of expansion," with congregations starting often with "branch schools," which in turn became affiliated congregations and ultimately independent congregations. This type of mission work was less effective, however, on the frontier with its greater distances. See August R. Suelflow, "Historic Patterns of Lutheran Settlement and Outreach," The Lutheran Parish in an Urbanized America with Special Reference to the Missouri Synod, ed. by Ross P. Scherer, Fifteenth Yearbook, Lutheran Education Association (River Forest, Illinois: L. E. A., 1958), pp. 32f. Suelflow quotes Sharvey G. Umbeck, "The Social Adaptations of a Selected Group of German-background Protestant Churches in Chicago," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Divinity School, University of Chicago, 1940, pp. 17f. See above, Ch. II, pp. 30ff.

tunities. Toward the middle of the decade prime attention in synodical meetings went to the division of Synod into the four districts. The 1854 synodical Proceedings contained no references at all to itinerant ministries.

## CHAPTER V

### THE COLPORTEUR

Gustav Pfau

The fourth convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, which met in 1850, resolved not to send out an itinerant clergyman, or what had been commonly referred to as a Besucher, but instead to create two positions as lay colporteurs. One of these men should work in the area of New Orleans, distributing literature among newly arrived immigrants.<sup>1</sup> This marked the beginning of the second basic type of itineracy employed by the Missouri Synod to meet the rapidly expanding home mission fields especially of the frontier. The colporteur, based on an idea which seems to have been quite common already in Europe and was also being employed by such agencies in the United States as the American Bible Society,<sup>2</sup> was a traveling distributor of literature.

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<sup>1</sup>Vierter Synodal-Bericht der deutschen evangel.-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio, und andern Staaten vom Jahre 1851 [sic; read 1850, the title page is in error] (St. Louis: M. Niednerschen Buchdruckerei, 1851), p. 21. Hereafter all such official Proceedings of conventions are cited in the following abbreviated form: Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1850, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>August R. Suelflow, "Historic Patterns of Lutheran Settlement and Outreach," The Lutheran Parish in an Urbanized America with Special Reference to the Missouri Synod, ed. by Ross P. Scherer, Fifteenth Yearbook, Lutheran Education Association (River Forest, Illinois: L. E. A., 1958), p. 29. For evidence that the Missouri Synod, at least later on, knew of the activity of such agents in Germany, see Lehre und Wehre, VI (February 1860), 63; ibid., XIV (June 1868), 198. For recognition of such activities on the part of the American Bible Society, see ibid., VII (March 1861), 94; ibid., XV (August 1869), 253.

The colporteur did not need to be an ordained clergyman, although a clergyman might function as a colporteur. The position was probably adopted by the Missouri Synod partly because regular clergymen were not available for the exploration of new areas and this was a function which could be performed almost as well by a layman. The decision to employ colporteurs may perhaps also have resulted in part from the scruples <sup>X</sup> certain members of Synod were having about the right of Synod to commission regular clergy as itinerants. A regular clergyman, it was thought, should have a valid call from a local congregation; no such restriction would necessarily accompany the use of a layman nor would he have the problem of to what extent he was qualified to perform such functions of the public ministry as the administration of the sacraments. This question about the use of regular clergy had been raised already at the second convention of Synod in 1848.<sup>3</sup>

The 1850 resolution met with failure, however, because no suitable candidates were available for the positions. The plan was not to be abandoned on this account. The following year, at the 1851

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<sup>3</sup>See above, Ch. IV, pp. 64f. That the transition to the use of the lay colporteur was a concession to these doctrinal scruples is also the impression gathered from Theodor Büniger's 1901 essay surveying home mission work to that time: "Einiger fürchteten [in 1848], dass die Synode nicht das Recht habe, Reiseprediger in der Weise anzustellen, wie es jetzt [1901] geschieht. Sie meinten, dass unter Getauften nur diese selbst das Recht hätten, das Predigtamt unter sich aufzurichten. Man hatte damals eben nicht allseitig bedacht, dass, sobald ein Prediger in eine Ansiedlung kommt und die Leute damit zufrieden sind, dass er predigt, und sie nicht schon Pfarrkinder eines andern sind, ein solcher Prediger von ihnen den Beruf hat. So hatte man nun einen Colporteur beauftragt, um Erkundigungen einzuziehen und nach dem Gebot der Liebe Rath zu ertheilen." Theodor Büniger, "Die Anfänge der Mission," Part III of "Etliche Züge aus der Geschichte der Missouri-Synode," Missouri Synod, Iowa District, Proceedings, 1901, pp. 81f.

convention, Pastor Th. J. Brohm made a proposal whereby he and his congregation in New York City would employ a candidate who had finished his preparation for the ministry. He would apparently assist Brohm and work on the side as a colporteur. No further specifications for the office were given. Synod would need only to assume the expense of providing a place for the man to preach and living quarters for him. But in this case, too, nothing came of the proposal, because no such candidate was available.<sup>4</sup> So far as is known this proposal was one of the few, perhaps the only, of such plans for a colporteur which involved the services of a man trained as a regular clergyman.

Thus after repeated failure to effect a plan to have colporteurs in both New York City and New Orleans, the idea of placing one in New York was given up and it was decided by the 1852 convention to concentrate more on the western regions and to call a colporteur for this purpose:

Hr. Gustav Pfau aus New York wurde als ein dazu passender Mann vorgeschlagen, bestens empfohlen und zu den gegenwärtigen Sitzungen [in Fort Wayne, Indiana] per Telegraph eingeladen. Er erschien, übernahm das ihm angetragene Amt und die Committee, welche mit Verabfassung der Instruction für den Colporteur und dem Verzeichnisse der zu colportirenden Bücher beauftragt worden, legte ihre Arbeit vor.

This was followed by the directives for Mr. Pfau:

1. Der von der deutschen evangelisch-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio, u. a. St. angestellte Colporteur hat die Aufgabe, vornämlich predigerlose deutsche lutherische Niederlassungen und Haushaltungen aufzusuchen und ihnen Bibeln, Gesangbücher, Katechismen und alle solche Erbauungs- und Gebetbücher zum Kauf anzubieten, welche die Genehmigung der Synode hierzu erhalten.

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<sup>4</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1851, pp. 13f.

2. Daneben ist es seine Pflicht, die Leute mit Ernst und Liebe anzuregen, das heilige Predigtamt unter sich aufzurichten. Findet er also einzelne grössere oder benachbarte kleine Ansiedlungen vor, die da willig werden, sich einen lutherischen Prediger zu berufen, so hat er ihnen Anleitung zu geben, wie sie zur Erreichung dieses Zweckes die geeigneten Schritte zu thun hätten. — Ist dagegen die Anzahl der besuchten lutherischen Familien in einem grösseren Umkreise zu klein, um alsbald einen ständigen Prediger zu berufen, so hat er die Leute zu ermahnen, sich an die nächste lutherische Gemeinde, die einen treuen Prediger hat, also anzuschliessen, dass sie von letzterem doch dann und wann besucht und mit Wort und Sacrament bedient werden, in der Zwischenzeit aber sich also zu halten, dass sie Sonntags sich aus einem guten Predigtbuche erbauen und nicht die Gottesdienste der Falschgläubigen und Schwärmer besuchen.

Ueberhaupt hat er unseren Glaubensgenossen allen guten Rath zu ertheilen, im Sinne der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche, wie z. B. der Hausgottesdienst einzurichten, wie der Unterricht der Kinder zu betreiben, wie die Nothtaufe zu verrichten sei.

3. Sein Arbeitsfeld begreift die westlichen Staaten in sich, wohin der Strom der deutschen Einwanderung vornehmlich sich ergiesst; insonderheit hat er sein Augenmerk auf Wisconsin, das nordwestliche Illinois und Iowa zu richten.

4. Er hat von Zeit zu Zeit dem Präses der Synode über den Erfolg seiner Wirksamkeit Bericht abzustatten und auch aus sonstigen Erfahrungen über die kirchlichen Verhältnisse der von ihm besuchten Gegenden das Wichtigste auszüglich mitzutheilen.

5. Er hat der Synode Rechnung abzulegen, sowohl in Hinsicht auf den Verkauf der Bücher und Traktate, als auch in Beziehung auf seine Reisekosten.<sup>5</sup>

Gustav Pfau had been a member of the Saxon immigration under Martin Stephan to Perry County, Missouri, in 1838. He is best known as a painter of some skill. Though hardly among the top-ranking theological minds among the Saxon laymen, Pfau seems to have possessed enough knowledge and a personal piety to fit him rather well for the position as colporteur.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1852, pp. 24f.

<sup>6</sup>A brief biography of Pfau appears in Ludwig E. Fuerbringer, Persons



Beginning in the fall of 1852 Gustav Pfau worked for about one year. Apparently no published report of his activities in any great detail ever appeared.<sup>7</sup> At the 1853 synodical convention it was reported that Pfau's activities had centered in Wisconsin, particularly among recently arrived Prussian immigrants. Only Milwaukee was specifically mentioned. Not much hope had been held for erecting orthodox Lutheran churches among the often indifferent, unionistic, or atheistic Prussians, but Pfau's report was less discouraging than even he had anticipated it might be. He had done some of his most effective work among these Prussians:

Hier hat er auch die meisten und besten seiner Bücher abgesetzt, besonders Luthers Postillen und Catechismen, Löhe's Saamenkörner u.[s.w.] und würde namentlich von des Hrn. Prof. Walthers Buch von Kirche und Amt eine nicht geringe Zahl verkauft haben, hätte er damit von Anfang an versehen werden können. Mehrere Glaubensgenossen haben schon in Folge der Wirksamkeit des Hrn. Pfau um Prediger gebeten und erhalten, und Herr Pfau würde sicher mehr gewirkt haben, wenn nicht Hindernisse mancherlei Art zu überwinden gewesen wären. Im Ganzen unbekannt mit den Niederlassungen, konnte er keinen bestimmten Operationsplan entwerfen, dazu kam, dass sein Terrain so gross war, während von den amerikanischen Colporteurs nur immer kleine Strecken bereist werden, in deren Mittelpunkt sie ihre Wohnung und ihre Bücherniederlage haben. Ferner fehlte es im Anfange dem Colporteur an dem nöthigen Vorrath von Büchern, das Pferd des Colporteurs war in schlechtem Zustande u.s.w.<sup>8</sup>

Pfau was not personally present at this convention. The report continued with a promise that more particulars would be shared in an

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and Events (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 94-96. He died in 1884 while serving as a Hausverwalter at the Springfield seminary, according to his obituary, Der Lutheraner, XL (1 March 1884), 37, col. 3.

<sup>7</sup>In his presidential report for 1853, F. C. D. Wyneken promised such a report, but this seems not to have materialized. Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1853, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 35f.

article in Der Lutheraner and continued with Pfau's future plans.

Herr Pfau befindet sich gegenwärtig auf seiner letzten Tour in Wisconsin. Nach Beendigung derselben gedenkt er, so Gott will, das nördliche Illinois zu durchziehen, und dann bei Herannahung des Winters sich nach St. Louis zu wenden. Damit wird er wahrscheinlich seinen Colporteurberuf beschliessen und das Amt einem andern lassen, da er nach seiner Natur nicht im Stande ist, demselben länger vorzustehen.

Pfau's intention to resign elicited the suggestion that it would be good for him to consider studying for the ministry, in view of his experience and training as well as his natural aptitude. Nothing specific was done about a successor. Synod wanted to settle accounts with Pfau.

Die Synode hält dies für Hrn. Pfau fürs Beste, wird durchs Präsidium (dem überhaupt die Sorge für die Colportage übertragen worden) seine bisherige Stelle besetzen und seine bisher gehaltenen Auslagen ihm sämtlich ersetzen lassen. Auch soll derselbe, in Berücksichtigung seiner grossen Sparsamkeit und Ängstlichkeit, die Synode mit Ausgaben für seine Bedürfnisse zu verschonen, für seine Person ausserdem eine Gratification von 54 Doll. 20 Ct. erhalten, welche Summe Herr Bergmann aus der Bücher-Casse der Synodal-Casse offerirt hat. Auch soll Herr Pfau sein jetziges, nicht gut für seinen Zweck passendes Pferd verkaufen und ein geeignetes anschaffen, in Hinsicht der Kosten für seinen eigenen Bedarf aber nicht so ängstlich sparsam sein.<sup>9</sup>

The perquisite given Herr Pfau was exactly half of the surplus of \$108.40 which the synodical book fund showed for that year.<sup>10</sup> Pfau had also received some support from private gifts from individuals and congregations.<sup>11</sup>

Following Pfau's year of service no successor seems to have been found for him and the plan was allowed to lapse for several years. As

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>11</sup>Der Lutheraner, IX (19 July 1853), 168, col. 1; ibid., IX (28 September 1852), 24, col. 2.

noted above, the praesidium of Synod was charged with the responsibility for finding a successor but apparently failed.

#### Literature for the Colporteur

Note should be made at this point of efforts to produce literature of the type colporteurs and itinerant missionaries might use. The Missouri Synod was not unaware of the activities of such agencies as the American Bible Society. The question of relations with this organization had been raised already at the 1850 convention. The answer then had been that under certain conditions it was not wrong to use their merchandise, but the idea was also brought up that it would be advantageous for the Lutheran church to have its own Bible Society.<sup>12</sup> The revised constitution of 1854 demanded a renunciation of participation in all heterodox tract and mission endeavors.<sup>13</sup> Though critical of the unionistic features of such societies, Synod remained aware of their activities and was known to have been supplied by such a society.<sup>14</sup>

In 1856 the Western District offered readers of Der Lutheraner the "first Lutheran tract." Patterned after the type published by Methodists,

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<sup>12</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1850, pp. 28, 29.

<sup>13</sup>Die Neue Verfassung oder Constitution der deutschen evangelisch-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten (St. Louis: Druckerei der evang.-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. St., 1855), article II, section 3, p. 3. This Constitution also appeared in Der Lutheraner, IX (21 June 1853), 145-51.

<sup>14</sup>E.g., see the article submitted by F. C. D. Wyneken on the activities of the American Bible Society, its budget, distribution of materials, and number of agents for 1864-1865, "Die amerikanische Bibelgesellschaft," Der Lutheraner, XXII (1 February 1866), 85. In 1856 the Eastern District resolved to thank the Strassburg Tract Society for the large number of tracts it had received, Missouri Synod, Eastern District, Proceedings, 1856, p. 28.

it was a reprint of an article which had appeared in the previous issue of Der Lutheraner on why a Lutheran could not unite with a United, an Evangelical, or a United Reformed-Lutheran congregation. It was in pamphlet form, in partial color, and sold two for five cents, to be had from teacher Eduard Roschke in St. Louis, the Western District treasurer.<sup>15</sup> Apparently, however, it was not until 1873 that another such uniquely Lutheran tract could be produced.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, Der Lutheraner itself is known to have furnished Reiseprediger with convenient pieces of literature to distribute. Certain issues may have been specifically designed for such purposes.<sup>17</sup>

Beginning in 1853 Bible societies were organized within the Missouri Synod. A meeting of "Der deutsche ev. lutherische Central-Bibelverein des Westens" was called for 22 September 1853 at Immanuel Church in St. Louis.<sup>18</sup> Soon thereafter Der Lutheraner printed the full constitu-

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<sup>15</sup>"Ein lutherischer Traktat," Der Lutheraner, XII (12 August 1856), 207, cols. 2f. The article reprinted, "Warum sich kein Lutheraner bei seiner Seelenseligkeit an eine 'unirte,' oder 'evangelische,' oder auch 'vereinigt reformirt-lutherische' Gemeinde anschliessen darf," was in ibid., XII (29 July 1856), 193-97.

<sup>16</sup>The president of the Evangelical Lutheran Tract Society announced that at length a second tract had been published, Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1873, p. 87. Whether this means that it was the "second" since the first one in 1856 is not clear. Casual investigation, however, does not reveal any further such productions between 1856 and 1873.

<sup>17</sup>E.g., F. Döschner was distributing issue number 24 of Der Lutheraner, Vol. XVI, in Benton County, Iowa, during 1860, Döschner's "Bericht über innere Mission," Der Lutheraner, XVII (25 December 1860), 74. The issue he was using is an example of one which seems to have been specially designed for such purposes, ibid., XVI (10 July 1859). Another possible example might be ibid., XXIII (1 September 1866), 1-8.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., X (13 September 1853), 11, col. 1.

tion of the society, now officially entitled, "Die deutsche evangelisch-lutherische Central-Bibelgesellschaft für Missouri, Illinois und Iowa," The society had been founded 24 May 1853. It was to have an agent, four commissioners, and four collectors in St. Louis. The manifestly poor were to be given New Testaments gratis. Colporteurs might receive stock on credit if they needed it.<sup>19</sup> The first agent, whose notices began appearing in Der Lutheraner the following spring, was teacher Otto Ernst, address care of Dr. Walther in St. Louis.<sup>20</sup>

The designation "central" signified that the society intended to be the parent organization with a number of auxiliary organizations (Zweige) in outlying areas. In time other central societies were organized. One for Wisconsin, Michigan, and Canada, in Detroit, was in existence in 1855.<sup>21</sup> At first the society in Fort Wayne was a branch of the one for the north in Detroit.<sup>22</sup> In 1858 it requested the status of a central society.<sup>23</sup> A society for the Eastern District, at Baltimore, was formed in 1862.<sup>24</sup> While not directly related to the subject of itin-

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<sup>19</sup>"Lutherische Bibelgesellschaft," ibid., X (9 November 1853), 41f.

<sup>20</sup>E.g., ibid., X (14 March 1854), 120, col. 1; ibid., X (23 May 1854), 160, col. 2. Ernst's position as "Agent und Schatzmeister" seems to have led him into other areas of religious book sales, ibid., X (29 July 1854), 200. In 1859 a number of St. Louis enterprises suffered when he suddenly absconded, ibid., XV (22 February 1859), 111, col. 2; ibid., XVI (4 October 1859), 32, col. 2; ibid., XVI (18 October 1859), 40, col. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., XI (3 July 1855), 183, cols. 2f.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., XIV (20 October 1857), 39, col. 2.

<sup>23</sup>Missouri Synod, Central District, Proceedings, 1858, p. 26. Cf. Der Lutheraner, XV (28 December 1858), 79, cols. 1f.

<sup>24</sup>Missouri Synod, Eastern District, Proceedings, 1862, p. 40. Cf. Der Lutheraner, XIX (17 September 1862), 14, col. 3.

erant ministries, these Bible societies were probably of some importance to the itinerant in that they provided him with Bibles and other literature at a nominal price, often on credit.<sup>25</sup>

### The Later Colporteurs

Gustav Pfau's services terminated soon after the 1853 convention of Synod. When the ninth convention of Synod met in October of 1857, three years after the division of Synod into districts, it was reported that the Western District had already had a colporteur at work for a year and a half. He was Mr. Friedrich Lange of St. Louis.<sup>26</sup> A fuller report entitled "Beilage L"<sup>27</sup> and signed by J. F. Büniger was appended to the Proceedings. Lange was perhaps a member of Büniger's Immanuel congregation in St. Louis. He is reported to have still been in the publishing business later on.<sup>28</sup> Büniger's report stated that he had volunteered (ein Freiwilliger Colporteur) and at his own expense (auf eigene Kosten).

Mit einem Beglaubigungs- und Empfehlungsschreiben von einem derzeitigen Beamten der Synode versehen, fuhr Hr. Lange in seinem Wagen nach Illinois und machte zunächst eine Reise durch

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<sup>25</sup>"Die deutsche ev.-lutherische Central-Bibel-Gesellschaft für Missouri, Illinois und Iowa zu St. Louis, Mo.," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (27 November 1861), 57, col. 2.

<sup>26</sup>"Colporteur der westlichen Districts-Synode," Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1857, p. 59.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. In the body of the Proceedings the Beilage was mistakenly referred to as "K."

<sup>28</sup>F. Lange was one of the five men with stock in the St. Louis printery who offered it to Synod at the 1869 convention. Walter A. Baepler, A Century of Grace: A History of the Missouri Synod, 1847-1947 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), p. 150.

einen Theil von Madison County. Ermuthigt durch den guten Erfolg seiner ersten Reise unternahm er eine andere und hat so im verflissenen Jahre mehrere gemacht. Obschon die ganze Zeit, die in anderthalb Jahren auf das Colportiren verwendet worden ist, zusammengenommen kaum ein Vierteljahr beträgt und ausser einem Theil von St. Louis nur ein County, das besagte Madison County, und zwei andere deutsche Niederlassungen in der Nähe davon besucht worden sind, so ist doch die Bücherzahl, die verkauft wurde, nicht unbedeutend.<sup>29</sup>

By actual count he had sold 968 books—over a thousand if the many smaller writings were counted—at a retail value of \$506.25. This included 139 copies of the Bible and the New Testament, 100 of Luther's Hauspostille (both the New York and Berlin editions), 27 copies of the Book of Concord, 80 of Luther's Small and Large Catechisms, 23 of Arnd's Wahres Christenthum, 210 copies of prayer books by Luther, Arnd, Habermann, Stark, and Löhe, 30 copies of a Luther biography, and a consignment of Lutheran Hymnbooks, writings of Timotheus, Heinrich Müller, Scriver, and so forth, a number of Luther's Schatzkästlein from the New York Tract Society, expositions of the Vater Unser, and Honigtropfen. Bünger admitted that many of these would have been acquired by the people regardless of Lange's activities, but argued that many more were sold this way. He wanted Synod to recognize Lange's work, grant him further authorization as a colporteur, help him procure reasonable books, and give him a Gratifikation to help cover the cost of his horse and wagon.<sup>30</sup>

The Western District at its convention the following year urged

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<sup>29</sup>J. F. Bünger, "Beilage L. Bericht über die Colportage im westlichen Distrikt der Synode von Missouri, O. u. a. St.," Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1857, p. 109.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 109f.

Mr. C. Kerckhof, delegate from Zion and St. John's congregations in Jefferson County, Missouri, to assume the duties of colportage for Missouri. It is not known whether Mr. Kerckhof accepted this proposition.<sup>31</sup> The same convention ruled that colporteurs should receive books published by Synod on the same terms as book dealers.

Either the records were silent on what colportage activities there may have been in the ensuing years or the explanation is that not much was done. In some areas this type of work was again carried on by the Reiseprediger following the revival of this office in the late 1850's.<sup>32</sup>

By 1865 Friedrich Lange was again the officially recognized colporteur of the Western District. The District's convention of that year resolved to help him by paying for a wagon for him. The money was to come out of the home mission fund. Pastor Brohm was designated to select materials for Lange to distribute. He would work in the country during the summer season and in St. Louis during the winter.<sup>33</sup>

Inspired by the example of the Western District, the Eastern

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<sup>31</sup>Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1858, p. 35. Cf. August R. Suelflow, The Heart of Missouri: A History of the Western District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1854-1954 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 40.

<sup>32</sup>One example is the report of J. Jacob Hoffmann, who had an itineracy more or less the result of his own initiative in the vicinity of Wausau, Wisconsin. Hoffmann reported that he had sold \$25.00 worth of books, half on credit, and had to send for more. J. Jacob Hoffmann, "Reiseprediger-Bericht," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (30 October 1861), 45, col. 1. Hoffmann's first initial is incorrectly given as "G."

<sup>33</sup>Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1865, p. 72. This is the same convention which held a long discussion on the doctrinal issues raised by the office of Reiseprediger and then commissioned C. F. Liebe in this capacity.



District later the same year empowered a three man committee on colportage to find a suitable man for this purpose. He was to work mainly in the New York City area. A maximum of \$300 could be devoted to this purpose.<sup>34</sup> Nothing seems to have come of this proposal, however. Presently the District entered other areas of home mission work in the New York City area and elsewhere.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile consideration was also being given by the general Synod to placing an immigrant missionary in New York City, who could also serve as colporteur.<sup>36</sup> When the immigrant mission got under way officially in 1869, colportage became one of its important features.

In the 1866 Western District convention Friedrich Lange gave a report on his activities and a new name appeared, Mr. J. Umbach.<sup>37</sup> At the general synodical convention of 1869, both Lange and Umbach reported. Umbach had made two trips, one into Wisconsin and the other through the southern part of Illinois and into Missouri. Sales had totalled \$2,803.25. In recognition of his efforts he was to receive \$25.00 per month for the time spent as a colporteur of Synod. Friedrich Lange was again working on a voluntary basis. Between 1867 and 1869 he had sold \$2422.00 worth of books. He was thanked for his service of love. Somewhat later, the same convention proposed that he be made the official synodical colporteur and be salaried accordingly. Synod re-

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<sup>34</sup>Missouri Synod, Eastern District, Proceedings, 1865, p. 64.

<sup>35</sup>For initial considerations, see ibid., p. 60.

<sup>36</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1866, p. 89.

<sup>37</sup>Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1866, p. 74.

solved to leave it up to the committee on publications (Committee für Drucksachen) whether a second salaried colporteur could be employed.<sup>38</sup>

From about this time on the position of colporteur seems gradually to have been abandoned. The synodical treasurer's report for 1872-1874 still listed an expenditure of \$349.25 for colportage.<sup>39</sup> As late as 1879 yet, in the Eastern District, Mr. H. Rolf was appointed official colporteur for the District's congregations.<sup>40</sup> Mr. Rolf's, however, was hardly an itinerant appointment in the same sense as the earliest colporteurs, who were often also explorers. No further references to colporteurs were discovered in this investigation.

It is rather difficult to assess the activities of the colporteurs, especially in terms of results. As Bünger was willing to admit, much of their literature would have gotten into people's hands even without their work. Yet many of these people might not have taken the initiative to acquire this same literature. The idea of supplying such religious literature to families isolated on the frontier and deprived of the regular services of a clergyman certainly had merit. In some cases the colporteur was also able to lend spiritual counsel and to advise families about carrying on devotions and establishing reading services (Lesegottesdienste) in the interim until a regular pastor would be available. Finally, one of his most important functions

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<sup>38</sup> Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1869, p. 104.

<sup>39</sup> Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1874, p. 86.

<sup>40</sup> Missouri Synod, Eastern District, Proceedings, 1879, p. 67.

was that of serving in the position of a synodical contact man, to keep synodical officials posted on movements of Lutherans on the frontier, and to alert them when a group was large enough to support a pastor of their own. Like the Besucher before him and many of the early Reiseprediger in general, the colporteur was an explorer. His office as such was only a partial answer to the crying spiritual needs of the American frontier. But still the colporteur served an important function, spotting these needs, making initial contacts, and paving the way for a regular, permanent shepherd and flock.

## CHAPTER VI

### REVIVAL OF THE ITINERANT MINISTRY

#### Resumption of Interest

A revised constitution was adopted by the Missouri Synod in 1854, mainly to permit the necessary changes for dividing the Synod into four regional districts. To the jurisdiction of the general (allgemeine) Synod remained the work of "innere Mission in den Staaten Nordamerika's, über welche sich keine der Distriktssynoden erstreckt," as well as that of foreign missions (Heidenmission) which at that time meant missions to the American Indian.<sup>1</sup> In due time this provision lost its original meaning as virtually every area of the United States fell under the jurisdiction of one district or another. Yet the general Synod as such maintained an interest through the years in the work of home missions. Meanwhile, the 1854 Constitution directed that districts had the responsibility to meet the opportunities for home mission work within their boundaries, to provide candidates for vacant congregations, and to support poorer congregations so that they could have the regular services of a minister.<sup>2</sup> The new Constitution provided for a Heidenmissions-Commission, but no board or commission

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<sup>1</sup>Die Neue Verfassung oder Constitution der deutschen evangelisch-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio, u. a. Staaten (St. Louis: Druckerei der evang.-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. St., 1855), p. 5. Reference is to Article IV, Section B. The text of this Constitution may also be found in Der Lutheraner, IX (21 June 1853), 145-51.

<sup>2</sup>Die Neue Verfassung, p. 6 (Article IV, Section C).

specifically for home missions.<sup>3</sup> Convention assemblies were directed to discuss the necessary measures for carrying on home missions in their jurisdictions.<sup>4</sup> The only provision for financial matters was that district treasurers were to remit surplus funds not expended for foreign or home missions within the district to the treasurer of the general Synod.<sup>5</sup> Such was the basic organizational machinery provided to meet the ever increasing needs of the church on the American frontier.

Indicative of a reawakening interest in establishing some kind of an itinerant ministry to meet these needs was the second convention of the Western District which met in 1856. For one thing President G. A. Schieferdecker brought up the subject in his annual report. He had visited a congregation in Palmyra, Missouri, which was so small that it was having difficulty supporting a minister of its own.

President Schieferdecker commented:

Meine Besuchsreisen benutzte ich gleichfalls dazu, etliche Gemeinden aufzusuchen, die theils von Predigern unserer Synode bedient worden waren und nun längere Zeit predigerlos waren, theils als neugebildete Gemeinden um Prediger nachgesucht hatten; was mich auch aufs neue an das dringende Bedürfniss eines Reisepredigers erinnert hat.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 9, 11 (Article V, B, 1, d and V, B, 5).

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>6</sup>Verhandlungen der Zweiten Sitzungen des westlichen Districts der Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten, im Jahre 1856 (St. Louis: Druckerei der evang.-luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. St., n.d.), p. 12. Hereafter all such official Proceedings of conventions are cited in the following abbreviated form: Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1856, p. 12.

The same 1856 Western District convention had in attendance a guest, Pastor J. R. Moser of the Tennessee Synod,<sup>7</sup> who apparently sparked a discussion about similar matters. The question he put before the assembly was whether it was better to serve as large a circle as possible of scattered members with occasional care and services, or to concentrate on a small area and serve it well. Moser called attention to the fact that in the eastern synods pastors had already become accustomed to serving multiple parishes. With the westward movement this was becoming all the more necessary. The answer given him was:

Als allgemeiner Grundsatz wurde aufgestellt, dass man seine Kraft so wenig wie möglich zersplittern dürfe, wenn man hoffen wolle, mit Gottes Hülfe etwas Tüchtiges zu leisten. Die Vielgeschäftigkeit sei nicht zu loben, und ginge immer Nachtheil. Das Bedienen von 4, 6, ja mehr Gemeinden, oft nur in Folge des schändlichsten Geizes, sei unverantwortlich, wenn man anderweitige Hülfe haben könne, weil dabei zu viel Nothwendiges versäumt werden müsste. Doch habe man freilich auch die Pflicht, sich der zerstreut wohnenden Glieder, so viel dies ohne Vernachlässigung des Nöthigen geschehen könne, anzunehmen.

Had not Paul enjoined Titus to ordain elders in the cities?

Es sollen also nach göttlicher Ordnung die Pfarrer in ihren Gemeinden wohnen, deren sie wohl 2 oder 3 benachbarte bedienen mögen, dann aber wo möglich immer mit Schullehrern zur Seite, wogegen auf einem Felde von 5, ja 10 Gemeinden, wie es sonderlich im Osten oft getroffen werde, blutwenig ausgerichtet werden könne.

If this was not done, the discussion continued, so that the Lutheran

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<sup>7</sup>In order to encourage relations between the Tennessee and the Missouri Synods an exchange of guest representatives at conventions had been arranged. Pastor Th. J. Brohm of New York City had attended a Tennessee Synod convention in 1854 and the Tennessee Synod had responded by delegating Pastor Moser to attend the next meeting of the "Western portion" of the Missouri Synod. Der Lutheraner, XI (2 January 1855), 77f.

Church could take proper root in America, it would lose its identity and its clear confessional principles and would remain Lutheran in name only. There was a danger, some felt, in spreading one's effort too thin. Pastors would lose the necessary personal contact required for effective Seelsorge and souls would be lost to the sects. Stress should be on quality, not quantity, the delegates decided in effect. "Dies sei aber nicht wohl anders zu erreichen, als durch fortgesetzte treue Arbeit in den einzelnen Gemeinden." Yet the same Scriptural injunction that seemed to favor the establishment of a resident ministry might also be interpreted in favor of a type of itineracy:

Im Blick auf obige Stelle heiliger Schrift [Titus 1:5] wurde der Wunsch ausgesprochen, auch unter uns ein Evangelisten-Amt, wie es im Anfang der christlichen Kirche bestanden, aufzurichten, damit wir so auch unserer Pflicht, die zerstreuten Schaafte aufzusuchen und zu sammeln, recht nachkämen, während dann die Pastoren ihres Amtes in den Gemeinden warteten. Diese Sache wurde mit Ernst der Synode ans Herz gelegt.<sup>8</sup>

Thus even apostolic injunction and practice were sufficiently ambiguous to justify no really decisive answer to the problem Moser had posed.<sup>9</sup>

#### Ferdinand Sievers' Exploration and the Beginnings of Work in Minnesota

The Northern District convention of the same year 1856 was likewise not silent on the subject of home missions. Its deliberations,

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<sup>8</sup>"Vom Bedienen vieler Gemeinden—Evangelistenamt u.," Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1856, pp. 35f.

<sup>9</sup>It is passages such as the above quoted which have led Carl S. Meyer to conclude: "Circuit riders were used and Reiseprediger were sent out. The Lutheran tradition demanded, however, an emphasis on a resident ministry." Carl S. Meyer, "Lutheran Immigrant Churches Face the Problems of the Frontier," Church History, XXIX (December 1960), 448. Meyer cites the 1856 Western District discussion on p. 446.

however, were less concerned with theoretical implications and more with getting the job done. Several different areas were mentioned as potential fields. What was then known as Canada West (Ontario) was one, but it was decided that this province, except for a few places more accessible to pastors from Michigan, belonged to the jurisdiction of the Eastern District.<sup>10</sup> Where possible the Michigan pastors should make trips from time to time into Canada and their congregations were requested to make the sacrifice their absence would create. California was a second possibility, but work there was deemed impossible for want of men and means.<sup>11</sup>

The best field, it was decided, was the Territory of Minnesota. Pastors from the Northern District could easily reach it and many Lutherans from eastern congregations were already settling there. It was resolved, consequently, "einen Prediger des Distrikts zu einer wo möglich noch im Laufe dieses Sommers anzutretenden Erkundigungsreise nach Minesota [sic] zu beauftragen, dem Distriktspräses aber die Wahl der geeigneten Person zu übergeben." The convention met 21-27 May 1856. By the time the Proceedings were printed a suitable man had already been picked, for the secretary added as a footnote: "Unter der Voraussetzung, dass die Gemeinde zu Frankenlust und Amelith zustimmen und ihren Prediger für einige Zeit zu missen bereit sein werden, ist Herr

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<sup>10</sup>Missouri Synod, Northern District, Proceedings, 1856, p. 22.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 23. Apparently the question of to whose jurisdiction such a far off state belonged had not yet been settled. This also seems somewhat out of line with the principles of the revised Constitution, see above, p. 95. The general Synod, of course, had not yet met since the division into districts.



Pastor F. Sievers hiezu bestimmt worden."<sup>12</sup> Sievers' trip was to serve a combination of two interests: Indian and home mission work.

Later that year a series of letters written by Ferdinand Sievers, reporting on his experiences and addressed to Prof. C. F. W. Walther, appeared in Der Lutheraner. The first two were principally about Indian missions. But in the first one he did mention that during his present stay in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area (his letter was datelined "Anthony Falls") he was trying to gather German Lutheran families together to organize a congregation. He did not seem overly hopeful, however, since he was finding that most of the Germans there were Roman Catholics. His address was to be St. Paul until 7 September, when he was planning to return home.<sup>13</sup>

Sievers submitted a full report on his home mission efforts later, upon returning to Frankenlust. On the way back from the Indian reservations in the vicinity of Crowing (sic) and Mille Lac, he had tried first at St. Cloud. But he had found no German Lutherans—only "Americans" and Roman Catholics.<sup>14</sup> In Minneapolis and St. Anthony Falls he

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<sup>12</sup>Missouri Synod, Northern District, Proceedings, 1856, p. 23.

<sup>13</sup>Ferdinand Sievers to C. F. W. Walther, from [St.] Anthony Falls, [Minnesota], 21 August 1856, Der Lutheraner, XIII (9 September 1856), 14f. Sievers, together with Missionary Miessler and interpreter Gruet, had just returned to the Twin Cities area from an exploratory trip to the vicinity of Crowing (sic), which he described as about thirty miles west of Mille Lac. Missouri Synod officials were exploring this area because the Indians there, the Chippeways (sic), were the same tribe and had the same language as those at the Synod's earlier mission at Bethany, Michigan, and vicinity. Sievers urged that two candidates be sent to this new field. The second letter was devoted almost entirely to Indian mission matters; F. Sievers, "Bericht über eine Missionsreise ins Minnesota-Territorium im August und September 1856," part one, ibid., XIII (10 February 1857), 99-101.

<sup>14</sup>The designation "American" becomes rather common in reports by

had better results. He found a few German families who considered themselves Lutheran, and after determining that they subscribed to the Lutheran Confessions, he held two services for them, with Holy Communion, and baptized a child. Then he also visited outlying areas of the Twin Cities, particularly the settlement of Corcoran. Sievers' dominating concern, at least from what he wrote in his letters, appears to have been for the confessional standpoint of the people he met. Fearing rationalistic influences among them, he was especially cautious about whether or not they could be communed.<sup>15</sup> At length he was able to organize a small congregation in Minneapolis and St. Anthony Falls, with outlying areas to be served as branch churches, if a pastor could be found.<sup>16</sup>

In St. Paul, where Sievers next went, a Lutheran pastor, a former Buffalo Synod member by the name of [F. W.] Wier, had been carrying on work. But because of the poverty of the flock he had gathered, Wier

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the itinerants, signifying that entire segment of the population generally which was not German. Other national lines seem to occur quite rarely. "Germans" were further subdivided as to their respective religious convictions.

<sup>15</sup>Sievers may have been somewhat unique in this respect, that he included the administration of the Sacrament of the Altar in his ministrations at such a preliminary stage. Unless he was simply being careless about chronological sequence in his report, it seems he administered Lord's Supper before a congregation had been formally organized. If this is correct, it would lend support to the belief that the doctrinal implications of the itineracy never loomed so large in the Northern District as they did, for example, in the Western.

<sup>16</sup>Ferdinand Sievers, "Bericht über eine Missionsreise ins Minnesota-Territorium im August und September 1856," part two, *ibid.*, XIII (24 February 1857), 109-111. This entire report is reprinted in H. Meyer, The Planting Story of the Minnesota District of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio and Other States (Minneapolis: n.p., 1932), pp. 19-29. Meyer gives further identification of some of the places mentioned by Sievers.

was now forced to farm on the side in order to make a living. Sievers told them that the Missouri Synod was willing to propose a candidate for them, if only they would subscribe to pure doctrine. From their point of view this was evidently not the real problem; they wanted to know whether the Synod could help support the man. Sievers was forced to tell them: "Auf Unterstützung mit Geldmitteln aus der Synodalcasse aber könne sich unsere Synode nicht einlassen, da es die Pflicht einer jeden Gemeinde selbst sei, ihren Pastor zu erhalten."<sup>17</sup>

Leaving St. Paul, Sievers made a circuit to the south which included Shakopee, Chaska and Carver County, Henderson, and Prairiemonnd (sic). In this last-mentioned town he tried to organize a congregation, but met with strong resistance from the sects and unionists, particularly the Herrnhuter. At length a small group in Prairiemonnd did declare its willingness to subscribe to the Augsburg Confession and asked for a pastor and a proper Lutheran church constitution. Sievers' next destination was St. Peters. Enroute he met a farmer from near Le Seur who expressed some interest in organizing a church in his area. Sievers' next stop was Farribault (sic). There he found that whatever Germans there were in the area were scattered throughout the country-

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 111, cols. 2f. Forty-five years later, and the year before the Synodical Church Extension Fund was created, Theo. Bünge would quote this exact passage with apparent surprise and, in effect, would admit that Synodical thinking and policy on this subject had undergone a change. Theo. Bünge, "Die Anfänge der Mission," part III of "Etliche Züge aus der Geschichte der Missouri-Synode," Missouri Synod, Iowa District, Proceedings, 1901, p. 82. A possible interpretation of Sievers' remark--namely, that synodical support for congregations violated the principle of congregational autonomy--seems never to have been seriously maintained, however. Yet this whole issue of support might be considered at least incidentally along with other problems raised by the itineracy.

side, so he made his way on to Cannon Falls. Caught in the Busch at nightfall, he spent the night with a family of the ubiquitous "Americans." The next morning he located a German family and had morning devotions with them. Because there was no hope of assembling any sizable group in this area, he urged the family to affiliate with the closest Lutheran congregation. They related to him how once already they had almost been fooled by a Methodist preacher who had posed as a Lutheran, until the tracts he passed out had exposed him. Passing through Cannon Falls, Sievers made his way to Red Wing, on the Mississippi, where he had already stopped off four weeks previously. Here again the main problem was the Methodists. Upon securing pledges to the Lutheran creeds and the Augsburg Confession from the people in Red Wing, Sievers held services, again with Holy Communion. Before he left Red Wing, the group there had also announced their desire to form an orthodox Lutheran congregation. Sievers arrived home in Frankenlust 25 September 1856.<sup>18</sup>

At least one more or less immediate result of Sievers' exploratory trip may be mentioned here. A congregation was organized at Carva (sic), Carver County, Minnesota, and called a candidate from the practical seminary in Fort Wayne. Candidate F. W. Kahmeyer was ordained by W. S. Stubnatzy with the assistance of W. G. Polack at Thornton Station (Coopers Grove), Cook County, Illinois, on 19 August 1857 and the following day was on his way to Minnesota.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ferdinand Sievers, "Bericht über eine Missionsreise ins Minnesota-Territorium im August und September 1856," part three, Der Lutheraner, XIII (10 March 1857), 116f.

<sup>19</sup>W. S. Stubnatzy, "Kirchliche Nachrichten," Der Lutheraner, XIV (8 September 1857), 15, cols. 1f. Cf. Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1857,

## August Selle's 1857 Essay

The practical result of the 1856 Northern District convention was the exploratory trip of Ferdinand Seivers. The result of the discussion at the Western District convention the same year was a follow up on its suggestion of a so-called Evangelistenamt at the general synodical convention the following year. For at the 1857 general convention Pastor C. August T. Selle, at that time in Crete, Illinois, delivered a significant essay entitled "Das sogenannte Evangelisten-Amt." Selle, who was later to become a professor at the teacher training school of Synod,

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p. 71. An interesting sidelight of this ordination is the explanation given by Stubnatzy why the ordination did not take place in the congregation in Carver County. "Lieber war es uns allen gewesen, wenn Hr. Past. Kahmeyer inmitten seiner Gemeinde hätte ordinirt werden können; allein die Reise dahin wurde viel Geld gekostet haben, was wir besser verwenden zu können glaubten, wenn wir dem Hrn. Past. K. zum Ankaufe eines Pferdes behülflich würden, damit er das Werk eines evangelischen Predigers nicht nur in seiner nächsten Umgebung, sondern auch im weitern Umkreise ausrichten könnte. So wurde denn hier in meiner Gemeinde für Mittwoch Abend 8 Uhr Gottesdienst angesagt, und nachdem der Unterzeichnete vor einer ziemlichen Versammlung über 2 Tim. 4, 5. gepredigt und, wie oben angedeutet, Hrn. Past. Kahmeyer ordinirt hatte, ging der Neuordinirte mit den andern Brüdern (denn auch die Pastoren Selle und Kuchle hatten sich eingefunden), zum Tische des Herrn." Der Lutheraner, loc. cit. Cf. W. H. T. Dau, editor, Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod During Three Quarters of a Century (Augmented edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), p. 333.

A number of points in the passage are of interest. For one, it showed the discomfort of Synod at this time about ordaining a man in absentia, so to speak, from his intended flock. The practice definitely did not accord well with congregational autonomy and the idea that congregations transferred their rights to a minister for public exercise. Secondly, the article brought out that Kahmeyer himself, though attached to a specific congregation, was to do the work of an itinerant. This would be largely upon his own initiative. Itinerancies such as Kahmeyer's were probably quite common throughout the early history of Synod. A final point of interest, for the present purposes, is the role of the Chicago area pastors, members of the Western District, in this matter. District lines seem to have been overlooked somewhat in this cooperative venture.

located first in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and later in Addison, Illinois, had demonstrated more than a passing interest in home mission work previously,<sup>20</sup> and would continue to do so.<sup>21</sup> Selle's Referat was written at the request of President Wyneken as a result of the discussion which had arisen the previous year at the Western District convention when a so-called Evangelisten-Amt had been proposed.<sup>22</sup>

Selle's essay, the text of which was appended to the convention Proceedings, began by listing some of the reasons for the urgency of establishing such an office of Evangelist. Chief among these was the frightful spiritual condition and the danger which prevailed for the salvation of many of the scattered fellow believers on the frontier.<sup>23</sup> Christians have God's command to preach the Gospel to every creature. The same call of love should motivate for home mission work as motivates the Heidenmissionar. So far, as a result of its missionary spirit (Missionsgeist) Synod had been greatly blessed in growth. This spirit should not die among the younger generation. The call of the forsaken

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<sup>20</sup>In 1849 while still in Chicago he had been made responsible for placing two candidates, one in the frontier post at Calumet, Wisconsin. See above, Chapter IV, p. 76, fn. 31.

<sup>21</sup>In July 1858 Selle accepted a call to Rock Island, Illinois, leaving behind a congregation in Crete "three times as strong." His avowed purpose in doing this was to make Rock Island a kind of a center or launching off point for expansion into Iowa. August Selle, "Herzliche Bitte um Hülfe," Der Lutheraner, XIV (27 July 1858), 199, cols. 2f. This will be dealt with at greater length in a subsequent chapter, see below, pp. 117ff.

<sup>22</sup>"Amt eines Evangelisten oder Besuchers," Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1857, p. 59. For the Western District deliberations see above p. 99.

<sup>23</sup>August Selle, "Beilage K. Das sogenannte Evangelisten-Amt," Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1857, p. 105.

Glaubensgenossen on the American frontier goes beyond the narrow limits of the individual congregation and pastors and their congregations must be encouraged to share their blessings. Congregations dare not place hinderances in the way of their pastor in his pursuit of home mission work.<sup>24</sup>

However, Selle continued, not all the scattered Lutherans could be reached by pastors of congregations within reach of them. The problem of reaching all the newly arriving immigrants was becoming more and more staggering, for as he noted, in the city of New York alone in the first eight months of the current year close to 140,000 immigrants had landed, mostly Germans.

So kommt es, dass in Minnesota, dessen Name erst vor wenigen Jahren bekannt geworden, sich eine deutsche Ansiedlung fast an die andere anschliesst. Ein gleich weites feld möchte sich uns darbieten in Iowa, in Californien, und wahrscheinlich demnächst auch in Kansas, Nebraska, Washington und Oregon Territorium.

Who had more of a call to serve these wandering Germans than the Missouri Synod? Selle wanted to know. Yet Synod lets all sorts of sects get in ahead and it brings up the rear.

Of course, Synod had tried. Selle recalled that Reiseprediger<sup>25</sup> had been sent out and not altogether without results. But the net result had been to show that something more effective would have to be done. The first Reiseprediger (Carl Fricke) had not been fully empowered to administer all the functions of the office, and besides had

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 106. The way this is stated brings out again that in the early thinking the congregation was the all-important agency for home mission work and that much was left up to local initiative.

<sup>25</sup>This was the word he used here. He was referring to the so-called Besucher.

soon been called to a regular position. A second Reiseprediger was already a pastor, but this had made it difficult for him to get away from his congregation for any length of time.<sup>26</sup> The effort had been allowed to lapse:

Seitdem ist nun in dieser Beziehung nichts oder doch gar wenig gethan worden. Sollten die gemachten Versuche uns entmuthigen? Sollten sie nicht vielmehr dazu dienen, uns zu zeigen, welche Missgriffe wir für die Zukunft in dieser Beziehung zu vermeiden haben?<sup>27</sup>

Selle's proposal was as follows:

Nun dies glauben wir thun zu können durch die Anfrichtung eines sogenannten Evangelisten-Amtes, dessen Träger sich nie an diese oder jene einzelne Gemeinde oder Gemeinden binden sollen, sondern deren Aufgabe es ist, sich allein, so zu sagen, die Pflanzung der Kirche da, wo sie noch nicht in geordneten Verhältnissen besteht, angelegen sein zu lassen.<sup>28</sup>

The Evangelist should be a young, eager man, but at the same time one well grounded in doctrine because of the assorted spirits he would encounter. Selle even explained how the Evangelisten would operate:

Diese [die Evangelisten] erwählen sich in einem ihnen von der Synode angewiesenen Staat oder Territorium als Diöcese je einen grössern Kreis von deutschen Ansiedelungen, die sie unaufhörlich bereisen und mit dem Wort resp. mit Sacrament bedienen, wann und wo immer sie Eingang finden können.

Such a procedure was bound to produce beneficial results. Not to mention the individual souls which will be led to heaven,

können diese Evangelisten ohne Zweifel gar bald, wenn auch Anfangs nur kleine Häuflein sammeln, die sich von Zeit zu Zeit regelmässig zusammenfinden, auch in Abwesenheit des Evangelisten durch Lesegottesdienste sich gemeinschaftlich zu erbauen. Man frage nicht, was es helfen wird, auf diese Weise viele Gemeinden

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<sup>26</sup>See above, Chapter IV, p. 67.

<sup>27</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1857, p. 107.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 107f.



zu organisieren, da es uns doch stets an Predigern fehle. Es müssen diese Gemeindlein von vornherein durch ihren Evangelisten, der hier in jeder Beziehung viel freier und entschiedener auftreten kann, als es einem Ortspastor, sonderlich in einer neuen, noch ungegründeteren Gemeinde möglich ist, sich an den Gedanken gewöhnen, dass sie erst einen eigenen Hirten bekommen werden, wenn sie zu Gemeinden herangewachsen sind, bei denen nicht mehr zu fürchten steht, dass sie sammt ihrem Pastor verkümmern müssen. Gerade hier ist es noch möglich, durch weises Verfahren der traurigen Zersplitterung in kleine Gemeinden, die wir in den älteren Staaten so vielfach schmerzlich beklagen, in Zeiten vorzubeugen. Bei so gebildeten Gemeinden, die unter der längeren Bedienung eines Evangelisten gelernt haben, was sie eigentlich thun, wenn sie nun einen eignen Pastor berufen und was sie von ihm zu erwarten haben, steht auch die Gefahr eines spätern bedeutenden Abfalls der Glieder von den Gemeinden, wodurch es anderwärts oft dahin gekommen ist, dass ein Pastor bei so gar Wenigen stehen muss, nicht so leicht zu befürchten.

As it would become necessary for these congregations in time to call their own pastors, the Lord would provide the necessary men. Selle was well aware of the objections that might possibly be raised to his proposal. It might encourage a spirit of independence and divisive- X  
ness, but this was a risk which had to be run. At present, if only one candidate were available, a beginning could be made perhaps in Minnesota.<sup>29</sup>

Selle begged Synod not to shrink from the prospect of the cost of this enterprise. It was his hope that as the circle of Synod's congregations would spread and the congregations themselves would enlarge, love would compel them to provide all the more for carrying out the work of the church at large. It was quite probable, he felt, that it would require but little more than the initial investment from the synodical treasury, for as time went on the first groups visited would begin to provide for the minister's needs and eventually the enterprise

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

might become self-sustaining to some extent. And at any rate, the desperate need demanded that all hindrances and all objections both theoretical and practical be laid aside for the present.

Selle did seem to sense that one such objection might also be the implications his proposal had for the doctrine of the ministry and the call. He did not, however, speak directly to any of these issues. Necessity compelled that all "hindrances" be laid aside, even if only for the time being: "Hört dieser Nothstand später auf, dann, aber auch erst dann, möge dieses Amt wieder fallen." Thus the office Selle proposed could be looked upon as of a merely temporary and provisional nature. It was on this note that Selle's essay ended.<sup>30</sup>

The terminology employed in this essay deserves comment. By this time the term Besucher had largely disappeared, except as a synonym as used in the title of the report in the body of the convention Proceedings. Evangelist appears to be another deliberate attempt to distinguish the Missouri Synod itinerant office from those of other denominations which were commonly referred to as Reiseprediger. The term Reiseprediger did occur, however. August Selle referred to the Besucher as Reiseprediger.<sup>31</sup> The unusual term Evangelist had first been used in the 1856 Western District convention, as noted above.<sup>32</sup> The manner in which it was brought into the discussion suggests that its use may have been based on the Scriptural and apostolic office with

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>32</sup>See above, p. 98.

this same title. There may be reason to believe that it was August Selle who had proposed the idea and the terminology already at the 1856 Western District convention, since he was the one selected to elaborate on it for the 1857 general convention. Whatever the case may be, this term Evangelist never gained wide acceptance. After 1857 Reiseprediger became the common term.<sup>33</sup>

No action was taken by the 1857 convention on Selle's proposal. In fact, the idea in the form he proposed it was never actually accepted at all. Yet this early renewed agitation for an itinerant ministry can probably be considered a significant step. Selle appears to have been one of the first to promote in public a new concept of the itineracy for the Missouri Synod. The Besucher had been an explorer. His task had been to investigate and to locate the needs. To a lesser degree, the same might be said of the colporteur. But August Selle appears to have been one of the first to suggest something more than this—that an itinerant ministry itself might be a partial, if in many ways defective, answer to the needs and problems of Lutheranism on the American frontier. It required some time for the Missouri Synod to come to the point where the itineracy was no longer viewed merely as a means to locate the needs, but also that it might be a means to meet those needs.

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<sup>33</sup>In his 1860 presidential address Fr. Wyneken still showed some uncertainty about the term when he urged Synod to somehow care for the scattered fellow believers "durch eigentliche Reiseprediger, Evangelisten, oder wie man sie nennen will . . . ." Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1860, p. 21.

## A Special Fund for Home Missions

One of the results, at least indirectly, of Selle's essay in 1857 was the creation at the next general convention in 1860 of a special fund or treasury for home missions. At this convention President Wyneken again reminded the delegates of the church's responsibility in this great field. He spoke first of the importance of preaching pure doctrine and that pastors be faithful in their calling. X

Then:

Ich kann diesen Punkt nicht schliessen, ohne die Ehrw. Synode, wie früher so auch jetzt an die Pflicht zu erinnern, sich mit Treue des armen zerstreuten Deutschen namentlich hier im Westen anzunehmen und durch eigentliche Reiseprediger, Evangelisten, oder wie man sie nennen will, für sie zu sorgen. Dem Herrn sei Dank, es ist ja nun ein kleiner Versuch in Minnesota, Iowa und Californien gemacht. Ob aber die Sache nicht einer weitem Besprechung bedürfte, und namentlich dabei Bezug genommen werden sollte, auf die allerdings leider immer noch verkommene Praxis, jeder einzelnen kleinen Gemeinde einen Pastor auf ihr Verlangen zu geben, wenn nur einer vorhanden ist, überlasse ich dem Ermessen der Ehrw. Synode.<sup>34</sup>

The report to the convention on the "Mission unter unsern zerstreuten Glaubensgenossen" stated that two letters had been received by Synod on this subject. One was from Pastor Selle,

worin er an die Synode die Frage that, ob es nicht möglich sei, dass sie solchen Pastoren, denen sich ein weiteres Missionsfeld aufgethan hat, Hülfsprediger beigebe und dieselben, wenigstens im Anfang ihres Wirkens, unterhalte;

The second was from Friedrich Döschner, the pastor who had taken over the beginnings which August Selle had made in Iowa City from his Rock Island "outpost,"

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 21.

worin er die Synode bat, ihm, da er bereits an 17 verschiedenen Orten zu predigen und in der Muttergemeinde zu Iowa City auch noch Schule zu halten habe und es ihm also unmöglich sei, seinen jetzt schon c. 300 Meilen umfassenden Wirkungskreis zu erweitern, einen Gehülfen (vielleicht den Seminaristen Lossner von Fort Wayne) beizugeben, der zwar in Iowa City wohnte, aber weder an diese, noch eine andere Gemeinde gebunden wäre, damit er von da als von einem Mittelpunkte aus Missionsreisen, auch längere, unternehmen könnte.<sup>35</sup>

In 1857 August Selle had requested that an Evangelist be officially appointed, commissioned, and maintained by Synod. Now apparently he was willing to settle for something less: Give a man already in the field an assistant and, at least for the first, help support him. This would be all that would be required of Synod, qua Synod. The rest would be up to the local pastor and congregation, and to local initiative.

These letters touched off a lengthy discussion about the necessity and the best way of carrying on home missions.

Als die geeignetste Weise, dies zu thun, erkannte man, wenn nicht besondere Evangelisten ausgesendet würden, diese, dass solche Pastoren, die Gelegenheit zum Missioniren habe, Gehülfen bekommen sollten, welchen nach Bedürfniss Unterstützung gereicht werden müsste. Herr Dr. Sihler theilte mit, dass Pastor Rupprecht, der gegenwärtig ohne Amt sei, als Reiseprediger wirken könne, wenn er unterstützt werde.<sup>35</sup>

The new idea set forth in these letters and in the deliberations was not that of the Gehülfe (assistant pastor; commonly referred to in other contexts as Hülfsprediger, or Hilfsprediger). As a matter of fact a good case could probably be made that this had been and con-

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 70. For a detailed account of Döbcher's activities shortly after this, see his "Bericht über innere Mission," Der Lutheraner, XVII (25 December 1860), 73-75; ibid., XVII (8 January 1861), 84f. See below, Ch. VII, pp. 120ff.

<sup>36</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1860, p. 70.

tinued to be the most effective method Synod had all along for doing home mission work. An established congregation would start a branch congregation (Filiale). As soon as size warranted an assistant would be called. In time he would more and more have charge of the Filiale. Eventually the new congregation would call him as its resident pastor and would become an independent congregation.<sup>37</sup> The only really novel aspect of the Gehülfe as here proposed was that it be employed before the "mother congregation" had really become firmly established and self-sustaining. Döschers Muttergemeinde in Iowa City and all his seventeen verschiedenen Orten together could hardly have been supporting him completely at this time. Thus what was really novel about the proposal was the request for partial support for the Gehülfe from Synod.

This time Selle had better success. The following resolutions were passed by the 1860 convention:

- a. dass die Unterstützung von Reisepredigern in die Hände des Herrn Dr. Sihler gelegt werde;
- b. dass alle, die Unterstützung bedürfen, sich an Herrn Dr. Sihler zu wenden haben;
- c. dass die Districtssynoden veranlasst werden, besondere Cassen für diesen Zweck zu errichten, und die Districtscassirer die dafür eingehenden Beiträge an den Cassirer des mittleren-Districts, Herrn Wilh. Meyer in Fort Wayne, einsenden sollen;
- d. dass in Bezug auf ferner liegende Gebiete (z. B. Kansas, Nebraska u. a.) der Allgem. Präses beauftragt sein soll, falls sich Gelegenheit findet, allda innere Mission zu treiben, die dazu nöthigen Massregeln zu ergreifen;

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<sup>37</sup>See above, Ch. II, pp. 30ff. Or the congregations might remain associated in a "district" arrangement, as the case remained in St. Louis for some years.

e. dass dem Herrn P. Rupprecht die Summe von \$150 zum Ankauf eines Pferdes u. a. sogleich mitgegeben, diese Summe aus der Missionscasse entlehnt und von den für innere Mission eingehenden Geldern wieder erstattet werde.<sup>38</sup>

Dr. Wilhelm Sihler was at that time pastor of St. Paul's congregation and president of the practical seminary in Fort Wayne. Because this seminary was supplying the majority of the candidates for such frontier areas as Iowa, Fort Wayne may have been looked upon as a sort of a home mission training center.<sup>39</sup> Dr. Sihler with the help of Mr. Meyer had the responsibility for distributing the new fund. This basic procedure, that funds collected in the districts be channeled through a synodical official, remained in effect for a number of years. Later the general synodical treasurer became the collector and distributor. After a number of years altered financial needs within the districts necessitated changes in this procedure.<sup>40</sup>

That the new fund soon became operational can be documented from the notices and acknowledgments which began appearing in Der Lutheraner. Wilhelm Meyer began by inserting a notice advising would-be donors of the last convention's resolution in the 27 November issue.<sup>41</sup> In February 1861 Fr. C. Th. Ruhland of Oshkosh, Wisconsin, acknowledged

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<sup>38</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1860, p. 71.

<sup>39</sup>Another bit of evidence is that the reports of Döscher and others printed in Der Lutheraner were addressed to Prof. August Crämer, also on the Fort Wayne faculty. See above, p. 112, fn. 35; below, Ch. VII, pp. 131, 139.

<sup>40</sup>One of the leaders in this was the Northern District when its own home missions committee came into existence. Missouri Synod, Northern District, Proceedings, 1873, p. 60.

<sup>41</sup>Der Lutheraner, XVII (27 November 1860), 63, col. 3.

that he had received \$75.00 from Meyer—\$61.30 of it from the mission treasury of St. Paul's Church in Fort Wayne—for the purchase of a riding horse so that he could visit his Filialgemeinden.<sup>42</sup> One of the first official reports by Meyer appeared in the 11 June 1861 issue. He had collected a total of \$218.03. Some donors had apparently designated the field (für Minnesota, für Iowa) for which their money was to be used.<sup>43</sup>

By November 1862 Dr. Sihler was complaining that the fund was almost depleted. A pastor in northwestern Wisconsin had written to him and the man needed money for a horse. Sihler commented that Synod had plenty of interest in Heidenmission, evidently intending to suggest that innere Mission should not thereby be overlooked.<sup>44</sup> Shortly thereafter receipts picked up again somewhat.<sup>45</sup> By late 1864 Sihler had to make another appeal, this time for two men in Minnesota who needed horses.<sup>46</sup>

The lack of finances was one of a number of problems which hindered the earlier development of itinerant ministries in the Missouri

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., XVII (19 February 1861), 112, col. 3.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., XVII (11 June 1861), 176, cols. 1f.

<sup>44</sup>W. Sihler, "Herzliche Bitte an die Gemeinde der Synode," ibid., XIX (12 November 1862), 45, col. 2. The applicant may have been Theodor Gustav Adolph Krumsieg, who later acknowledged receipt of \$150 toward purchase of a horse, saddle and harness through W. Meyer from the home mission fund. Ibid., XIX (1 March 1863), 111, col. 1.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., XIX (21 January 1863), 88, cols. 1, 2; ibid., XIX (15 February 1863), 104, col. 2.

<sup>46</sup>W. Sihler, "An die Freunde der innern Mission," ibid., XXI (15 November 1864), 46, cols. 2f.



Synod. There were indeed other deterrents: the doctrinal uncertainty about sending out a man who did not have a call to a specific congregation, the lack of suitable men, and also doubts about the practical effectiveness of the venture itself, promising as it did to reach many people occasionally, but few adequately. But the conviction remained with at least a number of Missouri Synod members that something, no matter what its deficiencies and possible negative consequences, would have to be done. Meanwhile, the venture could hardly succeed even on a more or less experimental basis without the financial means. That is why the establishment of a centralized treasury for home missions was another important step forward in the revival of the itinerant ministry during the late 1850's and early 1860's.

## CHAPTER VII

### DEVELOPMENTS FROM ABOUT 1860 TO 1865

#### Resumption of Work in Iowa

The earliest activities of the Missouri Synod in Iowa had been the exploratory trip of Freidrich Lochner in 1848 and the brief pastorate of Heinrich Grätzel in Bremer County from about 1856-1858.<sup>1</sup> The initial thrust, at least in the case of Lochner, had come from interested persons in the St. Louis area. The later thrust of about 1859, which resulted in a permanent foothold for the Synod in this state, came from a different direction. It followed a course which had run roughly over a line across northern Illinois beginning at Chicago, extending through Crete in Will County, with a frontier outpost finally established in Rock Island, Illinois, overlooking the Mississippi River and the state of Iowa. The man most intimately associated with this advance on the frontier was C. August T. Selle.<sup>2</sup> Like the earliest effort to plant the Synod in Iowa, this one too would make use of forms of itinerant ministry.

On 4 July 1858 August Selle left his congregation at Crete, Illinois, which he had served for some eight years, and was installed in Immanuel congregation, Rock Island.<sup>3</sup> Up to this time the little

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<sup>1</sup>See above, Ch. IV, pp. 67-75.

<sup>2</sup>See above, Ch. VI, pp. 104ff.

<sup>3</sup>Der Lutheraner, XV (7 September 1858), 15, col. 3. Cf. Verhandlungen der Fünften Jahres Versammlung des Westlichen Distrikts der

flock in Rock Island had been served intermittently by visits from the closest neighboring pastor, perhaps August Selle himself from Crete.<sup>4</sup> In the 27 July 1858 issue of Der Lutheraner Selle explained why he was leaving a congregation "three times as strong" to come to Rock Island. Rock Island and environs had a great potential for mission work. The Illinois city itself had some 10,000 inhabitants and only the Mississippi River separated it from another 18,000 in Davenport, Iowa. This had to mean that there were many Germans in the area and there was no other pastor within 100 miles to serve them.

Hunderte von Meilen in der Runde ist kein Pastor unserer Synode, ja Rock Island kann als der Schlüssel des ganzen mittleren Iowa's betrachtet werden. Die hiesige Gemeinde hat deshalb ihre Aufgabe begriffen, als Missionsgemeinde dastehen zu müssen, und eben darum mich hierher berufen, weil sie in mich das gute Zutrauen setzt, dass ich für die Ausbreitung der Kirche mich besonders eifrig beweisen werde.

The notice continued with a plea for financial support.<sup>5</sup>

Several factors accounted for the slow expansion of the Missouri Synod into Iowa, though it had been a state since 1846. One was the fact that the major travel routes into the more remote West by-passed the state, and even when the heavy immigration did come after about 1852, railroads were slow in being built and highways remained extremely

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deutschen evang.-luther. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten im Jahre 1859 (St. Louis: Synodal-Druckerei von Aug. Wiebusch u. Sohn, 1859), p. 9. Hereafter all such official Proceedings of conventions are cited in the following abbreviated form: Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1859, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1859, p. 83. Of August Selle's Rock Island congregation in this statistical report the remark is added: "bis 1. Juli besuchsweise bedient."

<sup>5</sup>Aug. Selle, "Herzliche Bitte um Hülfe," Der Lutheraner, XIV (27 July 1858), 199, cols. 2f.

poor.<sup>6</sup> But it seems that there was another factor which may have hindered Missouri Synod growth in the state. For Iowa probably did not lend itself so well as previous fields to Synod's customary home missionary methods. Home missions had been left largely up to local congregational and pastoral initiative rather than to a collective synodical agency. An established congregation would organize a branch in the next community or settlement. This congregation in turn would become independent in time and the process would repeat itself. The method worked well in growing urban areas and in the rural areas of the eastern states as long as movement into virgin territory was relatively slow. It was another matter, however, when almost overnight whole states and territories became populated. The vigorous efforts required of August Selle to establish an advance outpost in Rock Island in order to move into Iowa indicates one of the weaknesses of the early mission methodology of the Missouri Synod. What would have been the result had there been no one willing to establish the bridgehead? Complete dependence upon congregational and local initiative for the expansion of the church had definite drawbacks, and particularly for the expansion of the church into more remote frontier areas.

August Selle lost little time following his own installation on 4 July 1858 in putting his plan into action. By the following spring already he had been as far as Iowa City and had organized a congregation.

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<sup>6</sup>Aug. R. Suelflow, The Heart of Missouri: A History of the Western District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1854-1954 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), pp. 53f., citing T. Stephan, Golden Anniversary of the Iowa District (Waverly, Iowa: Waverly Publishing Co., n.d.), p. 5.

On 20 November 1859 a candidate, Johann Friedrich Döschler, who had been trained at Fort Wayne, was ordained and installed in this congregation by Selle.<sup>7</sup> An interesting transition seems to have taken place at this time. Iowa City now became the frontier outpost, no longer Rock Island. Pastor Döschler took charge and eventually had several candidates working with him so that they were able to cover a good sized circuit around the Iowa City home base.

The account of a typical itinerary of Friedrich Döschler during the summer of 1860 appeared in Der Lutheraner. On Sunday, 22 July, he had preached for morning services at the church in Iowa City. By 2:30 that afternoon he was preaching at a place eight miles distant. Another six miles brought him to Middleburg for services at 5:30. So far he had been traveling south. He now intended to turn toward the northwest, but had to return through Iowa City the next day because he had forgotten something. He left town again about 2:00 p.m. and traveled sixteen miles to a settlement where he preached that evening. On Tuesday he went six or seven miles to preach at 2:00 in the afternoon, then three miles north and four miles west for an evening service. The next morning, apparently Wednesday, he arrived in Marengo, thirty miles from Iowa City, where he had not conducted services before. Among the group he met with there he encountered unionistic sympathies, which he attempted to counter by distributing copies of an issue of Der Lutheraner containing an article against such practices.<sup>8</sup> By 5:30 that evening he had

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<sup>7</sup>Der Lutheraner, XVI (13 December 1859), 71, col. 2. Cf. Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1860, p. 26.

<sup>8</sup>Döschler refers to it as "No. 24." This would probably be the

proceeded another twelve miles to be with a group in Benton County. He arrived about 9:00 p.m., in time for the common meal but too late for a preaching service. However, he did manage to get into a heated discussion with one of the group's Vorsteher, who had been conducting the Lesegottesdienste at this place, about the article against the sectarians in the same issue of Der Lutheraner. The previous winter Lochner had had quite a bitter encounter with Methodist sympathizers in this area. The next day, by now apparently Thursday, he proceeded twenty miles southwest into Poweshe County and preached there in the evening. A trip of twelve miles the next morning brought him to Montezuma.<sup>9</sup>

On Saturday, Döschler's report continued, he had gone twenty miles from Montezuma to Millersburg by noon. There he found a man who had been conducting Lesegottesdienste in the area. He preached in Millersburg on Sunday morning. The people there had organized what they considered a congregation, but were not really strict Lutherans, referring to themselves as "Protestant." Here Döschler had an opportunity to employ a device he had learned to use. He gave the impression that he did not have a Bible with him. Instead he would ask the people he was visiting for one, so that he could see whether or not they were able to produce one and, if so, what condition it was in. The house to which the group in Missersburg went for the Sunday service happened to

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most recent volume, namely, Der Lutheraner, XVI (10 July 1860), 185-192, which seems to fit the conditions well.

<sup>9</sup>Friedrich Döschler, "Bericht über innere Mission," letter to August Crämer, 15 August 1860, from Iowa City, ibid., XVII (25 December 1860), 73-75.

be one where a Bible was not to be found and the man had to borrow one from next door. From Millersburg, by way of another German settlement he had heard about, he made his way to Oskaloosa, arriving there probably on Tuesday. He found some interest in his services there and promised to stop by again in four weeks. By this time he was in Wabaska County, seventy-four miles from Iowa City. By what was perhaps Thursday of that week he had traveled another forty-five miles through Emmington to Fairfield. On Friday he was in Washington, but he found no Germans there and went on to the vicinity of Middleburg where he knew of someone with whom he could spend the night. A fifteen mile trip the next day brought him back home to Iowa City, after a journey of two weeks.<sup>10</sup>

Döscher's assistant, Fr. A. Hermann Lossner, preached at services in the Iowa City Muttergemeinde the next morning, while Döscher held services that afternoon at a Filialgemeinde seven miles away. The following Sunday it was Lossner's turn to go to another Filiale, ten miles distant. In addition to these two, they were also regularly serving three other places, one nine miles north, one eighteen miles north and one ten miles east. It had taken thirteen days to make the round trip described above. Altogether, with Lossner's help, Döscher was serving eighteen places. To visit every one of these, which he tried to do at least once a month, took three weeks and meant traveling a total of some 325 miles. He himself had to preach twenty-two times a month.

Prof. August Crämer, to whom this letter was addressed, had appar-

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., XVII (8 January 1861), 84f.

ently promised to send more help by fall. Düscher did not, however, think that it would be best simply to divide the field and have the new man take over part of the present territory, say seven of the places. Rather, it would be better to have both men stationed in Iowa City and make circuits from this home base. It was not stated what Lossner's role should be; apparently, he was merely considered Düscher's assistant in Iowa City to permit Düscher to get away for his travels. As it was at present, despite the fact that his wife was also teaching school when he was away, Düscher complained that he wasn't able to be gone long enough. His real love was for the roving mission work he had described:

Das Missioniren liegt mir aber ganz absonderlich am Herzen. Wenn ich dieses fortsetzen kann, so ist mir keine Mühe zu schwer. Herzlich gerne wäre ich Reiseprediger. Ja, lieber Herr Professor, wenn die vorhandenen Kräfte des Seminars dazu angewandt werden sollten, dass sie in neueren Staaten—z. B. in Kansas und Nebraska missionirten, so möchte ich mich noch gern bescheiden.<sup>11</sup>

Thus by desire Friedrich Düscher would have been a more or less permanent, professional itinerant missionary.<sup>12</sup> This was a comparatively

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>12</sup>A complete biography of Düscher would reveal that he never abandoned this youthful zeal for home missions. In 1863 Düscher left Iowa to serve a congregation in Hampton, Illinois. By 1865 he was back at Marshalltown, Iowa; Der Lutheraner, XXI (15 August 1865), 190, col. 2. On 26 December 1866 he was installed at two German-English congregations in Linn County, Iowa; Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1867, p. 14; cf. Der Lutheraner, XXIII (1 February 1867), 86, col. 2f. In 1869 he accepted a call to Fort Dodge, which was also a center of mission activities; Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1869, p. 42; cf. Missouri Synod, Iowa District, Proceedings, 1879, p. 118. Later, he was the first in the Dakota Territory to call attention to the new mission field among the Russians in the territory and served it himself from about 1875 until ill health forced him to resign in 1877; Missouri Synod, Northwestern District, Proceedings, 1875, p. 62; ibid., 1877, p. 64. Unfortunately, his story has a rather unhappy ending. After leaving Dakota he went to New Orleans where he served as first Negro missionary of the Synodical Conference. Here trouble arose,



new idea in Missouri Synod home mission work. Ordinarily itinerants had been regular pastors on leaves of absence from their congregations or sometimes, when local initiative made it possible, assistant pastors connected with an established congregation to do mission work in "branch" congregations. The concept of a non-resident ministry had, of course, been proposed by men such as August Selle in 1857; but Dörscher was one of the first to find a way of putting such an idea into practice. The very earliest itinerancies of the Missouri Synod served mainly to explore possibilities for home mission work. By the time of Friedrich Dörscher's work in Iowa, the realization was beginning to come that an itinerant ministry in itself might be a partial solution, at least for the time being, to the urgent problem of serving the scattered brethren on the frontier.

During 1862 Dörscher became associated with a short-lived plan to establish a German Evangelical Lutheran colony in the West on free government land (Congress-Land) which the Homestead act of that same year was making available. The idea had been discussed at the last convention of the Western District at Crete, Illinois, and Dörscher had assumed the responsibility for promoting it in Der Lutheraner. He apparently thought it was a good idea because it would consolidate the settlement of German Lutherans. For the present purposes his account is mainly of interest because in order to prove his point about how scattered the people were he gave a description of his own work at that

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Dörscher suffered a nervous breakdown, was suspended, and became involved in a bitter dispute with his congregation; Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1884, pp. 86-91.

time:

Am ersten Predigtplatze, 11 Meilen von hier, wohnen etwa 6 Familien, 10 Meilen weiter 5 Familien. Von da ging es wieder heim und hatte ich am ersten Predigtplatz 3, am zweiten 4, am dritten 6 oder 7, und am vierten 6 Familien. Welche Arbeit hat hiernach ein armer Reiseprediger, die ihn in wenigen Jahren aufreiben muss, während er doch verhältnissmässig nur so wenig ausrichten kann! Wie viel schöner und besser wäre es daher, wenn alle jene Familien bei einander wohnten?<sup>13</sup>

Later the same year another report in Der Lutheraner stated that Döschner had been keeping an eye out for suitable sites for a colony and that one had now been located, in Humboldt County, twenty miles from Fort Dodge. Presumably this site had come to his attention on one of his itineraries.<sup>14</sup> If so, it is at least a small indication of the range covered in the travels of this pioneer itinerant in Iowa.

Within several years Döschner received two candidates to assist him. Fr. A. Hermann Lossner has already been mentioned. During 1861 and 1862 he was referred to in the literature as a Reiseprediger in Iowa, first in care of Döschner in Iowa City and by 1862 at Marshall Town [sic], Marshall County, Iowa. He was listed among the advisory pastors present at Western District conventions in both these years.<sup>15</sup> The other man who served under Döschner was Candidate H. W. Wehrs, whom the records indicate was in Iowa at least as early as June

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<sup>13</sup>J. F. Döschner and others, "Aufruf zur Gründung einer deutschen ev. luth. Colonie im Westen," Der Lutheraner, XVIII (9 July 1862), 191, cols. 2f.

<sup>14</sup>J. F. Döschner, "Die beabsichtigte ev.-luth. Colonie betreffend," ibid., XIX (10 December 1862), 63f.

<sup>15</sup>Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1861, p. 4; idem, Proceedings, 1862, p. 4. Cf. Der Lutheraner, XVIII (20 August 1861), 8, col. 3; ibid., XIX (10 December 1862), 63, col. 3; ibid., XIX (15 March 1863), 120, col. 2. This last reference is an acknowledgement of \$60.00 received through Dr. Sihler out of the home missions fund.

1862.<sup>16</sup> One noteworthy fact about these two helpers of Döschner was that both received at least a small part of their support from official synodical sources. But perhaps even more remarkable is that apparently neither one was ordained until each had been extended regular calls from a congregation. Wehrs was the first to be ordained, on 29 March 1863. This came about when Döschner accepted a call to Hampton, Illinois, and Wehrs succeeded him as pastor of the congregation in Iowa City.<sup>17</sup> Hermann Lossner, who had actually served even longer than Wehrs, was not ordained until several months later, on 31 May 1863, after accepting a regular call to the congregation in Marshalltown [sic].<sup>18</sup> This would mean that Lossner, for example, had served nearly two years as a Reiseprediger before being ordained. It is known that he even escorted another candidate, F. W. Lange, into a mission field in Kansas and on the way stopped off in Leavenworth to preach and begin work there.<sup>19</sup>

The delays in ordaining Lossner and Wehrs may perhaps be partly explained by the fact that such relative technicalities might have been

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<sup>16</sup>E.g., Der Lutheraner, XVIII (25 June 1862), 183, col. 3. Like Lossner, Wehrs also was being officially supported in part, for this is an acknowledgement of \$40.69 through Pastor Döschner from the Western District toward the purchase of a horse.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., XIX (1 May 1863), 143, col. 2. Cf. Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1863, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup>Der Lutheraner, XIX (15 July 1863), 183, col. 1. Cf. Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1863, p. 25.

<sup>19</sup>Aug. R. Suelflow, op. cit., p. 59. Cf., W. H. T. Dau, editor, Ebenezer: Reviews of the Work of the Missouri Synod During Three Quarters of a Century (Augmented edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1922), pp. 353f. Lange and the man who was called to Leavenworth, Michael Meyer, also served for a short while before someone could come out to Kansas and ordain them.

overlooked somewhat on the frontier. But it also seems to indicate that there was a hesitation to identify a man as a fully authorized pastor until he had a call as a resident with a particular local congregation. The length of time it took for such a connection with a local congregation to be made for Lossner and Wehrs may very likely be accounted for by Dörscher's determination to make of Iowa City what one might call a frontier outpost which a number of men might share as a headquarters base of operations. Hence Dörscher may have been in no hurry to have his assistants associate with specific congregations. As long as this was the case ordination would not be necessary. In fact, from one point of view, as long as Lossner and Wehrs did not have calls to a specific congregation, they had no right to receive ordination. Exactly how insistent Dörscher was on this centralized procedure is difficult to estimate on the basis of the available sources. About the same time that he left Iowa City some of the neighboring congregations were beginning to become independent of the Muttergemeinde.<sup>20</sup>

#### Other Fields of the Western District

From Iowa attention now turns to other fields which came under the jurisdiction of the Western District and in which forms of itinerant ministries were employed during this period prior to 1865. These were

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<sup>20</sup>E.g., on 1 March 1865 E. A. Schürmann was installed at the congregation in the vicinity of Homestead and South Amana which had up to then been served as a Filiale from Iowa City. Hopes were expressed that the population of this area would soon increase considerably, because there was still much unclaimed land about and it was near the railroad leading from Chicago into the western states. Der Lutheraner, XXI (1 April 1865), 118, col. 3.

chiefly California and Kansas.

In December of 1859 Der Lutheraner printed a letter dated 2 November 1859 which editor Walther had received from a Lutheran in California appealing for aid and for at least two men to do mission work there.<sup>21</sup> A fund to subscribe the traveling expenses of two young men was immediately started.<sup>22</sup> By the middle of May 1860 two recent graduates of the St. Louis seminary were prepared to answer "the Macedonian call from California," but not half the required amount had been collected for their fares.<sup>23</sup> As a result the Lutherans in California had to settle for only one emissary from the Missouri Synod-- Jacob Matthias Böhler.<sup>24</sup> On 24 August 1860, this first missionary of Synod to the west coast arrived in San Francisco at the end of a twenty-four day trip from New York City by way of Panama.<sup>25</sup> A number of reports in quick succession brought Der Lutheraner readers up to date on Böhler's initial experiences.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>"Californische Correspondenz der Redaction," *ibid.*, XVI (13 December 1859), 70, cols. 1f. Richard T. Du Brau, The Romance of Lutheranism in California (n.p., 1959), p. 12, identified the writer as a Mrs. Elizabeth Schreiber.

<sup>22</sup>Der Lutheraner, XVI (27 December 1859), 80, col. 1, *et seqq.* By 1 May 1860 a total of \$285.74 had been collected, *ibid.*, XVI (1 May 1860), 151, col. 3.

<sup>23</sup>J. List, "Eine Erinnerung betreffs der Mission in Californien," *ibid.*, XVI (15 May 1860), 157, col. 2.

<sup>24</sup>In the earliest references the name of this only English-speaking student at the St. Louis seminary appeared as Beehler. Cf. Du Brau, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 15f.; "Nachricht aus Californien," Der Lutheraner, XVII (2 October 1860), 30, cols. 2f.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, XVII (30 October 1860), 44f.; *ibid.*, XVII (11 December

For the present purposes Bühler's actual experiences and accomplishments are not of prime concern. His main work was that of organizing a congregation in San Francisco. Hence Bühler himself can hardly be considered an itinerant, though many of the men who later followed him to the west coast were. One aspect of Bühler's assignment to California is relevant, however, and that is that he is an example of a man who was commissioned, or authorized, to go into a territory in advance of the actual organization of a congregation. True, there was the "Macedonian call" letter; but this could hardly be equated with a regular call from a congregation. J. M. Bühler went to California, it seems, armed only with a letter of recommendation from Prof. C. F. W. Walther, his seminary president and teacher. Du Brau claims that this letter was "issued in lieu of a certificate of ordination, or commissioning."<sup>27</sup> There seems to be no record that Bühler was ever ordained. This differed from previous practice.

In 1849, for instance, August Selle had made a special trip to Calumet, Wisconsin, to organize a congregation which in turn could call Candidate Nikolas Volkert.<sup>28</sup> Prof. Walther made a special trip to New Orleans in 1853 to ordain Candidate Georg Volk, after the exist-

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1860), 68, cols. 2f.; ibid., XVII (30 April 1861), 146f. After this some time elapsed before another letter from Bühler appeared in Der Lutheraner, viz., ibid., XX (1 February 1864), 84-86.

<sup>27</sup>Du Brau, op. cit., p. 16. Here a photostatic reproduction of the letter, dated 3 February 1860, is shown. Original in California and Nevada District Archives. Cf. Aug. R. Suelflow, "Notes on the Rev. J. M. Buehler of California," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXV (January 1953), 189-192.

<sup>28</sup>See above, Ch. IV, p. 76, fn. 31.

ence of orthodox Lutherans there had come to Walther's attention and Volk had made a preliminary exploratory trip.<sup>29</sup> Bühler's assignment was a slight departure from the customary procedure, but apparently one made only because of the remoteness of his assignment. This one possible exception does not demonstrate any pronounced departure from the generally accepted principles of the congregational call. It does show that some flexibility was possible in cases of practical necessity, in spite of Synod's heavy emphasis on the proper call by a congregation as the basis for the public ministry.

During this same period the opportunity to begin home mission work in Kansas also presented itself. Der Lutheraner carried a brief notice on 5 March 1861 that on 19 February Pastor J. A. Fritze of Adams County, Indiana, had traveled through a Lutheran settlement in Council Grove, Kansas.<sup>30</sup> This apparently led to the sending of Candidate F. W. Lange to this area. Lange went by way of Iowa City, where he met Hermann Lossner, who accompanied him to Clarks Creek. Here Lange preached his first sermon and organized a congregation during August 1861. Meanwhile, Hermann Lossner, on his way back to Iowa, stopped off in Leavenworth, found Lutherans there, preached to them in a Methodist church building on 25 August, and thus became responsible for having Candidate Michael Meyer sent to this city. Meyer arrived 9 November 1861. Neither Meyer nor Lange could be ordained immediately. F. J. Biltz ordained Meyer on Cantate Sunday, 18 May 1862, but only

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<sup>29</sup>Der Lutheraner, IX (5 July 1853), 158.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., XVII (5 March 1861), 118, col. 2. Cf. Dau, op. cit., p. 353; Suelflow, op. cit., p. 59.

after the latter had already organized a congregation in Leavenworth and had received a call from it.<sup>31</sup> Meyer in turn ordained Lange on the twelfth Sunday after Trinity, 1862.<sup>32</sup> Presumably both men performed the usual functions of ministers during the interim before they were ordained.

Both Meyer and Lange organized their own congregations and functioned as itinerants. This is clear in Lange's case from his letter to Prof. August Crämer which was printed in Der Lutheraner, 2 April 1862. Here he described his typical itinerary. From his home station Lange would proceed twelve miles southwest to a place where three families gathered for worship. From here it was fifteen miles south to a flock consisting of six families. Then he would travel twenty-five miles southeast to the place where the relatives of "Pastor F." lived and from here it was forty-six miles back to his home base, where he was currently ministering to five families, with three or four more expected to arrive soon. At this juncture he would strike off to the east, eighteen miles, to visit a place where eight families gathered, and from this place another fourteen miles east, then a return trip of thirty-four miles west to home again. He was visiting all these places once every three weeks. In addition he conducted school part time. The article was largely devoted to an account of his various unpleasant experiences and encounters with Methodists.<sup>33</sup> By Trinity Sunday of the

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<sup>31</sup>Der Lutheraner, XVIII (6 August 1862), 208, col. 1. Cf. Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1863, p. 23.

<sup>32</sup>Der Lutheraner, XX (1 July 1864), 167f.

<sup>33</sup>W. Lange, "Nachricht aus Kansas," ibid., XVIII (2 April 1862), 135.



same year Lange had secured a peaceful release from his stations in the counties of Davis, Dickenson, Morris, and Wabounsee, and was installed in the congregation at Humboldt, Kansas.<sup>34</sup>

Michael Meyer also had an itinerant situation at Leavenworth. On 28 June 1862 he wrote to Der Lutheraner appealing for financial support for the building of a church in Leavenworth. He had entered upon his field of endeavor the previous fall with high expectations, he wrote. He considered himself Reiseprediger for Leavenworth and vicinity. He had figured that out of this city of 12,000 inhabitants, a third of them should be Germans, and that he would find perhaps half of these again to be Lutheran. Alas, he had been doomed to disappointment. What Lutherans there were, were typical products of the German X enlightenment or else sectarians. Beginning with seven families the previous fall, he was now regularly serving ten to twelve. It appears that he was doing some work also in St. Joseph, Missouri.<sup>35</sup>

Lange and Meyer were not officially designated or appointed by the Missouri Synod or the Western District as itinerants. Aside from individual responses to their personal pleas for financial assistance, mainly for building purposes, there seems to be no record that they were supported out of the synodical home mission fund administered by Dr. Sihler in Fort Wayne. Yet here is a clear case of two men who were functioning as itinerants, who even referred to themselves as Reiseprediger. Neither one at the time of his assignment seems to have had

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., XX (1 July 1864), 167f.

<sup>35</sup>M. Meyer, "Hülferuf aus Kansas," ibid., XVIII (9 July 1862), 190f.

an official written call from a particular, already organized congregation. This may perhaps be regarded as another demonstration of flexibility in the Missouri Synod's official policy.

#### Continuation of Work in the Northern District--Minnesota

The work of the Northern District in Minnesota had already begun in 1856 with the interest in Indian missions, Ferdinand Siever's home mission explorations, and the calling of F. W. Kahmeyer to Carver County the following summer.<sup>36</sup> The District's interest in exploring new areas persisted. There is evidence that during the summer of 1858 three pastors of the Northern District--Ferdinand Sievers again, Hermann Fick of Detroit, and Heinrich L. Dulitz of Buffalo--made exploratory trips in the interest of home missions to Canada, Minnesota, and similar areas.<sup>37</sup>

By early 1859 two trainees of the Fort Wayne practical seminary were on their way to Minnesota.<sup>38</sup> Pastor F. W. Kahmeyer ordained one of these men, Johann Horst, at Trinity Church, the first congregation of the Missouri Synod in Minneapolis, on 5 June 1859. On 26 June, with Horst's help, Kahmeyer ordained the other candidate, Paulus Rupprecht, at Prairie Mount.<sup>39</sup> At the general synodical convention during the

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<sup>36</sup>See above, Ch. VI, pp. 98-103.

<sup>37</sup>This is based completely upon a published acknowledgment to this effect signed by Sievers for traveling expenses received. Der Lutheraner, XV (21 September 1858), 24, col. 1.

<sup>38</sup>Both were guests at the convention of the Western District which met 5-10 May 1859 at Addison, Illinois. Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1859, p. 6.

<sup>39</sup>Der Lutheraner, XV (12 July 1859), 192, col. 1. Prairie Mount

summer of 1860 Rupprecht was officially appointed to serve as an itinerant.<sup>40</sup> However, before he could be apprised of this fact he had already accepted a call away from the Henderson area and could not carry out the assignment. Johann Horst, who had been delegated to inform Rupprecht of the synodical resolution, then asked for another candidate. By the following February this request had been filled with the sending of Candidate A. E. Winter. There is no indication that Reiseprediger Winter was called by or in any way associated with a particular congregation. Yet soon after he arrived, on the seventh Sunday after Trinity of the same year, 1861, he was ordained by Horst.<sup>41</sup> Depending on how the notice of Winter's ordination is interpreted, it seems likely that he was one of the first itinerants to be ordained simply as a Reiseprediger without an association with some congregation. Winter accepted a call to St. John's congregation at Prairie Mount less than a year later and was installed there by Horst on 18 May 1862.<sup>42</sup>

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(or Prairie Mount) is the "Prairiemoond" Ferdinand Sievers visited in 1856; see above, p. 102. Rupprecht's address is given as Henderson, Minnesota. Cf. Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1860, p. 31.

<sup>40</sup>When he was accepted into advisory membership in Synod at the 1860 convention, he was listed as "Reiseprediger in Minnesota," ibid., p. 13. His appointment as Reiseprediger was on pp. 70f.

<sup>41</sup>The report sent in by Horst stated: "Nachdem nun derselbe [Winter] einen seiner Sendung entsprechenden, rechtmässigen Beruf erhalten und angenommen hat, ist er . . . von dem Unterzeichneten ordinirt worden." It did not say anything about him being installed. Presumably the call corresponding to his commission would have to be that issued by the synodical convention in 1860, first to Rupprecht and now to Winter. Der Lutheraner, XVII (6 August 1861), 206, col. 3. Cf. Missouri Synod, Northern District, Proceedings, 1862, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup>Der Lutheraner, XVIII (25 June 1862), 183, col. 2. Cf. Missouri Synod, Northern District, Proceedings, 1862, p. 6.

In time other men entered the Minnesota field. In March 1862 Albrecht Brand had to resign at Trinity and an affiliated congregation in Town Hard, Winona County, due to ill health, and H. F. C. Ch. Grupe was called.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, in early 1862 Johann Horst was still making occasional circuits from Minneapolis.<sup>44</sup> By October 1862 Horst had moved to near Red Wing, Minnesota. On 14 December his congregation, St. Paul's in Town Hay Creek, Goodhue County, dedicated a new frame building.<sup>45</sup>

#### Northern District Work in Wisconsin

During this same period prior to 1865 various points in Wisconsin also became mission outposts and centers for expanding activities after the fashion of Rock Island, Illinois, and Iowa City, Iowa. One such center was Oshkosh, Wisconsin. On Exaudi Sunday, 1859, Candidate Friedrich Ruhland was installed in the congregation there, after having been ordained previously in Friedrich Lochner's congregation in Milwaukee on Ascension Day. The Oshkosh congregation, vacant since Martin Stephan had left for Fort Wayne nearly a year before, was small, "aber überaus wichtig als Ausgangspunkt zum Missioniren unter den lutherischen Niederlassungen des Nordwestens Wisconsins . . . ." During the vacancy

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<sup>43</sup>Der Lutheraner, XVIII (30 April 1862), 150f. Cf. Missouri Synod, Northern District, Proceedings, 1862, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup>Der Lutheraner, XVIII (25 June 1862), 183. This is an acknowledgment of \$25.00 through Mr. W. Meyer from the congregation in Fort Wayne to cover the remaining debt on his Missionspferd.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., XIX (1 October 1862), 24, col. 3; ibid., XIX (21 January 1863), 87, col. 1.

it had been visited by Pastor Lochner and others occasionally and had provided itself with Lesegottesdienste.<sup>46</sup> The hopes for further expansion from this center apparently began to be realized at least by 8 September 1861 when Pastor J. N. Beyer, from Hermann, Wisconsin, was installed in the former Filialgemeinde of the Oshkosh church, Zion congregation at Caledonia and Winchester, Winnebago County, Wisconsin. Meanwhile the Oshkosh congregation had other Filialen at New London, Blomfield, and Belleplain.<sup>47</sup>

Another such mission outpost was Wausau, Wisconsin. Here J. Jacob Hoffmann served first as a Hilfsprediger to Pastor Johann Strieter beginning in early 1861, then on 15 August 1861 was installed as head pastor in Wausau.<sup>48</sup> While still a Hilfsprediger Hoffmann was able to qualify for support from the home mission fund administered by Dr. Sihler.<sup>49</sup> Even after accepting the call as pastor in full he kept up his itinerant activities.<sup>50</sup>

A letter to August Crämer in Fort Wayne printed later in 1861 in Der Lutheraner described Hoffmann's work shortly before he was offi-

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., XV (28 June 1859), 183, col. 2. The spelling here was "Oschkosch."

<sup>47</sup>Missouri Synod, Northern District, Proceedings, 1862, p. 6.

<sup>48</sup>Der Lutheraner, XVIII (17 September 1861), 23, col. 3. Cf. Missouri Synod, Northern District, Proceedings, 1862, p. 5.

<sup>49</sup>He acknowledged a receipt of \$50.00 toward the purchase of a horse from the home mission fund, and another \$12.00 for home mission purposes from private sources. Der Lutheraner, XVIII (3 September 1861), 15, col. 2.

<sup>50</sup>He acknowledged receipt of another \$25.00 to cover the debt on his horse from the congregation in Fort Wayne. Ibid., XX (15 September 1863), 16, col. 1.

cially installed at Wausau. As a rule he was preaching in the Wausau congregation each Sunday and was making the rounds of the other places at least once every three weeks. He had five places which he considered "within" the boundaries of the main parish at Wausau and which he visited every two weeks--three one Sunday and two the next. In addition he was serving eight other stations lying from fifteen to seventy-seven miles distant from Wausau. His main complaint was about Methodist inroads among the people and their general indifference. He was also serving in the capacity of a colporteur. In the past few days he had sold \$25.00 worth of literature, half on credit, and had exhausted his supply of merchandise.<sup>51</sup> Hoffmann made a distinction between what he considered a Filiale and merely a Missionsposten: a Filiale consisted of at least twenty families or so.<sup>52</sup> The last part of his report was mainly about his various encounters with the Methodists and other sectarians, and their abuse of the sacraments in particular. However, Hoffmann was cautious not to invade another pastor's territory. For some time he had hesitated to visit the most remote station on his itinerary (the one seventy-seven miles away) because he had heard that another Lutheran pastor was supposed to come. Later he found out that the Wisconsin Synod had promised a man, but no one had come. The activities Hoffmann described were dated between 20 July and 11 August 1861.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>J. Jacob Hoffmann, "Reiseprediger-Bericht," ibid., XVIII (30 October 1861), 44f. Hoffmann's first initial was incorrectly given as "G." in his signature at the end of the article.

<sup>52</sup>It was some time before the second installment of this article appeared. Ibid., XVIII (8 January 1862), 85f.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., XVIII (22 January 1862), 92-94. Throughout the entire

In time Hoffmann was able to turn part of the work over to assistants. On Ascension Day, 25 May 1865, Philipp Samuel Estel was installed as Hoffmann's Hilfsprediger in Wausau.<sup>54</sup> In connection with a mission festival on 4 July 1866, Hoffmann ordained and installed Ehregott Gottfried Christian Markworth as pastor of St. John's, Zion, and Trinity congregations and as "Hilfsprediger am Zionsdistrict der Muttergemeinde."<sup>55</sup>

Another of these early mission centers was perhaps Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Here, on the fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, 1862, recent graduate of the practical seminary in St. Louis Theodor Gustav Adolph Krumsieg was ordained and installed by H. Grupe.<sup>56</sup> Krumsieg's itinerant activities may be inferred from the fact that he also qualified for financial assistance from the home mission treasury in Fort Wayne.<sup>57</sup> By 13 December 1863 Krumsieg had departed the Eau Claire re-

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article names of persons and places were deleted.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., XXI (15 June 1865), 159, col. 1. Estel had been ordained somewhat earlier by Friedrich Lochner in Milwaukee; ibid., XXI (15 May 1865), 142, col. 1.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., XXII (15 July 1866), 174, col. 2. This would seem to indicate that these congregations in Marathon County were forming an association of congregations, or district congregations, similar to the practice in cities such as St. Louis and Chicago. On 31 May 1866 Estel, no longer merely a Hilfsprediger, had been installed as pastor of St. John's with congregations in three towns "im untern Theile unsers gemeinschaftlichen Wirkungskreises."

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., XIX (15 October 1862), 32.

<sup>57</sup>From Fall-Creek, Wisconsin, Krumsieg acknowledged receipt of \$150.00 through Mr. W. Meyer for a horse, saddle and harness; ibid., XIX (1 March 1863), 111, col. 1. Krumsieg was very likely the unidentified applicant who had inspired an earlier appeal by Dr. Sihler to replenish the depleted home mission fund; W. Sihler, "Herzliche Bitte an die Gemeinde der Synode," ibid., XIX (12 November 1862), 45.

gion for two congregations in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin.<sup>58</sup>

First reached by men from Wisconsin, upper Michigan may also be considered in this connection. J. Jacob Hoffmann of Wausau first penetrated this region which was booming as a result of its mining interests. His trip, by foot, was made between 8 and 27 August 1864. A detailed report was printed in Der Lutheraner. In Rockland, Michigan, he found a group which considered itself Missourier, but for lack of any other they had allowed themselves to be served by a man from the Michigan Synod. This man, a graduate of the Basel mission school, happened to be on his death-bed and Hoffmann was at his side shortly before he passed away. From Rockland Hoffmann proceeded to Ontonagon on Lake Superior, through Buchanan, Burlington, and Portland in Minnesota, Superior City, La Pointe, Bayfield, and Bay City, near Ashland, Wisconsin, and the Michigan cities of Marquette and Mumsing. Having found quite a number of Lutherans, some of whom considered themselves Missouri Synod members, Hoffmann urged Professor Crämer, to whom his letter was addressed, to see to it that a man was sent to this area.<sup>59</sup>

This proposal was followed up the next year when Pastor August Rohrlack was installed in Rockland, Michigan. The man who made a special trip to the region in order to perform the installation, A. D. Stecher of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, gave a detailed account of his trip. Stecher went by lake boat through Sault Ste. Marie. Wherever the boat stopped off enroute, Stecher would disembark and scout about for Luther-

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., XX (1 January 1864), 71, col. 1.

<sup>59</sup>J. Jacob Hoffmann, "Missionsreise-Bericht," ibid., XXI (15 October 1864), 28-30.



ans—in Marquette, Padish Lake (in the vicinity of Hancock and Houghton), and Antonagon (sic). Rockland was a copper mining town about fourteen miles inland from Ontonagon. Rohrlack had already been there for about two and a half weeks and had already come to the conclusion that he would do best not to consider himself a traveling missionary for the entire region. Steamboat travel on the lake was too uncertain, and as long as he remained stationed in Rockland he was too far from the harbor at Ontonagon to make easy boat accommodations. Stecher could testify to the uncertainty of lake travel from personal experience. Boats arrived at harbors on no particular schedule and sounded a signal when they were ready to set sail again. Rohrlack would waste too much time waiting for boats, since there was not even a telegraph from Rockland to the harbor. Besides, he had plenty to keep him occupied in Rockland and could also teach school.<sup>60</sup>

Stecher suggested that someone other than Rohrlack be assigned to man a mission post for the entire Lake Superior region:

Soll seitens unserer Synode für Lake Superior etwas Weiteres geschehen, so muss entweder ein Reiseprediger von Beruf, oder in Ermangelung desselben ein Bruder im Amte, für mindestens zwei Monate hinaufgesendet werden, um mit Musse und Umsicht die dortigen Verhältnisse, sonderlich auch an der Minen landeinwärts, näher kennen zu lernen, und zu diesem Zweck in seiner Gemeinde so lange vertreten werden. Da auch am Canada-Ufer sich mehrere Kupferminen befinden, von denen wir noch gar nichts in Erfahrung gebracht haben, so dürfte auch eine Reise dahin nicht ohne guten Erfolg sein.<sup>61</sup>

Thus the entire region first needed further exploration. This was the

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<sup>60</sup>A. D. Stecher, "Bericht über eine Missionsreise des Past. Stecher bei Gelegenheit der Einführung des Past. Rohrlack in Rockland, Mich.," ibid., XXII (15 November 1865), 43-46.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 45, col. 2.

work, so to speak, of a "professional" Reiseprediger—a man specially called for the purpose (ein Reiseprediger von Beruf)—or at least a man who could manage to get a leave of absence from his congregation for several months. There is no evidence, it would seem, that Stecher's suggestion was followed up. Work continued in the upper Michigan area. Pastor Rohrlack, however, soon encountered greater difficulties than he had at first perhaps anticipated. He did make at least several exploratory trips into surrounding areas—Maple Grove, ten miles from Rockland, and Portage Lake, sixty miles distant—but finally concluded that he would do well just to keep his little flock together in Rockland. This later report states that a Reiseprediger would hardly have much success in the area.<sup>62</sup>

#### The Movement Toward an Official Itinerary

The years from about 1860 to 1865 brought more and more pressure in certain areas of the Missouri Synod for attention to the problem of meeting the needs of the scattered brethren on the frontier. Pastors should in no way be hindered by their congregations from carrying on mission work in their neighborhoods.<sup>63</sup> Steps ought to be taken to consolidate parishes in many localities and especially to relieve pastors of teaching duties.<sup>64</sup> Such irresponsible squandering of precious man-

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<sup>62</sup>Aug. Rohrlack, "Das Missionsgebiet am Lake Superior," ibid., XXII, (1 July 1866), 162-64. This is a good illustration of one area and set of circumstances where an itinerant ministry proved a practical failure.

<sup>63</sup>Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1862, p. 14.

<sup>64</sup>F. C. D. Wyneken in his presidential address, Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1863, p. 20.

power would have to stop:

Während wir jede kleine Gemeinde, die sich an uns wendet, mit einem Prediger versehen, sind Canada, Minnesota, und Iowa, wo wir doch schon seit Jahren Gemeinden haben, von andern Synoden eingenommen. Californien und das uns zur Zeit freilich verschlossene Texas, wie auch Iowa, rufen seit Jahren vergeblich nach Reisepredigern. Sie haben je einen sesshaften Prediger, Iowa zwei.<sup>65</sup>

No specific action was taken at this convention in response to President Wyneken's urging.<sup>66</sup> Another proposal appeared in Der Lutheraner about this same time. Pastor Martin Stephan appealed for fewer small congregations. He admitted that it would not do to violate existing parish lines, but steps could be taken to prevent the same mistake in the western states where congregations were just being organized.

Ist eine Gegend so zerstreut angesiedelt, dass sich keine grössere zusammenhängende Gemeinde bilden lässt, so sollte es vorerst ein Reiseprediger-District bleiben, und sollten nicht die einzelnen Predigtplätze sogleich mit Predigern besetzt werden.

In due time attention could be given to the proper and traditional deutsches Parochialwesen, those in one area could be gathered into one congregation, Filialgemeinden could be formed—perhaps under a teacher—and congregations would assume more convenient forms and sizes.<sup>67</sup>

Such a proposition as this involved an assumption—namely, that the itinerant ministry could be used as a valid form of ministry to meet the needs of the scattered frontier brethren. It was an assumption which X had been a long time in coming. And one more hurdle—the doctrinal

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1863, p. 95.

<sup>67</sup>M. Stephan, "Unsere kleinen Gemeinden," Der Lutheraner, XX (1 July 1864), 163-65.

implications and ramifications it entailed--would still have to be crossed. This was roughly the status of the itinerant ministry in the Missouri Synod by 1865.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DOCTRINAL PROBLEM

#### The Nature of the Problem

Throughout the early history of itinerant ministries in the Missouri Synod there were indications that some uncertainty about the doctrinal implications and ramifications of such offices existed. For example, the 1848 convention actually heard two opposing points of view expressed about whether the Synod might commission a pastor to visit the scattered Lutherans, or whether such authority for the ministry came from the congregation alone by virtue of its call.<sup>1</sup> The first itinerant ministry, the Besucher, may have been abandoned in 1850 and the colporteur substituted for it because of this unresolved doctrinal issue.<sup>2</sup> [The plan August Selle proposed in 1857, that the Synod send out a so-called Evangelist, probably came to nought because of the same doubts and scruples about the right of Synod to appoint a man to such an office in which he would be functioning as a minister of the Word without the benefit of a call from a congregation he would be serving.] To understand this reticence on the part of Synod one must examine the official doctrine of the ministry to which it subscribed. X

One of the main sources for this doctrine was the second part of C. F. W. Walther's Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche

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<sup>1</sup>See above, pp. 64f.

<sup>2</sup>See above, p. 81, esp. fn. 3.

und Amt. Here supported by ample testimonies from the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the writings of the fathers of the church, Walther had summarized in ten theses or propositions the traditional Lutheran doctrine "Vom heiligen Predigtamt oder Pfarramt," as held by the Missouri Synod.<sup>3</sup> These theses were composed mainly in the context of a debate with Pastor J. A. A. Grabau of the Buffalo Synod,<sup>4</sup> but partly also in the context of a rather heated discussion which had arisen in the German churches following the political upheaval of 1848.<sup>5</sup>

In a number of respects Walther's point of view, and that officially adopted by Synod, might be regarded as a mediating view. Two

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<sup>3</sup>C. F. W. Walther, Die Stimme unserer Kirche in der Frage von Kirche und Amt (Third edition; Erlangen: Andreas Deichert, 1875), pp. xv, xvi and 174-124. This work had first been authorized by the 1850 Missouri Synod convention as a reply to Pastor J. A. A. Grabau of the Buffalo Synod, with whom a dispute had arisen over the doctrine of the church and the ministry. The theses were submitted to the 1851 convention for discussion and approval. The first book form, with supporting quotations, appeared in 1852. A second edition was printed in 1865 and a fourth in 1911 at Zwickau in Saxony. Hereafter referred to as Kirche und Amt.

<sup>4</sup>For a good history of this controversy, see Roy A. Suelflow, "The Relations of the Missouri Synod with the Buffalo Synod up to 1866," S. T. M. Dissertation, Concordia Seminary, 1945, printed in Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XXVII (April 1954), 1-19; ibid., XXVII (July 1954), 57-73; ibid., XXVII (October 1954), 97-132.

<sup>5</sup>A brief discussion of this controversy is in Conrad Bergendoff, The Doctrine of the Church in American Lutheranism (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1956), pp. 28f. A study quoted by Bergendoff, which is mainly based on the German sources but which also mentions Walther's role, is by Holsten Fagerberg, Bekennnis, Kirche und Amt in der Deutschen Konfessionellen Theologie des 19. Jahrhunderts (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri ab, 1952), pp. 101-20, esp. pp. 111f. Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, trans. by Walter W. F. Albrecht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), III, esp. pp. 443ff., also has much useful historical information.

contrasting points of view had arisen, with representatives both in America and abroad. On the one hand men such as Grabau in America, and Julius Stahl and Wilhelm Loehe in Germany, stressed the divine origin and authority of the office of the ministry. In Germany the crisis was precipitated by the breakdown of state control over the churches, especially following 1848. In the place of the state, many of the most Confessional theologians and leaders advocated a type of episcopal polity because they feared that anarchy and disorder would result from lay autonomy. An analogous problem in America resulted from this country's religious pluralism and lack of state control of the church. Extremists even went so far as to advocate a concept of apostolic succession. Nearly all who held this point of view stressed the importance of ordination and that a proper call was necessary for the administration of the sacraments. The role of the congregation or or the laity was relatively unimportant. This point of view, in other words, implied that the existence of the church was dependent upon the ministry, or that the ministry, so to speak, makes the church. X

On the other hand, an opposing school of thought, represented in Germany principally by J. W. F. Hbfling at Erlangen, denied the divine ordinance of the office of the ministry and stressed its derivation out of the universal priesthood, or the Christian congregation. But in its extreme forms this view made of the holy ministry too much merely a human ordinance and an expediency. There would be no divine command or necessity attached to it. The very existence of the office would be a matter of human discretion and under certain circumstances it might actually be dispensable. In other words the church arbitrarily makes---

or does not make, as the case may be--the ministry.

Walther, although he very strongly favored the latter view in that the office was looked upon as a derivation of the rights granted all Christians as royal priests, nevertheless was very cautious to avoid extremes such as those of Höfling.<sup>6</sup> This is also abundantly clear from the ten theses on the ministry in Kirche und Amt, especially if they are read in the light of the contrasts Walther faced. The first three assert the uniqueness, the divine ordinance, and the obligatory nature of the office of the ministry.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, according to thesis IV, it is not a special class (Stand), superlative to that of ordinary Christians.<sup>8</sup> Thesis V set forth the authority of the office: to

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<sup>6</sup>C. F. W. Walther, "Reisebericht des Redakteurs," Der Lutheraner, VIII (13 April 1852), 133. Höfling, Walther asserted, overlooked the divine origin, institution, and the express command of the Lord upon which the ministry rested. Fagerberg has also found Walther's a mediating view, an attempt to circumvent the two fruitless extremes: "Der Versuch Walthers, eine vermittelnde Haltung einzunehmen, ist deutlich. Er wollte zugleich auf dem Recht des Amtes wie auf dem der Gemeinde bestehen: die Eigenart des Amtes [i.e., its divine origin and institution, its relative autonomy] sollte aufgezeigt werden, ohne es deshalb allzu stark von der Gemeinde abzugrenzen. Ein Beleg für seine Zwischenstellung ist der Umstand, das beide gegnerischen Lager der Amtsdiskussion glaubten, Walthers Zustimmung sicher zu sein." Fagerberg, op. cit., pp. 111, 112.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, this was Walther's own conception of his role in the debate. He did not want to be grouped together with Höfling. In connection with a book review in Lehre und Wehre, he remarked: "Leider ist es dahin gekommen, dass jetzt jeder, welcher die romanistische Lehre vom Amte verwirft, in dieser Lehre für einen Höflingianer gilt und als ein solcher verdächtigt wird, während doch Höfling's Lehre vom Amte und die der romanisirenden Lutheraner die zwei entgegengesetzten Extreme sind, zwischen denen die reine lutherische Lehre, zu der sich unsere Synode allein bekannt hat und noch bekennt, in der Mitte liegt." [C. F. W. Walther], "Kraussold und die Lehre vom Amt," Lehre und Wehre, IV (December 1858), 354, fn.

<sup>7</sup>Walther, Kirche und Amt, pp. xv, 174ff., 193ff., 211ff.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. xv, 221ff.



preach the Gospel, administer the Sacraments, and to function as a spiritual tribunal (Gericht).<sup>9</sup>

The next two theses, perhaps the most crucial ones, presented an explanation of how the authority of the ministry could be derived from the universal priesthood or the congregation and still preserve its divine source and uniqueness:

#### VI. Thesis

Das Predigtamt wird von Gott durch die Gemeinde, als Inhaberin aller Kirchengewalt oder der Schlüssel, und durch deren von Gott vorgeschriebenen Beruf übertragen. Die Ordination der Berufenen mit Handauflegung ist nicht göttlicher Einsetzung, sondern eine apostolische kirchliche Ordnung, und nur eine öffentliche feierliche Bestätigung jenes Berufes.

#### VII. Thesis

Das heilige Predigtamt ist die von Gott durch die Gemeinde als Inhaberin des Priesterthums und aller Kirchengewalt übertragene Gewalt, die Rechte des geistlichen Priesterthums in öffentlichem Amte von Gemeinschaftswegen auszuüben.<sup>10</sup>

Thesis VIII went on to state that the ministry was the highest office in the church and that all other offices issued out of it.<sup>11</sup> The ministry demands reverence and unconditional obedience, according to the ninth thesis, but only when it requires what is explicitly required in the Word of God. Ministers may not dominate the church or, for example, regulate indifferent matters arbitrarily.<sup>12</sup> Finally, in thesis ten, it was stated that judging doctrinal matters was indeed a

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. xv, 238ff.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. xv, 245ff. 315ff.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. xvi, 342ff.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., pp. xvi, 360ff.

function of the ministry, but that laymen also shared in this responsibility.<sup>13</sup>

For the present purposes the most important of these theses are numbers VI and VII which set forth what has come to be known as the so-called theory of transference (Uebertragungstheorie). The authority of the ministry belongs originally to all Christians, that is, to the general spiritual priesthood or congregation. But for the sake of order and for its public administration, this authority is transferred, or committed, by the original possessors to certain individuals.

What bearing does this have on the subject of itinerant ministries? Very simply stated, the doctrine of transference would seem to at least imply that any minister must first have a congregation, which in turn delegates or transfers to him his authority and rights before he may administer these publicly. A corollary of the doctrine of transference is the concept of congregational autonomy or supremacy. Only the congregation may determine who is to preach the Word and administer the sacraments publicly in its behalf. Only the congregation may extend a call to a candidate for the ministry and only the congregation's call is a valid call. This would mean that, theoretically, an itinerant minister should have a valid call from a congregation in the area in which he is to function before he can be sent. Furthermore, if followed consistently, this means that no representative church body, such as a synod or a mission board of the synod, can appoint such a man or issue a valid call.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. xvi, 398ff.

A related, though somewhat more practical issue, might be mentioned also at this point. In considering the itinerant ministry the question sometimes arose as to whether this was really the most efficient and most practical way of promoting the extension of God's kingdom here on earth. Was it best to concentrate on a small area and minister well to the needs of a few, through sound indoctrination and personal pastoral guidance (Privatseelsorge)? Or was it better, and under the urgent conditions of the American frontier, perhaps mandatory, to spread the work thinner, and to try to reach as many of the scattered brethren as possibly, even if less frequently?<sup>14</sup> This practical problem was closely related to the more theoretical and doctrinal problem. And in both respects it is probably true that "the Lutheran tradition . . . demanded an emphasis on a resident ministry."<sup>15</sup>

In spite of some opposition and no little hesitation, itinerants were appointed and sent out during the years from 1847 to 1865, as

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<sup>14</sup>This was precisely the way the issue was formulated at the second convention of the Western District in 1856; "Vom Bedienen vieler Gemeinden-Evangelistenamt, u.," Verhandlungen der Zweiten Sitzungen des westlichen Districts der Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten, im Jahre 1856 (St. Louis: Druckerei der evang.-luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. St., n.d.), pp. 35ff. Cf. above pp. 97f. Hereafter all such official Proceedings of conventions are cited in the following abbreviated form: Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1856, pp. 35ff.

<sup>15</sup>Carl S. Meyer, "Lutheran Immigrant Churches Face the Problems of the Frontier," Church History, XXIX (December 1960), 448. Meyer is, of course, speaking principally of the practical aspect. A brief discussion of the doctrinal issue, especially of the matter of congregational sovereignty, is Aug. R. Suelflow's "Historic Patterns of Lutheran Settlement and Outreach," The Lutheran Parish in an Urbanized America with Special Reference to the Missouri Synod, ed. by Ross P. Scherer, Fifteenth Yearbook, Lutheran Education Association (River Forest, Illinois: L. E. A., 1958), pp. 29f.

shown in the preceding chapters. During this same period not one, but a number of suggestions and possible solutions to the problem were explored. The published sources indicate, however, that the most crucial and important discussions in terms of results did not take place until 1863, and particularly 1865. Attention must be given to both of these discussions.

### The Synodical Convention of 1863

At the 1863 general convention of the Missouri Synod a lengthy discussion, mostly having to do with the doctrine of the ministry, arose, sparked initially by a consideration of the twenty-first thesis of Prof. Walther's Die rechte Gestalt einer vom Staate unabhängigen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Ortsgemeinde.<sup>16</sup> The discussion began with the matter of how vacant congregations ought to consult with neighboring pastors for direction when calling a new pastor and it ended with a lively discussion about the Reiseprediger. Immediately preceding this last section the doctrine of ordination had been discussed, with particular reference to the errors of J. A. A. Grabau on this point.<sup>17</sup>

The issue of the Reiseprediger was articulated in the following manner:

Die Reiseprediger gehen aus ohne Beruf zu einem Pfarramt, und darum ohne Ordination; ihr einziger Beruf ist der Beruf der Liebe.

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<sup>16</sup>C. F. W. Walther, Die rechte Gestalt einer vom Staate unabhängigen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Ortsgemeinde (St. Louis: Gedruckt bei Aug. Wiebusch u. Sohn, 1863).

<sup>17</sup>"Verhandlungen über § 21 des Referats von Herrn Prof. Walther über 'die rechte Gestalt einer vom Staate unabhängigen Ev.-Luth. Ortsgemeinde,'" Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1863, pp. 52ff.

Wenn sie nun zu den verlassenen Leuten kommen und predigen, so gerathen sie oft in grosse Gewissensnoth, wenn sie aufgefordert werden, Kinder zu taufen; in noch grössere Anfechtung kommen sie, wenn sie hie und da in Nothfällen das heil. Abendmahl verwalten sollen. Die Verwaltung der Taufe ist ihnen bisher gestattet worden, nicht so die Verwaltung des heil. Abendmahls, das Letztere, nicht, weil sie kein Recht dazu hätten, sondern weil im Betreff des Abendmahls kein solcher Nothfall vorhanden sein kann, wie im Betreff der Taufe.

This provoked a contest between two different opinions which could not be completely reconciled. One side was more liberal about what ministerial functions the Reiseprediger could perform. Provided he did not usurp an office which did not belong to him or assume an improper character, under certain circumstances the itinerant could perform all the acts of the office. If the people requested him to perform the acts of the office they would thus be extending him a call, or what might be regarded as a call under the necessitous circumstances. The opposing point of view was more strict:

Nur muss man dabei nicht vergessen, dass das Predigtamt eine göttliche Ordnung ist und nicht eine menschliche. Ist es eine göttliche Ordnung, so darf ich sie nun und nimmermehr übertreten, ausser im höchsten Nothfalle, da des armen Sünders Seligkeit auf dem Spiele steht. Allerdings hat der Herr Jesus diese Ordnung gemacht nicht zum Verderben der Seelen, sondern zu ihrer Rettung, also darf im Nothfalle der Reiseprediger taufen, ja auch das heil. Abendmahl verwalten, aber dies kann eben nur gerechtfertigt werden durch den Nothfall. Ein Reiseprediger ist ohne Amt; wenn er es zur Regel macht, zu taufen, wo man es nur verlangt, und Abendmahl zu halten, wo man es nur begehrt, so begeht er eine schwere Veründigung an Gottes Ordnung.

The argument that the request constitutes a call was denied, on the grounds that the people were not actually calling him, but only entrusting him with a single act of the office.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 56. English translation of this entire section in Appendix B, pp. 206-210.

One of the main issues centered about the administration of baptism. In cases of emergency fathers of households, for example, X could baptize. But if the father asked a Reiseprediger to do it for him, this did not constitute a call into the public ministry. If, however, no pastor was available and the proper persons felt incapable, the task might be delegated to another person. This would constitute a case of emergency or necessity and in such cases also a Reiseprediger might baptize. This was as much as the more conservative side in the discussion was willing to concede. But if this is true of this one function of the ministry, than what about others? Must preaching, too, be limited to cases of necessity?

Antwort: Es ist ein grosser Unterschied zwischen Taufen und Predigen. Wenn die Leute eben so gut selbst predigen könnten, wie sie selbst taufen können, so wäre das freilich eine Gottlosigkeit, wenn ich als Nicht-Berufener ihnen öffentlich predigen wollte; denn dann griffe ich in ein fremdes Amt und mit Recht könnten die Leute sagen: Geh nur deiner Wege, wir brauchen dich nicht zum Predigen, das können wir selbst! Das können sie aber nicht und stehen darum in grosser Gefahr, verloren zu gehen. Da bitten wir denn einen Bruder, dass er sich die Liebe dringen lasse, die armen Leute aufzusuchen und ihnen das Evangelium zu bringen. Etwas anderes ist es mit der Taufe, die können und sollen sie im Nothfalle selbst verrichten. Wenn freilich auch in Beziehung auf sie die Leute sagen: Wir sind zu ungeschickt dazu, dann taufe man, nur lasse man Nothfall Nothfall sein und ein Reiseprediger gerire sich nicht als Pfarrer, sonst übertritt er Gottes Ordnung.

This did not satisfy the more liberal element. It would be difficult to get these doctrinal subtleties across to the people and would only confuse them. "Sagt man ihnen: Ich bin kein Pfarrer, thut's selber, so werden sie die Augen aufreissen und davon laufen; denn sie sind unwissend und unverständlich." The reply was that ignorant people must be instructed. They should be happy to learn that they possess rights they did not know they had. And if they still want the itinerant to

perform a baptism he should say: "Wohlan, ich will's thun, wie du selbst, oder dein Nachbar es auch thun könnte."<sup>19</sup>

The more liberal point of view was still not satisfied: Why was it that, aside from regular congregational conditions, a Reiseprediger was not allowed to do what a common citizen or farmer even could do in cases of necessity, if he has the gift for it? The answer to this was that the administration of the sacraments presupposes the existence of congregations, where the preached Word has already fulfilled its purpose. The conservatives cited by way of historical precedent the fact that the Lutheran fathers had condemned the Calvinists in France for employing Reiseprediger to do mission work during the second part of the sixteenth century. Such men were proselytizers, were not to be regarded as pastors, and had no valid call. They had stolen France from the Lutheran church. But this was in ecclesiastically well-regulated France, was the counter argument, and could hardly apply to the circumstances in America. Here there would not be so much danger of usurping someone else's office. In fact, the unique situation in religiously pluralistic America, so the argument apparently went, demanded a new interpretation of this entire matter. Now it was the turn of the more conservative side to object, and this seems to have been the concluding argument of the debate:

Antwort: Das Gesagte trifft nicht die Sache. Dass unsre Reiseprediger predigen sollen, darüber sind wir ja alle einig; nur nicht taufen, nur kein Abendmahl halten sollen sie ohne die dringendste Noth. Wenn ich als Reiseprediger den Leuten geprediget habe, dann wasche ich meine Hände in Unschuld; denn ich habe gethan, sie zu retten, was ich konnte und durfte. Was das

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

Taufen betrifft, so ist es ganz dasselbe, ob ich ein Kind hier in Fort Wayne oder in Oregon taufe,—immer darf ich es nur im Nothfall, wenn entweder Sterbensgefahr oder sonstige Nothstände dazu drängen. Es wird also zugegeben: Wenn ein Reiseprediger fremd an einen Ort hinkommt, so mag er taufen, wenn die, so zunächst dazu berufen sind, und zwar zuallererst die Väter, sich's nicht selbst getrauen, ja er mag in gewissen dringenden Nothfällen auch das Abendmahl verwalten; aber er sehe sich wohl vor und prüfe genau, ob auch solche Nothfälle vorliegen, sonst könnte ihm seine Handlungsweise noch in der Todesstunde grosse Gewissensqual verursachen.<sup>20</sup>

Neither side can be said to have won a decisive victory in this encounter. Yet it did show certain areas of agreement. For one thing, by this time the existence of itinerants seems to have been taken as a matter of fact, even by those who were not too sure about the propriety of the office. According to the discussion it was the Reiseprediger himself who was having doubts and scruples and wanted an answer to this problem. It was no longer a matter of whether or not to have an itinerant ministry, but only one of how much such itinerants might be permitted to do. The answer given at the 1863 convention, stated as concisely as possible, was that they could preach—of this both sides were certain—but that they could administer the sacraments only in cases of emergency or necessity. Here a difference of opinion came into focus—over the issue of what constituted such a case of necessity.

One side, those favoring a broader interpretation of the Reiseprediger's function, argued that his whole existence, his very need to be, was predicated on the desperate spiritual conditions the office was designed to meet. His call was a call of love, though this line

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 58.



of reasoning was not fully developed in this discussion, and the call of love outweighed and outranked all others, even procedures of calling established by God Himself for ordinary conditions. This argument was briefly alluded to, at the very outset, in the 1863 discussion; it was one which would be expanded on subsequently.

The more conservative side wanted strict limitations placed on the definition of an emergency. An emergency on the frontier in Oregon could only be considered an emergency if it would also have been an emergency in the settled, well-regulated congregational life of the city of Fort Wayne, where Synod happened to be meeting that year. In general, the more liberal proponents were motivated by practical concerns; the conservatives held out on more theoretical or doctrinal grounds.

A further partial basis of agreement may have been the general outlook of both sides toward the status of the Reiseprediger, his office as compared to that of a regular, resident minister. That he was not to be equated with a resident pastor seems not to have been contested even by his firmest advocates. He was not ordained.<sup>21</sup> In fact, he did not really have a call—not in the traditional sense of the term. If he could be said to have a call, it was either merely the general call of love-in-the-face-of-necessity, or else the casual, informal request made of him to perform some particular function of the public ministry. There was no suggestion in 1863 that Synod, acting collectively in behalf of its congregations, could extend a call, while

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<sup>21</sup>This may not always have been the case, however. Cf, for example, a possible exception in the case of A. E. Winter, p. 134, above.

thus preserving in theory the idea of congregational autonomy.

It might be remarked that, for the most part, the 1863 discussion spoke in terms of a largely theoretical type of Reiseprediger, or perhaps a potential type of Reiseprediger. For by far the majority of itinerants up to this time seem to have been associated with a congregation from the outset of their work, or soon arranged for such an association. It is true, of course, that even such men and also the men who took leaves of absence and made exploratory trips ran into difficulties when they penetrated new areas. The official doctrine of Synod was that a man should have a call from a congregation first, in advance of whatever services he might render. But it is clear that by 1863 even the doubters were hardly interpreting the doctrine of the call so strictly.

It is interesting to note that these 1863 convention delegates were not arguing, however, about resident pastors (sesshafte Prediger) who made occasional itineraries or even about assistants (Gehülfe; Hilfsprediger) who were associated with a particular congregation but who concentrated on outlying areas. Rather, the participants in the discussion were concerned about the type of man who might be appointed, for example, by Synod or one of the districts and who would function purely as an itinerant. This was the type of office which Synod had established in 1847, but had abandoned, perhaps for doctrinal reasons, by 1850. This was the idea which August Selle had promoted at the 1857 convention, but he had been forced to settle for a partially supported assistant. In 1863 the Missouri Synod could again talk in terms of a synodically appointed and official recognized itineracy. If this inter-

pretation is correct, the 1863 convention marks another significant step in the development of itinerant ministries in the Missouri Synod.

#### The Western District Convention of 1865

The other crucial discussion referred to above, perhaps even more significant in terms of the results it produced, was a series of twenty-eight theses, or propositions, presented and discussed at the convention of the Western District at Collinsville, Illinois, 10-17 May 1865. It is not clear just who composed these twenty-eight statements. It may have been District President J. F. Bünker himself, for it was he who in his presidential address directed that they be discussed, even though another principal essay had priority on the convention docket.<sup>22</sup> The theses were brought before the convention by a special committee of three, who had been given the assignment of reporting on the presidential address.<sup>23</sup> No immediate cause, other than President Bünker's

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<sup>22</sup>An abbreviated report on the convention appeared soon after it met. It stated: "Unser Herr Distrikts-Präses hatte nämlich in der Synodalrede darauf aufmerksam gemacht, wie wichtig und nöthig es sei, dass Reiseprediger ausgeschiedt werden, die verlassenen und zerstreuten Brüder im fernen Westen und Norden aufzusuchen. Ja, aber wie soll das gehen? ein Prediger ohne Gemeinde ist ja kein Prediger, wie soll man also Reiseprediger schicken? Und doch haben wir beschlossen, vor der Hand einen und, sobald wir können, mehr zu schicken?" The reader was referred to the Proceedings for the answer the convention had given to the question. J. P. Beyer, "Etwas von der Letzten Synodalversammlung in Collinsville," Der Lutheraner, XXI (1 June 1865), 146, col. 1. Emphases in original.

President Bünker demonstrated an abiding interest in the extension of the church. This was his first presidential address.

<sup>23</sup>The address itself was omitted from the published Proceedings. This committee, number IV, consisted of Pastors C. J. Hermann Fick, Ch. Popp, and H. Wunder. Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1865, pp. 10, 57. There is a possibility that someone else, such as this committee, may have been authors of the theses.

urging based on the general need for a solution to the Reiseprediger problem, was given for the consideration of this matter at this time. The theses appear to have been presented one by one and each was followed by at least a few lines summarizing the discussion on the convention floor. The line of reasoning propounded may be gathered from the theses themselves:

1. Jeder gläubige neutestamentliche Christ ist ein wahrer und nicht mehr bevormundeter, geistlicher Priester, davon die Söhne Levis und Aarons im Alten Testamente nur die Vorbilder und Schatten waren.
2. Jeder Christ hat als geistlicher Priester: (1) das Amt des Wortes, (2) zu taufen, (3) zu segnen oder weihen das heilige Brod und Wein, (4) zu binden und von Sünden zu entbinden, (5) zu opfern, (6) zu beten für die Andern, (7) zu urtheilen und erkennen über alle Lehre.<sup>24</sup>
3. Das öffentliche Predigtamt ist die durch die gläubigen Christen übertragene Gewalt, die Rechte des geistlichen Priestertums in öffentlichem Amte an Christi Staat und von Gemeinschaftswegen auszuüben.
4. Das öffentlich Predigtamt, und dass niemand dasselbe verwalten solle, er sei denn ordentlich dazu berufen, ist zwar eine Ordnung und nicht ein Gnadenmittel, jedoch nicht eine menschliche, sondern eine göttliche Ordnung.<sup>25</sup>
5. Alles, was zur äusserlichen indifferenten Ordnung in der Kirche dient, ist von Gott der Kirche selbst in christlicher Freiheit zu ordnen überlassen.
6. Wie alle Ordnungen des grossen Gottes selbst nicht nur um der

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<sup>24</sup>"Achtundzwanzig Thesen über den Beruf und die Stellung eines Reisepredigers," Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1865, p. 57. The locations of the theses in the Proceedings are given here as they occur, since the presentation covers a number of pages due to the discussion of each. The theses alone are to be found in Thesen für die Lehrverhandlungen der Missouri-Synode und der Synodalconferenz bis zum Jahre 1893 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1894), pp. 12-14. English translation of the theses in Appendix C, pp. 211-215 of present essay.

<sup>25</sup>"Achtundzwanzig Thesen," p. 58.

Äusserlichen Ordnung willen, sondern zugleich aus andern Ursachen, die uns theils geoffenbart, theils verborgen sind, gemacht sind, so auch die Ordnung des öffentlichen Predigtamtes.

7. Von der Ordnung des öffentlichen Predigtamtes abzugehen, ist keiner Creatur in irgend einem Falle gestattet, es sei denn dass Gottes Wort selbst vorkommenden Falles davon abzugehen gebietet. Matth. 15, 1-6., Röm. 10, 15.<sup>26</sup>

8. Wie alle Ordnungen Gottes im Neuen Testamente keine Gesetze, sondern gnädige Stiftungen Gottes zum Heile der Seelen sind, so auch die Ordnung des öffentlichen Predigtamtes.

9. Die Liebe ist die Kaiserin aller Gesetze, vielmehr aller Ordnungen, d. i. sie hat in Fällen der Noth kein Gebot, viel weniger eine Ordnung. Matth. 12,7. Röm. 13, 10.<sup>27</sup>

10. Es gibt Nothfälle, in welchen auch die Ordnung des öffentlichen Predigtamtes nicht inne gehalten werden kann und soll. 2 Mos. 4, 24-26.

11. Ein Nothfall findet dann statt, wenn durch gesetzliches Halten an der Ordnung die Seelen, anstatt gerettet zu werden, verloren gehen würden, also dadurch die Liebe verletzt werden würde.

12. Im Nothfalle darf von Gottes Ordnung nur so weit und so lange abgegangen werden, so weit und so lange der Nothfall vorhanden ist.<sup>28</sup>

13. Ohne die Predigt des Wortes Gottes ist kein Glaube möglich und ohne die Taufe ist bei Erwachsenen derselbe in steter Gefahr, in jeder Anfechtung Schiffbruch zu leiden, und was die Kinder betrifft, so ist die Taufe für dieselben das einzige Gnadenmittel. Röm. 10, 14. Marc. 10, 15. 16.<sup>29</sup>

14. Wie das fünfte Gebot von der allgemeinen Nächstenliebe dem vierten von der Liebe zu den Eltern nachsteht, so steht der allgemeine Liebesberuf dem Sonderberuf nach.<sup>30</sup>

15. Wie der Beruf der allgemeinen Liebe nicht erlaubt, den Son-

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

derberuf eines öffentlichen Predigers aufzuheben und ihm in sein Amt zu greifen.

16. Die Liebe gibt kein Recht, in eines gültig berufenen, selbst ketzerischen Predigers Gemeinde das Werk eines öffentlichen Predigers zu thun, und so in sein Amt zu greifen.<sup>31</sup>

17. Die Liebe hat Beruf und Pflicht, da, wo keine Christen sind und die Kirche erst zu pflanzen ist, öffentlich aufzutreten und den Seelen Gottes Wort zu verkündigen und die, welche hierauf den Glauben bekennen, zu taufen.

18. Die Liebe hat Beruf und Pflicht, selbst da, wo Christen sind, die Kirche aber der öffentlichen Prediger mangelt, und die Seelen sonst in Gefahr sein würden, verloren zu gehen, auch öffentlich aufzutreten und Gottes Wort zu lehren, wenn sie Erkenntniss und Gabe dazu besitzt.

19. Wenn gesagt wird, dass die Kirche das Recht zu berufen habe, so heisst das nicht, dass die Kirche überhaupt durch ihr Berufen Prediger machen könne, sondern dass diejenigen Christen, welchen der Prediger zu senden ist, auch das Recht haben, diesen Prediger selbst zu wählen und zu berufen.<sup>32</sup>

20. Anderen als sich selbst ohne deren Willen Prediger zu berufen und zu setzen, ist ein Eingriff in fremdes Amt und nichts als Tyrannei.

21. Wenn der Christ Jemanden bitten und beauftragen kann, ein Werk der allgemeinen Liebe an seiner Statt zu thun, so können auch Christen Jemanden bitten und beauftragen, an ihrer Statt die eines Predigers ermangelnden Christen aufzusuchen und die Predigt des Wortes Gottes unter ihnen als ein Werk der allgemeinen Liebe zu übernehmen.<sup>33</sup>

22. Da ist kein Nothfall, wo durch Haltung der göttlichen Ordnung die Seelen nur eine zeitliche und leibliche Unbequemlichkeit auf sich zu nehmen genöthigt sind.

23. Die Verwaltung des heil. Abendmahls setzt das Bestehen einer christlichen Gemeinde und Privatseelsorge voraus; jene soll daher unterbleiben, wo keine christliche Gemeinde besteht und keine

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 65f.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

Privatseelsorge gehandhabt werden kann.<sup>34</sup>

24. Es darf keine Einrichtung getroffen werden, durch welche das Abgehen von der göttlichen Ordnung des öffentlichen Predigtamts zur stehenden Ordnung gemacht wird.<sup>35</sup>

25. Ein Nothfall in Administrirung des heiligen Abendmahls ohne die göttliche Ordnung des heiligen Predigtamtes, ist wohl denkbar, aber nur bei ganz ungewöhnlicher geistlicher Anfechtung.

26. Ein zum Lehren tüchtiger Christ, welcher die verlassenen Schafe vom Hause Christi aufsucht, und ihnen das Wort Gottes predigt, sollte nur da, wo man ihn darnach zum ordentlichen öffentlichen Prediger beruft, das ganze Amt des Evangeliums verwalten.

27. Ein solcher Reiseprediger sollte den Beruf kleiner Gemeindchen nur unter der Bedingung annehmen, dass er dabei die Freiheit behalte, immer mehr solche Gemeindchen aufzusuchen, und eine jede derselben, nur so viel es die Zeit leidet, zu bedienen.<sup>36</sup>

28. Die Aufgabe eines solchen Reisepredigers ist es, grösseren von ihm aufgefundenen Gemeinden zur Erlangung eines anderen, unter ihnen sesshaften Predigers behülflich zu sein.<sup>37</sup>

The first eight of these theses were mostly a restatement and reaffirmation of the public teaching of the Missouri Synod on the doctrine of the ministry, such as that expressed in Walther's Kirche und Amt. The specific application to the issue of itinerant ministries began with thesis 9. It stated that an exception might be made to the customary ordinances or regulations established by God, even those pertaining to the ministry, for the sake of love, or more precisely perhaps, love-in-the-face-of-necessity. This would imply, of course, that the Reiseprediger as an institution was an emergency and merely

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

provisional measure.<sup>38</sup> The temporary nature of the itinerant's calling was reiterated in the twenty-fourth and in the last theses. Thesis 13 gave the reasoning which justified permitting the Reiseprediger to baptize. The exegesis of the sequence of the commandments seems just a bit strained, but it was intended only to illustrate that making an exception for the sake of love in general still gave no one the right to violate a specific command such as that of usurping the office of someone already in the ministry (in ein fremdes Amt zu greifen). Here, too, the Missouri Synod caution about entering into competition with any other church body, even heterodox Christians, was restated (thesis 16).

The wording of thesis 19, though somewhat ambiguous, is significant in a somewhat different connection. Synod acting collectively (die Kirche überhaupt) and in behalf of the congregations could extend a call to an itinerant but it could not be considered the equivalent of a congregational call. At least this seems to be the sense of the thesis. The accompanying discussion brought out that this was fundamentally the error of the papacy—(one man or a group of men selecting priests for others—when in fact this was a right which belonged to all Christians, even women and children, though they were ordinarily represented by the men.) An analogy was used. No one could send someone to work in his neighbor's garden without the neighbor's express approval and consent. Now if the neighbor was ill and the garden needed attention, one might out of concern send a man, but even then this man could

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<sup>38</sup>By the very nature of the case the Reiseprediger was forced to work himself out of a job at any given location.



only work if the neighbor gave his consent. So it was with sending

Reiseprediger. In connection with thesis 20 the discussion went:

Daher soll ein Reiseprediger zu den verlassenen Lutheranern nicht in der Eigenschaft eines bereits gemachten und fertigen Predigers kommen, wie ein Handwerksmann, der auf gut Glück Beschäftigung sucht (denn es könnte ja sein, dass ihn der himmlische Meister und Hausvater trotz seiner Vorbereitung doch nicht annehmen wollte), sondern soll nur seine Dienste anbieten, indem er sich als ein von der Kirche für das Predigtamt tüchtig befundener und ausgehender Predigtamts-candidat legitimirt, damit sie sehen, dass sie es mit keinem Schwarmgeiste zu thun haben, und Zutrauen zu ihm fassen. Berufen sie ihn dann, so wird er durch solchen Ruf ihr Prediger.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, though Synod could not call a pastor for a congregation, this did not prevent Christians from asking and authorizing someone to do a work of love in their place and the work of an itinerant was clearly such a work of love. This was brought out again in the discussion on thesis 21:

Ogleich die Kirche das Recht nicht hat, für Andere Prediger zu berufen, so hat sie doch das Recht, Andere zu bitten, statt ihrer ein Liebeswerk zu thun. Denn verlassenen Christen Gottes Wort bringen, ist ja sicherlich ein gottgefälliges Liebeswerk; aber wir können doch nicht alle gehen und solches Werk der Liebe ausrichten, weil wir entweder dazu nicht geschickt sind oder es uns die Verhältnisse nicht gestatten. Da soll nun die Kirche die an ihrer Statt senden, welche Gaben und Lust zu diesem Werke haben, den Verlassenen ihren Dienst anzubieten und, wo sie es hören wollen, Gottes Wort zu predigen. Die Kirche aber erweist ihre Liebe, indem sie diese Sendlinge mit den erforderlichen äusserlichen Mitteln ausrüstet und ihnen das Zeugniß mitgibt, dass sie rechtschaffene Glaubensbrüder seien. Die Pflicht, die Reiseprediger zu unterstützen, liegt darum für Jeden darin, dass er selbst, wenn er dazu Zeit, Gaben und Geschick hätte, zu missioniren verpflichtet wäre.<sup>40</sup>

This also took care of the matter of supporting the itinerant.

The purely temporary nature of the office of Reiseprediger was

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 67.

affirmed in connection with thesis 24. All resemblance to the detested practice of licensing candidates should be avoided.<sup>41</sup> The Reisepredigeramt should be maintained only as an exception and not allowed to achieve the status of the rule. Furthermore, Reiseprediger should not be permitted to perform all the functions of the office for the same reason, namely, that a permanent arrangement might result. For if they performed all functions, the people would soon come to regard the regular office of the ministry as superfluous. The delegates became rather explicit about just how they thought an itinerant should function:

Unsere Idee vom Reisepredigtamte ist darum folgende: Der Ausgesandte findet ein Häuflein, sage zwei, drei oder mehr Christen. Er weist sich als Predigtamts-candidat vor ihnen aus, der von der Kirche gesandt ist, allen verlassenen Christen das Wort Gottes zu bringen. Er ladet die Leute zum Hören des göttlichen Wortes ein, predigt ihnen und verweilt eine hinreichende Zeit bei ihnen, damit er die Leute und sie ihn kennen lernen und Zutrauen zu ihm fassen. Begehren sie dann von ihm das heilige Abendmahl, so sagt er ihnen, dass er dazu nicht befugt sei, ehe sie ihm durch ordentlichen Beruf das Predigtamt übertrügen und ihn förmlich zu ihrem Seelsorger machten.

The Reiseprediger could accept a formal, though largely nominal, call to one of the groups he served. But even if he did accept this formal call, he was not to forsake his principal task, that of visiting as many settlements as possible and of covering as much territory as possible. As soon as possible he should try to get two or three of the small groups to associate so that they could call a pastor of their own. Until then he was to go on visiting them, sometimes as little as

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 68. Earlier, the licentiate may have been a real deterrent to the acceptance of the itineracy in the Missouri Synod. See above, Ch. III, pp. 50ff.

only four or five times a year, but a week or two at a time now and then to perform the necessary pastoral functions. By arranging for a formal call for the Reiseprediger the problem of Communion in emergencies would be circumvented.<sup>42</sup> Without some sort of a call the Reiseprediger was to administer communion only in cases of greatest necessity, "damit die Ordnung der lutherischen Kirche, die einem Laien nie erlaubt hat, das Abendmahl auszutheilen, nicht verletzt werde."<sup>43</sup>

The last two theses set forth the Reiseprediger's ultimate goal, to see the little congregations he had founded grow into larger ones and when the time came to help them obtain the services of a resident minister and thus to become self-sustaining.

The immediate result of the discussion was that this convention resolved that at least one Reiseprediger be sent out. The choice of a suitable candidate was delegated to the St. Louis Pastoral Conference in conjunction with delegates from the congregations in St. Louis as well as of those in Carondelet and Collinsville, Illinois.<sup>44</sup> Since the Western District did not want this project to remain merely a private enterprise of its own, the other districts which met later the same year were invited to share in the support of the new Reiseprediger. Thus at the Northern District convention the twenty-eight

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 69. Here the problem of the permanency of the call might have been raised, but apparently was not. It would seem that the Reiseprediger's call as described above might have been contested on the grounds of its permanency.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

theses on the Reiseprediger were read aloud and a few of them, particularly 16, 19, 22, 23, and 27, were discussed. Prof. Walther, who as president of Synod apparently brought the matter to the floor of the convention, explained the Western District's invitation to the other districts for support in view of the fact that the man chosen would not necessarily be limited to working only in the Western District.<sup>45</sup> Again at the Central District convention Prof. Walther introduced the subject. The report implied that by this time, 16 to 20 August, a man had been selected and appointed. Since the Central District also had no plans to send out a man of its own, it likewise accepted the Western District's proposal to share in supporting the one Reiseprediger.<sup>46</sup>

The Western District convention discussion also sparked interest in the Eastern District assembly. The Eastern District delegates were convinced that the idea could be put to good use in their own area. Examples of regions where Reiseprediger would perhaps work well were those in the vicinities of Frederick and Annapolis, Maryland, and Alexandria, Virginia, as well as the region between Buffalo and Rochester, New York. It was agreed that, "Die innere Mission ist wichtiger als die äussere." But the Eastern District also included other types of missionaries in this definition—such as the institutional missionary working in hospitals. In this sense the District could make use of "two or three dozen" such men, especially for areas such as Philadelphia and New York. In spite of the enthusiasm, how-

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<sup>45</sup>Missouri Synod, Northern District, Proceedings, 1865, p. 60.

<sup>46</sup>Missouri Synod, Central District, Proceedings, 1865, pp. 15f.

ever, little concrete action was taken. Pastors were encouraged to explore potential fields and report back to the district. In some areas a regular pastor could perhaps secure the services of a "vicar" X who could make periodic rounds of the Lutheran Diaspora. The Eastern District accepted the Western's report on the Reiseprediger. At the same time a committee was selected to study the matter of having a colporteur also for the Eastern District.<sup>47</sup>

These deliberations at the district conventions of 1865 were decisive in the history of the itinerant in the Missouri Synod. Home mission work might have progressed apace even had no official attention been given to the various doctrinal issues. Yet it can hardly be denied that these discussions, especially the initial one at the Western District convention helped clear the air and give the itinerant enterprise an officially recognized legitimacy it had lacked prior to this time.

#### Doctrinal Developments Subsequent to 1865

One of the main proofs for the contention that the discussions of 1865 were decisive doctrinally is the relative silence in the literature on these same issues after 1865.<sup>48</sup> For example, C. F. W. Walther's

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<sup>47</sup>Missouri Synod, Eastern District, Proceedings, 1865, p. 60. Cf. ibid., p. 64, for a further report on colportage.

<sup>48</sup>The present writer has done an historical survey of the literature of the later period and it is partly upon the findings of this study that this conclusion is based. The investigation was not exhaustive, but it is hoped sufficiently representative to have caught any significant shifts in the thinking on the itinerant ministry. Karl Wyneken, "Later Developments in the Missouri Synod Doctrine of the Ministry, 1870-1900," mimeographed term paper, Concordia Seminary, 1963.

"Materialien zur Pastoraltheologie" began appearing in Lehre und Wehre already in 1865. But one looks in vain, even in the section on the call, for anything of real significance for the issues attending the question of Reiseprediger.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps the closest thing of any relevance at all was the advice that, if at all possible, the ordinand should be ordained in the congregation which had called him. If this was not possible, it was so much the more important that he at least be installed publicly in his own congregation.<sup>50</sup> To conclude that after 1865 no significant new developments occurred has the nature of an argumentum a silentio, viz., the silence of the published sources.<sup>51</sup> For that matter, it should be noted that the literature even before 1865, from the standpoint of doctrinal issues, was far from preoccupied with the problem. In fact, this is the very reason which made the discussions at the 1863 general and at the 1865 Western District conventions relatively unique.

In 1870 an article appeared in Der Lutheraner, written in the form of a conversational dialogue between two men on the subject of home missions. Various objections were raised by the fictitious opponent,

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<sup>49</sup>C. F. W. Walther, "Materialien zur Pastoraltheologie," Lehre und Wehre, XI (April 1865), 97-102; this was the first article in the series. The sections on the call are ibid., XI (July 1865), 193-200; ibid., XI (August 1865), 225-35; ibid., XI (September 1865), 257-63; ibid., XI (October 1865), 289-96; ibid., (November 1865), 321-25; ibid., XI (December 1865), 353-60.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., XI (December 1865), 358.

<sup>51</sup>Based on an exhaustive study of all official Proceedings of the Missouri Synod and its districts from 1847 to 1880, Der Lutheraner from 1844 to 1870, Lehre und Wehre from 1855 to 1872 (and less exhaustively thereafter).

but significantly not one was of a doctrinal nature relating to the call of the ministry. The main point of the article was that the task of home missions was everyone's business.<sup>52</sup> This was but another example of the silence on the former issues following 1865.

Similarly no new doctrinal problems arose within the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America. Its first convention deliberated about entering the field of home missions. The committee assigned to report on the matter did make several references to the doctrinal aspects. Point five of this report recommended that the method of having a missionary associate with a definite field of work be followed, but mainly to avoid potential competition:

Solche Diener der inneren Mission sollten um göttlicher Ordnung und um der Freudigkeit zur Arbeit willen einen ordentlichen Beruf von einem bestimmten Arbeitsfelde haben, der ihnen jedoch zur Pflicht mache, von dort aus nach Massgabe ihrer Kräfte zu wirken.<sup>53</sup>

When presented to the convention this point was further discussed and the question of a congregational call was raised. To the question of whether one who is not a pastor in full might in cases of necessity carry out inner mission work, the answer given was a qualified yes. Experience had taught, for example in Louisiana, that the work progressed better when a missionary first had a call as an assistant to an existing congregation. When he had gathered a group of his own, he might accept a call from them but only with the understanding that he

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<sup>52</sup>"Ein Gespräch zwischen Johann und Friedrich über die innere Mission oder Aufsuchung und Versorgung predigerloser Gemeinden hier in Amerika," Der Lutheraner, XXVI (1 June 1870), 145-49.

<sup>53</sup>Synodical Conference, Proceedings, 1872, pp. 70f.

could continue with his mission efforts. However, "Ohne Beruf sollte eben, wie überhaupt, so auch auf dem Gebiete der Mission Niemand öffentlich lehren oder Sacrament reichen." There were too many Geistlichen Landstreicher about and Lutheran missionaries should avoid any such identification.<sup>54</sup> The Synodical Conference attitude expressed here hardly differed significantly from that, for instance, of the 1865 Western District of the Missouri Synod. If anything, it was perhaps just a bit more cautious and conservative than the Western District opinion had been.

The subject of Reiseprediger came up at least incidentally in a few essays delivered at later conventions. One example was that by Georg Stöckhardt for the Iowa District in 1883. In connection with his second thesis he touched on the problem of the people in the wilderness who have no orthodox pastor. Such a group constitutes a congregation and as such may call one who has the necessary gifts to administer the sacraments and perform similar pastoral functions. "Wir sollen daher, wo solche Fälle vorkommen, ja nicht den Leuten das Gewissen beschweren."<sup>55</sup> Stöckhardt continued with a pertinent quotation from Tilemann Heshusius and then brought up the subject of the Reiseprediger:

Dieses [the quotation from Heshusius] können wir auch auf den Fall anwenden, wenn ein Reiseprediger zu solchen verlassenen Leuten kommt. Der Reiseprediger hat ja auch kein öffentliches Gemeindeamt. Aber jenes Häuflein Verlassener, wenn es auch nur zwei oder drei sind, kann nun ein Notbistum aufrichten und dem Reiseprediger, der ja gewiss Geschick dazu hat, den Auftrag geben,

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>55</sup>Georg Stöckhardt, "Thesen über die Rechte und Pflichten des geistlichen Priestertums," Missouri Synod, Iowa District, Proceedings, 1883, p. 59. Cf. Thesen für die Lehrverhandlungen, p. 65.



das Sakrament auszuteilen.<sup>56</sup>

StBckhardt's attitude toward lay administration of the sacraments may have been somewhat more liberal than the usual synodical consensus on this point.<sup>57</sup> But his treatment of the Reiseprediger problem was basically the same as that of the 1865 discussions.

In later years various modifications in synodical and district policies of a more or less practical nature may have created slight shifts in the theory and concept of the itinerant ministry. One possible example of this may have been the creation of the district and eventually of the synodical home mission boards.<sup>58</sup> The first district to have what it referred to as an executive committee, plus a reporting committee for each state where work was carried on, was the Northern District, beginning in 1873.<sup>59</sup> When the Northern District was divided this arrangement was transferred more or less intact to the organizational structure of the Northwestern District, which met for

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<sup>56</sup>StBckhardt, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>57</sup>Cf., e.g., E. W. Kähler, "Hat die Gemeinde das Recht, ordentlicher Weise einen wesentlichen Theil des Predigtamtes irgend einem Laien temporär zu übertragen?" Lehre und Wehre, XX (September 1874), 257-68; ibid., XX (November 1874), 331-39; ibid., XX (December 1874), 363-69. Kähler may not have been the actual author of this essay presented originally to the Columbus Pastoral Conference, but it was he who submitted it to Lehre und Wehre. The answer to the question raised by the title of the article would appear to be definitely in the negative. However, this is spoken in terms of the settled conditions of eastern parish life. The main argument against using a layman was that it would violate the principle of the permanency of the call; see especially pp. 366ff.

<sup>58</sup>In the German usually referred to as committees, commissions, or in the case of the Iowa District a Directorium.

<sup>59</sup>Missouri Synod, Northern District, Proceedings, 1873, pp. 60f.

the first time in 1875.<sup>60</sup> The Western District did not follow suit until 1879 with the establishment of a Missions-Commission.<sup>61</sup> In time most of the districts involved in opening up new areas, and still later almost all districts when they began to awaken to the challenge of general church extension, would have such committees or boards. The existence of a special board separate from the one for foreign missions at the synodical level dates from 1878.<sup>62</sup> The effect of this was that the men who were officially commissioned as traveling missionaries and who were supported by such boards, became more and more directly responsible to them. Eventually the assumption seems to have been made that these boards extended what could be considered a call to the men who were sent out. Perhaps typical of this growing belief is a statement from an 1895 essay delivered to a sister synod of Missouri, the English Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri. Essayist A. W. Meyer of Winfield, Kansas, was speaking of what he called the "relative necessity" of ordination, when he said:

Circumstances may make the ordination necessary in the presence of some other congregation; for instance, in the case of missionaries going to the heathen or scattered brethren in this country. A call by some board always precedes; which is at the earliest possible opportunity substituted for the call of some congregation organized on the field, this again followed by installation as soon as practicable.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Missouri Synod, Northwestern District, Proceedings, 1875, p. 62.

<sup>61</sup>Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1879, p. 122.

<sup>62</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1878, pp. 53f. This agency, however, functioned primarily in the distribution of funds, or to equalize expenses for home mission work between comparatively wealthy districts carrying on little work and the poorer ones which had the major burden of the work to bear.

<sup>63</sup>English Ev. Luth. Synod of Missouri, Proceedings, 1895, p. 22. Cf.

It seems highly unlikely that such a statement would have been made in 1865. Theses 19 and 20 of the theses on the Reiseprediger were not unambiguously against the practice of the church, or congregations collectively (die Kirche überhaupt) issuing a call, but they did take care to preserve the local congregation's final right to affirm the call or refuse to accept the candidate. Meanwhile, it must be remembered that the principles set forth in the 1865 discussion were themselves only meant to be provisional and temporary. By 1895, or perhaps even earlier already, the exception seems to have become the rule. No longer was so much care exercised to be sure that the rights of the congregation to whom the missionary was being sent would not be violated. The 1865 theses themselves represented a shift in thinking toward a more liberal policy in the appointment of itinerants. But it is a debatable matter whether the exceptions they permitted were ever intended to become normative. Love-in-the-face-of-necessity seemed then to dictate certain exceptions to the rule (die Ordnung). The exception, however, was hardly meant to become a new rule. Such is the tentative verdict based on the findings of the present study.

In the years following 1865 the Reiseprediger institution, which increased greatly both in the number of men employed and the territories they covered, gradually became transformed into the general missionary-at-large, who may or may not have been an itinerant. The missionary-at-large has continued as a part of the Missouri Synod's

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Pieper, op. cit., p. 452: "Individual persons and boards can indeed extend a valid call, but only when they are commissioned to do so by those whose the power originally (principaliter et immediate) is, or when these have, at least, given their silent consent."

home mission methodology to the present time. This raises a question which may be of some relevance for the present. It is reasonably clear that the earliest itinerants were looked upon as necessitated largely by temporary abnormal conditions in meeting religious needs on the frontier. But the Reiseprediger, though somewhat modified and transformed perhaps, has nevertheless been preserved. If it is true that the Reiseprediger is indeed the ancestor of today's missionary-at-large, it might be asked whether even this much permanency was ever intended for what was initially a more or less emergency measure. To raise this question is to raise again some of the earlier issues: local congregational initiative vs. the district and synodical agency; a policy concentrating on sound personal pastoral care as opposed to spreading thin and covering as much ground as possible; perhaps even the autonomy of the congregation as expressed in the transference idea of the call in contrast to a more clerically oriented concept of the church and its functions. These are issues which can be raised on the basis of the period investigated. The final answer, however, will have to await further investigation, study and deliberation.

## CHAPTER IX

### RESULTS OF THE EARLY ENTERPRISE

C. F. Liebe

Speaking before the assembled delegates of the 1901 convention of the Iowa District, Theodor Bünger would call 25 August 1865 the "Geburtstag unseres jetzigen Reisepredigerwesens."<sup>1</sup> In 1901 Bünger stood near the zenith of the whole Reiseprediger enterprise. The event of thirty-six years before to which he referred was the day C. Friedrich Liebe, newly appointed Reiseprediger of the Western District, set forth toward the west from St. Louis on his first itinerary.

Liebe's appointment was the direct result of the discussion of twenty-eight theses on the Reiseprediger at the 1865 convention of the Western District. The committee which reported on the matter stated that a suitable man, Mr. Friedrich Lange, was available for colportage, but temporarily no candidate was available to fill the position of Reiseprediger which the convention had resolved to establish. Hence the delegates resolved to entrust the St. Louis Pastoral Conference, working in conjunction with delegates from the congrega-

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<sup>1</sup>Theo. Bünger, "Die Anfänge der Mission," part III of "Etliche Züge aus der Geschichte der Missouri-Synode," Sechzehnter Synodal-Bericht des Iowa-Districts der deutschen evang.-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und anderen Staaten, versammelt zu Lowden, Cedar Co., Iowa, vom 21. bis 27. August 1901 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1901), p. 87. Hereafter all such official Proceedings of conventions are cited in the following abbreviated form: Missouri Synod, Iowa District, Proceedings, 1901, p. 87.

tions in St. Louis as well as in Carondelet and Collinsville, Illinois, with the responsibility for selecting a suitable candidate.<sup>2</sup> Their choice was Candidate Liebe, originally of Lössnitz, Saxony, a graduate of Friedrich Brunn's preparatory school at Steeden, Germany, and of the practical seminary in St. Louis. His work is worth examining in some detail.<sup>3</sup>

Friedrich Liebe passed his theological examinations in June of 1865. He spent some weeks thereafter in the home of an educated English family because he did not understand English too well and it was obvious that he would need a command of this language for his work. Liebe was advised to make use of the railroad for traveling and to limit his activities primarily to visiting communities on the right of way or nearby it.<sup>4</sup> Thus when Liebe left St. Louis on 25 August 1865 it was apparently by way of the Pacific Railroad. He would follow this and a branch of it which went toward the southwest. On Sunday, 27 August, he was in Gray Summit, about forty miles west of St. Louis. From here he struck off into the country-side a distance to visit Tavern Creek and the town of Bonhomme on the Missouri River. His next visits were at Franklin City and at Rolla, in the latter of which he

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<sup>2</sup>Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1865, p. 72.

<sup>3</sup>Liebe's work, especially his earliest journeys, is summarized in Aug. R. Suelflow, The Heart of Missouri: A History of the Western District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1854-1954 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), pp. 60, 66-68.

<sup>4</sup>This use of the railroad was not unique. For example, the Northwestern District later had men with itineraries on the Wisconsin Central Railroad. Missouri Synod, Northwestern District, Proceedings, 1879, pp. 16, 63; idem, Proceedings, 1880, pp. 15, 72; Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1881, p. 104.

found a few prospects. His next stop was Eureka, which he described as being on the railroad line at the western edge of St. Louis County. By October Liebe had become ill and had to return to St. Louis where he was hospitalized with a fever.<sup>5</sup>

Liebe's second trip began 26 January 1866. He first visited the same places again, trying to obtain more permanent results by referring the prospects he found to pastors in nearby towns. For Eureka he secured the services of pastors from St. Louis on a monthly basis, starting in March 1866. Gray Summit he commended to the care of Pastor Franz Kleist in Washington, Missouri, as a Filialgemeinde. Tavern Creek was to be served by Pastor Christian A. Lehmann from Des Peres, and the congregation in Bonhomme by H. F. C. Meyer [or Meier] from Central Township [Olivette], St. Louis County. Liebe himself accepted a call to the congregation, small as it was, in Rolla, since it was too far for another pastor to reach. He served these twenty-two families on a more or less regular basis until a permanent pastor could be obtained. Thus on the basis of the written call from the Rolla congregation, Liebe was finally ordained, nearly a year after he had left the seminary, on 11 March 1866 at Immanuel Church in St. Louis. The report in Der Lutheraner which had been submitted by the ordaining pastor, J. F. Büniger, remarked how this was in accordance with Synod's stated policy:

Demnach ist der Anfang gemacht worden von dem in unserm Synodalberichte ausgesprochenen Verfahren, dass unser Reiseprediger sich von kleinen Gemeinden berufen lasse und dieselben eine Zeitlang

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<sup>5</sup>J. F. Büniger, "Die Ordination des Reisepredigers," Der Lutheraner, XXII (1 April 1866), 118.

bediene, bis sie weiter versorgt werden können.

Subsequent to this Liebe set off on a third venture, this time in the direction of the Northern Missouri Railroad.<sup>6</sup>

Liebe brought his first year's report to the general convention of Synod which met in 1866. As a result the conviction grew for the most part among the delegates that even more of this sort of work should be done and more Reiseprediger sent out. However, the old fear of spreading the efforts too thin also exhibited itself again. Some dissented from the generally happy note on which Liebe's report was received. To them an increase in the number of such itinerants would only mean more vacant congregations in addition to the places already without pastors. From this the discussion gravitated mainly into matters of recruitment of pastors and the consolidation of groups of small congregations into single parishes. It was to be the goal of the Reiseprediger also to bring the small groups into associations which eventually could be served by a single pastor visiting each one every six to eight weeks.<sup>7</sup> Besides, if Reiseprediger functioned as they were supposed to--preaching as often as possible, not primarily gathering and organizing congregations--they would actually help alleviate the problem of not enough candidates. The final decision was that even more men should be sent out.<sup>8</sup> It might be noted that here, for perhaps the first time in official deliberations, clear evidence

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 118f. For Liebe's ordination, cf. Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1866, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1866, p. 73.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 74.



was given that the itineracy itself could be considered a solution to the problem of the scattered brethren, the lack of resources for reaching them, and the lack of sufficient manpower. Liebe himself appears still to have been primarily an explorer, a man sent out to locate the scattered Lutherans and if possible to gather them into congregations or alert nearby pastors to serve them. But the day of the officially recognized Reiseprediger with a definite and regularly served itineracy was not far off.<sup>9</sup>

It is not necessary to relate all the details of Liebe's work. He himself wrote an extensive report on his activities from the very beginning which was later printed in Der Lutheraner. Kansas had been one of his objectives according to the original directives issued by the 1865 Western District convention. Liebe is known to have been active as far west as Atchison and Lawrence, Kansas.<sup>10</sup> On 26 August 1866 he was in Macon City, Missouri, to assist with the ordination of Pastor Bruno Miessler.<sup>11</sup> By 7 October he was in Leavenworth, Kansas, for the dedication of St. Paul's Church, where Michael Meyer was pastor.<sup>12</sup> On the first Sunday in Lent, 10 March 1867, Liebe ordained and

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<sup>9</sup>It must be granted that on less official levels such work had been going on more or less all along. The early work in Iowa was a good example. See above, Ch. VII, pp. 117ff. It might even be contended that a type of itineracy existed wherever a pastor served a multiple parish (Mutter- und Filialgemeinden).

<sup>10</sup>C. F. Liebe, "Reise-Bericht," Der Lutheraner, XXIII (15 December 1866), 59f.; ibid., XXIII (1 January 1867), 70f.; ibid., XXIII (15 January 1867), 76f.; ibid., XXIII (1 May 1867), 132f.; ibid., XXIII (15 May 1867), 140-42. Cf. ibid., XXIV (15 October 1867), 31.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., XXIII (15 September 1866), 15, col. 2.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., XXIII (1 November 1866), 40, cols. 1f.

installed Candidate Lorenz Menge in a congregation in Atchison which he had visited and organized.<sup>13</sup>

Liebe submitted a report to the Western District convention which met beginning 15 May 1867. He stated that most of his work was among Germans of the Lutheran Confession. The assembly urged him, however, not to ignore others altogether. By this time there was another candidate from the seminary ready to enter upon this type of work. The convention also deliberated the question of whether the Synod would be able to support a resident pastor (ein ansässiger Pastor) who would do mission work in outlying areas as he had opportunity. The answer given was, Yes, but with certain limitations. Such support would be granted only where there was certainty of it bearing fruit, not just for exploratory trips made to satisfy a pastor's curiosity. Men who qualified should submit their expenses to Dr. Wm. Sihler.<sup>14</sup>

Later in 1867 Liebe was forced to resign because of ill health. He accepted a call to New Orleans, where he was installed on 1 December 1867.<sup>15</sup> But even for some time thereafter there was evidence that Liebe's work was still bearing fruit. On the Sunday after Christmas, 1867, Candidate Conrad Vetter was ordained and installed at Warrenton, Missouri, as a direct result of Liebe's pioneer work in the area.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., XXIII (1 May 1867), 135, cols. 2f. Cf. Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1867, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup>Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1867, pp. 52f. This is evidence that the synodical home mission fund begun in 1860 was still functioning. Presumably this was Liebe's source of income also.

<sup>15</sup>Der Lutheraner, XXIV (1 January 1868), 70. Cf. Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1868, p. 16.

<sup>16</sup>Der Lutheraner, XXIV (1 February 1868), 87, col. 1. Unfortu-

This brief survey will give some idea of the activities of the first Reiseprediger appointed as a direct result of the deliberations of the 1865 Western District convention.

#### Later Results

If Theodor Büniger's appraisal of the significance of the date, 25 August 1865, was correct, it is obvious that the investigation being reported in this paper covers only the very earliest beginnings of the Reiseprediger enterprise. Yet in many ways this period from 1847 to about 1865 was the most consequential and important. For in these years the major problems—practical, technical, theological—were taken into consideration, dealt with, and for the most part settled. In other words, by 1865 the pattern was largely established and the die was cast. A survey of official publications from 1865 to about 1880 brings little to light in the way of significant new developments.

The official Proceedings had a great deal to report about home mission work, about the many Reiseprediger who were sent out and about their activities. If there was any main concern exhibited by these Proceedings, however, it was the problem of finances and of supporting the missionaries. Distributing the funds available and pleading for more funds became the chief functions of the embryonic mission boards.<sup>17</sup>

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nately no abiding results obtained; cf. ibid., XXIV (15 August 1868), 190, col. 3.

<sup>17</sup>The formation of these is discussed briefly in the preceding chapter, above, pp. 172f.

Theodor Bünger noted that the income for home missions had risen from \$2218.27 in 1865 to \$66,527.52 in 1900. With this had also come a modification away from the official policy that the Synod could not support a congregation. As Bünger put it: "Es ist eben auch darin die Praxis etwas anders geworden; mit Recht werden auch kleine Parochien unterstützt, die das Predigtamt unter sich nicht allein erhalten können."<sup>18</sup> But this was only indirectly related to the development of the itinerant ministry.

Examples of the methods employed by the later Reiseprediger might be multiplied indefinitely. Der Lutheraner became the favorite instrument for periodic reports on the activities of various men.<sup>19</sup> A good sized book could probably be written, merely recording the name of each man who served, where he served, and a sketch of his most significant accomplishments. For the present purposes several examples from the official transactions will have to suffice, limited to but one of the districts and a general synodical convention.

A high point of ambition and activity was reached by the Western District in 1879 and 1880. The pressing needs of home mission work were discussed at the 1879 convention at some length. Help was needed in Kansas, Nebraska, California, Colorado, Texas, Alabama, Louisiana,

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<sup>18</sup>Theo. Bünger, op. cit., p. 88. The trend was towards the formation of the synodical church extension fund in 1902.

<sup>19</sup>Just one example would be reports about the Rev. Heinrich Vetter from the St. Cloud, Minnesota, area, in F. Lochner, "Aus dem Jahresbericht unseres Reisepredigers in Minnesota," Der Lutheraner, XXXI (15 September 1875), 138; cf. Ch. H. Løber, "Bericht über das Werk der inneren Mission im nordwestlichen Synodal-District," ibid., XXXII (1 November 1876), 163.

Mississippi, Arkansas, and among the English Lutherans in southern Missouri. Greater coordination and planning was needed for carrying out home missions. Consequently, ten resolutions were passed:

1. Henceforth regular reports should appear in Der Lutheraner, with Pastor O. Hanser in charge.
2. Two Reiseprediger--one immediately--should be sent to Kansas.
3. In Nebraska, where one was already at work, the Rev. C. Meyer should also receive support; if possible another regular Reiseprediger should be sent to Nebraska within the year.
4. For California, Bühler was to receive an assistant who was to be supported from the home mission fund.
5. Colorado was to receive a man supported from the fund.
6. Another man was to be sent to the southern states (Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas) as soon as possible.
7. In north Texas, Pastor Birkmann was to be supported.
8. A missionary should be sent to the English Lutheran Conference of (Southeast) Missouri, if it requested one, and he should be supported in part by the Missouri Synod.
9. The commission for missions should see to the support of the Reiseprediger and missionaries and come to the next convention with an orderly proposal for carrying out the work.
10. Some pastoral conferences which had been spending the funds collected locally were directed to turn over all moneys in the future to the district treasurer.<sup>20</sup>

Not all of these resolutions, however, <sup>could</sup> could be implemented. The following year saw a similar, if somewhat less ambitious, report adopted by the district. Congregations were urged to do more in the way of support, particularly through mission festivals. Five resolutions were passed this time:

1. Pastor M. Meyer was to be called as missionary for Denver,

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<sup>20</sup>Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1879, pp. 120-22.

## Colorado.

2. Two missionaries were to be sent during the next year to California.
3. One should be sent to Oregon.
4. The salary of men serving mission fields without an organized congregation should be fixed. This would apply to Pastors Baumhöfener, Meyer, and Tönjes. The commission should determine the amount.
5. A plea was heard from a congregation in Denver for support because they had purchased a building and could not pay for it. Pastor Hanser was to investigate. If necessary the congregation could borrow as much as \$1500 from the district treasury.

This convention also decided to establish a separate mission committee and fund for the English Lutheran Conference and this committee was to look for a suitable missionary for the Conference.<sup>21</sup> This may not have been completely typical of the work being carried out in all the districts, but it does at least give a sample of one.

The other example selected for illustrative purposes here is the home mission report of the 1884 synodical convention. President H. C. Schwan already in his presidential address remarked on the further remarkable growth in the area of home missions: "Etwa 80 Reiseprediger arbeiten daran." He hoped that progress would be made in creating order so that there would be less duplication, and that the same man henceforth would continue to visit the same places. Financial conditions, meanwhile, had come to such a pass that Synod was now faced with the choice of whether to reduce the number of men and provide those left with adequate support, or to go on placing men at the risk of not being able to pay their salaries.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Missouri Synod, Western District, Proceedings, 1880, pp. 68f.

<sup>22</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1884, pp. 23f.

Pastor Jacob Bühler of San Francisco was present at this convention as a delegate of his pastoral conference and reported on the situation in California and Oregon. Pastor F. Sievers, Jr., reported for the Minnesota and Dakota field. Twenty-three missionary pastors (Missionsprediger) were serving 178 preaching stations in this area and just at that time opportunities in Montana were being considered, provided the means could be found to carry on the work there. A similar complaint of lack of means was raised by Pastor Timotheus Stiemke, the president of the Southern District, even though a number of men had been found for work in his District. He also mentioned a further hindrance to the work there, namely the unfounded fear people had in the north that there was a particular unhealthiness about the southern climate.<sup>23</sup>

Their interest whetted by these reports, the delegates asked Pastor Friedrich J. Sievers of Minneapolis, a son of the missionary pioneer, Ferdinand Sievers, to prepare a statistical listing of missionary pastors (Missionsprediger) and the number of stations they were serving for the entire Synod. In preparing his report, Pastor Sievers apparently had to create a definition of what constituted such a missionary. He decided rather arbitrarily to include as Missions- oder Reiseprediger all pastors in Synod who were serving four or more places. Thus his statistics included some men who were actually resident ministers but who happened to be serving this many branch congregations. The date he chose for his survey was 1 July 1884, not taking into consideration the candidates which had graduated that summer. Because of

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., pp. 66f.

the rapid turnover of missionaries he also warned that his figures could only be approximate. Table 1 reproduces his findings. Siever's

TABLE 1

MISSOURI SYNOD MISSIONS- ODER REISEPREDIGER IN 1884

<u>District</u>	<u>Missionaries</u>	<u>Places Served</u>
Eastern	1	4
Canada	1	6
Central	2	9
Southern	2	20
Illinois	5	20
Michigan	6	35
Nebraska	8	44
Western	8	55
Iowa	12	62
Wisconsin	16	98
Minnesota-Dakota	<u>23</u>	<u>178</u>
Totals	84	531

figures thus revealed that according to his definition a total of eighty-four Missions- oder Reiseprediger were serving a total of 531 preaching stations and congregations.<sup>24</sup> This may give some indication of the proportions and magnitude the itinerant mission enterprise had assumed by this time. Not every one, however, of the eighty-four men Sievers counted was strictly speaking a Reiseprediger. Nor were nearly this many men officially appointed and supported as such by the Synod or districts.

As time went on quite a number of men apparently entered the ministry who, for all practical purposes, functioned as Reiseprediger though

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 67. In the report Friedrich J. Sievers was referred to as "Junior," but this was merely to distinguish him from his father, Ferdinand. Another son bore the first name Ferdinand. Friedrich J. Sievers later served as president of the Minnesota-Dakota District.



they were not really called as such or supported officially. One such individual, for example, noticed in the course of this investigation was Candidate, and one day president of Synod, Friedrich Pfothenhauer. Since he had a regular call from a small congregation in Lac-qui-parle County, Minnesota, the notice of his ordination and installation there on 7 November 1880 did not refer to him as a Reiseprediger. It only noted that his congregation would include the above mentioned county in Minnesota as well as Grant County, Dakota Territory. Pastor Heinrich Vetter, a pioneer Reiseprediger in this region, ordained him.<sup>25</sup> However, young Pfothenhauer deserved the designation of Reiseprediger and it was one which has been applied to him.<sup>26</sup> Presumably, Pfothenhauer would have been one of the men included in Friedrich Sievers' figures.

The definition of an itinerant became even less clear as time passed. Gradually the other districts including those serving more settled areas began to awaken to the challenges of home mission work.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 1881, p. 105. Cf. Esther Abbetmeyer-Selke, "Herculean Laborers for the Extension of Lutheranism in Minnesota," Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, IV (October 1931), 82ff.

<sup>26</sup>A report by G. Kuchle, "Innere Mission in Minnesota und Dakota," on Pfothenhauer's first year's activities appeared in Der Lutheraner, XXXVIII (1 January 1882), 2f. This report as well as other particulars about Pfothenhauer's experiences may be found in the biography by E. A. Mayer, "Dr. Friedrich Pfothenhauer," trans. by F. A. Hertwig, Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, XIII (April 1940), 6-10.

<sup>27</sup>Interest in home mission work dates from the very earliest period in the Eastern District. Inspired by the example of the Western District which sent out Liebe in 1865, the Eastern District convention later the same summer agreed that their own District could use "two or three dozen" such Reiseprediger if they were available. A committee was appointed to study and report on this problem and also a committee to find a man for colportage. Missouri Synod, Eastern District, Proceedings, 1865, pp. 60, 64. See above, Ch. VIII, pp. 167f. Interest in the Central District appears to have been confined for the most part to

This seems to have led to the development of the system of missionaries-at-large which has continued more or less to the present day. But even for some time after the closing of the American frontier and the church's transition to a more general home mission work, the itinerant continued to be a potent force in the church's life. It was in 1890, for example, that the Missouri Synod's official Amerikanischer Kalender für deutsche Lutheraner began printing a separate listing just of Reiseprediger and the places they served.<sup>28</sup> This practice continued until 1905. In 1893 a synodical convention proposal even attempted to place a periodical devoted particularly to home mission work at the disposal of the home mission commission. The Chicago Stadtmissionar in a suitable number of copies was to be sent gratuitously to all Reiseprediger for distribution. The last page of the magazine would be devoted to reports about missions, changes of address among the Reiseprediger, and the like. The synodical commission would edit it and expenses would be paid out of the general home mission treasury.<sup>29</sup>

This hardly gives the highlights even, much less exhausts, the developments of the itinerant ministries subsequent to 1865. The purpose of the above has been to give the reader some idea of the net

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supporting the frontier districts until around 1877 when it began looking to its own needs. Cf. Missouri Synod, Central District, Proceedings, 1877, p. 65.

<sup>28</sup>Amerikanischer Kalender für deutsche Lutheraner, 1890, pp. 46-48, and 1905, pp. 67-72, for example.

<sup>29</sup>Missouri Synod, Proceedings, 1893, p. 82. The full title of the paper, first published in 1892 by the Northern Illinois Pastoral Conference, was Evangelisch-Lutherischer Stadtmissionar. The periodical itself, however, gives no indication that this plan was ever carried out.

effects and results of the earliest efforts. Perhaps these snapshots of the mature enterprise have helped him appreciate better the picture of it in its relative infancy--the main objective of this study.

## CHAPTER X

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### Summary

The main objective of this investigation has been to trace the development of the earliest itinerant ministries in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod from 1847 to 1865. Initial problems which gave rise to the need for an itinerant ministry were: (1) The scattered distribution of German Lutherans on the American frontier; and (2) The lack of trained clergy. It was seen that these two problems really merge into one inter-related problem. More pastors per member were required due to the random scattering of the people on the frontier than in the more settled areas. Inefficient use of the available manpower further complicated the problem. The colony plan and the immigrant mission in the port cities attempted to control the scattering process. A partial answer to the problem of ministering to the scattered Lutherans was the multiple parish. This made for a type of mission expansion which accorded well with the Missouri Synod concept of congregational autonomy. It also made for more efficient use of the available manpower. Another possible solution might have been increased use of the laity in certain functions normally reserved for the clergy, but this was only a temporary solution at best. One of the major solutions for the problem of meeting the needs of the scattered brethren was the one under investigation in this study--the itinerant ministry.

Possible precedents for the Missouri Synod itinerant ministries

had to be investigated. Among those considered were: (1) Itinerant ministries among non-Lutherans, particularly the Methodists; (2) Those of other, older Lutheran bodies in America; and (3) The work of the German mission societies. The influence of itinerant ministries such as those of the Methodists, for example, was largely, if anything, negative. The work of other Lutherans may have set certain patterns which were followed by the Missouri Synod later. But the Missouri Synod was firm in its rejection of one aspect common to the other Lutherans--the licentiate. Of the German mission societies the work of Wilhelm Loehe, for instance, may have offered a precedent. Loehe had a colporteur and a type of Reiseprediger among the young men he sent to the United States.

Several different types of itinerant ministries were employed in the Missouri Synod itself. The Besucher was an office created by the original Constitution of Synod and maintained until 1849. The first Besucher, Carl Fricke, was not ordained or attached to a congregation when he was sent out. Other Besucher, such as Freidrich Lochner in 1848, were regular clergymen who took leaves of absence from their congregations. The Besucher was largely an explorer. His main duty was to locate the needs, and if possible, organize congregations, not try to meet the needs himself. At the 1850 convention of Synod the idea was abandoned in favor of the lay colporteur. Doctrinal considerations, such as were expressed at the Synod's 1848 convention, may have helped lead to the abandonment of the Besucher idea. Equally as much a deterrent to the success of the venture, however, was the lack of men to fill the position.

The lay colporteur was next considered. The first synodical appointee to fill this position was Gustav Pfau in 1852. Thereafter the office was used from time to time in various areas until at least 1870. The lay colporteur had an advantage in the Missouri Synod over an itinerant clergyman in that the former had no need of a congregational call. The colporteur served also as an explorer, locating new areas where a congregation could be organized and a regular pastor called.

A revival of interest in a pastoral itinerant ministry began about 1856. A significant discussion was carried on at the Western District convention that year. It was also the year of Ferdinand Sievers' exploratory trip through Minnesota at the request of the Northern District. The following year at the general synodical convention came August Selle's plea for the establishment of what had been referred to as the Evangelistenamt. As Selle conceived the office, the Evangelist would be attached to no particular congregation but would make regular circuits in a given area so as to serve as many people as possible, even if only occasionally. Selle's proposal was not acted upon. However, at the next general convention in 1860 it was agreed that Synod could help support assistant pastors who were attached to regular congregations and who from there did the work of itinerants. A synodical fund was established for this purpose under the direction of Dr. Wilhelm Sihler in Fort Wayne.

Coinciding with these official developments were those on a more practical level during the same period, from about 1860 to 1865. One of the most significant was the penetration of Iowa through August Selle's efforts from Rock Island, Illinois. By late 1859 a new frontier

outpost had been established in Iowa City under Friedrich Dörscher. With the help of assistants Dörscher served a wide field around Iowa City. His was no longer an exploratory itineracy but one aimed at X actually ministering through an itineracy. Meanwhile the work of the Western District was also expanding into Kansas and even as far as California. In the Northern District practical results soon followed Sievers' 1856 exploration in Minnesota and by 1860 itinerant-like ministries were entering the more remote areas of Wisconsin and the northern Michigan peninsula. Throughout this period could be observed the movement toward an official, synodically appointed and maintained itinerant ministry.

One major hurdle remained and this was the final settlement of the doctrinal issue connected with the Reiseprediger. The problem had been raised early, perhaps first in 1848. It had accounted in part for the virtual eclipse of the synodical itinerant enterprise throughout most of the 1850's. The basis of the problem was the doctrinal conviction that anyone who exercised a function of the office of the public ministry had to have a call from the congregation he was to serve. The congregation was original possessor of the rights and authorities administered by its public servants. For the sake of order the congregation delegated, or transferred, these powers to certain persons by means of its call. Two published documents attested the seriousness of the implications the itinerant ministry created for the synodical doctrine of the public ministry. One was the discussion which was a part of the deliberations of the 1863 general synodical convention. Two opposing points of view were expressed but not com-

pletely reconciled. Unanimity, however, was reached two years later on the basis of twenty-eight theses presented and discussed at the 1865 convention of the Western District. Here it was agreed that Synod did not want to violate the proper procedure and the divinely ordained method of the congregational call. But under the distressing circumstances, an exception could be made for the sake of love. Love-in-the-face-of-necessity knew no law or over-riding ordinance. A Reiseprediger had such a call. In due time he could perhaps see about a call from a specific congregation. Meanwhile, he could go on searching for Christ's lost sheep. His was to be a preliminary work—one leading to the organization of self-sustaining congregations with resident pastors. If the Reiseprediger did take a call to a specific group, this would lend a certain legitimacy to the functions he performed which was desirable. But the call could hardly be more than a technicality, for he was to keep on serving as large an area as possible. The twenty-eight theses stressed the temporary and provisional nature of such arrangements. Other Missouri Synod districts meeting that same year approved the Western District's report.

The practical result of the twenty-eight theses was the appointment of C. F. Liebe who set forth from St. Louis for his first missionary trip on 25 August 1865. Subsequent developments in the itinerant ministry, of which only a few highlights could be presented in this essay, demonstrated that no really significant new developments or shifts in thinking about the itinerant ministry took place after 1865. The earliest itinerant ministries had set the pattern to a large extent even for the greatly expanded Reiseprediger enterprise of the



later period.

#### Areas for Further Study

Within the period of immediate concern, 1847-1865, this present study has attempted to be as exhaustive as possible with regard to the published sources. Further study might add valuable data, particularly greater detail about the actual experiences and accomplishments of men who served as itinerants, but would not be likely to add substantially to the present understanding of the basic developments. Further study might uncover useful background information. An investigation of unpublished and archival materials might contribute to a better understanding. A further area for study within this period would be the work of other Lutheran synods and non-Lutheran denominations concurrent with that carried on by Missouri.

Aside from the immediate period of concern several possibilities can be suggested. One is a more extensive study of Lutheranism on the American frontier in its broader perspectives. This would contribute to a better understanding of the setting into which the problem of the itinerant ministry must be placed. Included in this study might also be an examination of the uneven and random distribution of Lutheran settlement in terms of the supply of clergymen.

Further study of the Missouri Synod doctrine of the public ministry is another area which suggests itself for more intensive research. The period from the beginnings of Synod and extending to about 1880 is of most crucial importance for the development of thinking on this doctrine. The present study treats but one aspect of the general

problem of the doctrine of the ministry during this period.

In terms of the subject of the itinerant ministry itself perhaps the most pressing need for further study would be the development in years following 1865. The Reiseprediger institution first reached its zenith toward the end of the nineteenth century. If nothing else, a statistical analysis of the extent the itinerant was used and his accomplishments during this period would be helpful. Basic information is readily accessible in the synodical and district convention Proceedings and, following 1884, in the Statistisches Jahrbuch der deutschen evang.-lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten. Such a study would be able to trace the development toward the missionary-at-large and home mission work as it is carried on at present. The present study has had to omit the later developments for the most part.

These are but a few of the major areas for further research which have come to light in the present study. Others might present themselves in a more exhaustive study.

#### Conclusions

Itinerant ministries were one of the earliest solutions proposed within the Missouri Synod for the problem of meeting the needs of the scattered, unchurched brethren on the American frontier. The earliest type of itinerant office established officially by Synod, the Besucher, was primarily an explorer of the needs. He was not to function in such a manner as himself to be the one to meet these needs. His was not primarily a pastoral ministry.

Even the earliest itinerants who were principally explorers posed

a difficulty for the Missouri Synod's concept of the ministry. This problem can perhaps be explained best in terms of a tension between stability and adaptability, or flexibility. The traditional doctrine, church polity, and practice of the Missouri Synod as inherited from its German background demanded an emphasis on the autonomy of the congregation, its right to call pastors, and a resident ministry. Working on the side of greater flexibility, or mobility, were the stresses and pressures of altered circumstances in a new land where congregations had first to be gathered and founded.

During most of the 1850's the only form of itinerant was the lay colporteur. By about 1856 the pressures of frontier needs were beginning to reassert the practical necessity of reviving the pastoral itinerant ministry. Local and private initiative helped sustain ventures which paved the way for official action by Synod and districts. By about 1860 a number of areas were being served by men who for all practical purposes were functioning as itinerants. By this time, too, such itinerants were often no mere explorers, but actual answers per se to the problem of how to serve widely scattered brethren. Such itinerancies operated on more or less regular, cyclical schedules. It was an answer to the problem which stressed quantity, but not quality. The practical objection to such itinerant ministries remained that they did not permit sufficient indoctrination and a firm system of church discipline and order.

The greatest objection, however, to the official appointment of itinerant clergymen continued to be the doctrinal issue. The evidence is virtually incontestable that the doctrinal problem was a deterrent

to the further development of the itinerant idea up to about 1865. By 1865, in several significant convention discussions, a way had been found to resolve or at least temporarily circumvent the doctrinal issue. A Reiseprediger could be sent, as an exception to the general rule of the congregational call, by virtue of the call of love-in-the-face-of-necessity. This resolution paved the way for a vastly expanded itinerant enterprise over the next few decades.

It must be noted that there was not one but a number of different forms of itinerant ministries. The two basic types were the explorer and the actual pastoral type. The former did preliminary work leading to the organization of regular congregations. Such a function could also be performed by laymen, as in the case of the colporteur. The latter basic type, the more directly pastoral, was himself, per se, a partial if somewhat defective answer to the problem of the scattered spiritually destitute of the frontier diaspora.

Of this latter type it is possible to distinguish in turn two different forms. One was largely the product of local and private initiative and most often had the advantage of being associated with some nuclear group which would be considered a congregation. It was not this type which created the real doctrinal and theological problem. Rather, it was the type of pastoral, circuit-making Reiseprediger who was simply sent out by Synod or a district and had first to form a congregation or congregations which presented the greatest difficulty.

The final resolution of this problem was that such pastoral services could be considered valid only on a temporary and emergency basis. The Reiseprediger was urged, as soon as possible, to arrange for at

least a nominal call from one of the groups he served, provided this did not lessen his effectiveness as a missionary. Later, the thinking apparently developed that such an itinerant had a temporary call from the Synod or its mission board, acting collectively in behalf of all congregations.

In terms of results it should be noted that the earliest itinerant ministries gradually developed into the more general home mission program of the Missouri Synod. In many respects the missionary-at-large of more recent times is a direct descendant of the earlier Reiseprediger. Assuming that this is true, and that many features of the Reiseprediger institution were intended to be merely temporary exceptions to the rule, not permanent rules themselves, it may not be entirely out of place to suggest that certain features which have survived to the present day in the home missionary or missionary-at-large need to be rethought. To have home missionaries associate first with some nearby congregation as an assistant pastor would appear to be more in line with original synodical policy and practice, for example, than for a district mission board simply to send a man into a new area to assemble a congregation. This would also serve to restore the function of home mission work as more of a direct function of the local congregation and less the function of impersonal and sometimes disinterested official boards. But these are issues which are merely suggested and raised by the present study. Any conclusions in this regard must be purely tentative in lieu of a more detailed comparison of former policies with more recent ones.

The most important question arising out of the present study

itself is that which has to do with the development, or evolution, of synodical thinking and policy about the itinerant ministry during the period under consideration. Did the need for greater flexibility and mobility in time honored patterns of the ministry create modifications out of keeping with traditional theological convictions and practices? In other words, were concessions made for the sake of practical necessity? Did the Missouri Synod itinerant ministry represent an accommodation of doctrine to practice? In one sense of the word, accommodation may be a valid and useful interpretation. The practical problem of meeting new mission needs was not ignored for the sake merely of preserving tradition. The Missouri Synod response to this need did demonstrate a high degree of adaptability and flexibility. But this does not mean that the theological concerns having to do with the church and ministry were simply ignored, either. In the end, after a period of some hesitation and uncertainty, a way was found to justify the employment of synodically appointed itinerants, and in a manner satisfactory, it seems, to all concerned. This did not represent a concession either, on the one hand, to tradition simply for the sake of tradition or, on the other, to unlimited flexibility. Perhaps the best way of putting it is as a balance between flexibility and stability—that is, flexibility amid stability.

APPENDIX A

INSTRUCTIONS FOR A BESUCHER AUTHORIZED BY SYNOD  
FROM THE 1847 PROCEEDINGS<sup>1</sup>

1. He is mainly to seek out the German settlements and there to explore for Germans; also in his travels through English settlements he is to inquire about isolated German families and visit them.
2. It is incumbent upon him to seek out Lutheran households and to make inquiry about them:
  - a. Whether the families have immigrated from Germany or have come from the eastern part of America into the West and how long they have already been here;
  - b. Whether the father and the mother of the house are both really Lutheran;
  - c. How many children and other members of the household there are; whether all are baptized and how many perhaps have been confirmed;
  - d. Whether they have at times been or still are being visited by traveling sectarian preachers and in what manner, in case they were visited, the latter dealt with them;
  - e. Whether English or German enthusiasts and factious spirits have regular preaching stations in their neighborhoods and whether the Lutheran settlers visit these;
  - f. Whether, and if so how many, Catholics, Reformed, United, etc., live in the settlement and whether they are somehow served by preachers of their persuasion.
  - g. Whether the Lutheran settlers have in their houses Bibles, Luther's Small Catechism, good hymn books and perhaps old orthodox books of prayer, sermons, and books for edification,

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<sup>1</sup>Erster Synodalbericht der Deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Missouri, Ohio und andern Staaten vom Jahre 1847 (St. Louis: Arthur Olshausen, 1847), pp. 13f. Trans. by present writer. For original text see Ch. IV, pp. 58-60.

and whether they make regular use of them.

If the Besucher indeed finds good books but no proper use of them, he is to admonish the people in a friendly way not to let these treasures lie unused and to impart to them good advice for setting up wholesome family worship; but if he finds books containing disbelief or false doctrine in the house, and particularly if they are in use, then he must convince the people that such books are contrary to Holy Scriptures and can destroy the soul, and if it is God's will, thereupon the people avoid their use.

3. Naturally this inquiry should not be put in the form of an examination, but in a conversational manner, avoiding all appearance of compulsion.

4. The Besucher as much as possible is to get to know precisely the prevailing conditions both of the various families and of the individual members thereof with regard to spiritual matters; and with this it is incumbent upon him, according to the ability which God provides, to admonish with and by the Word of God, as the need arises.

5. It is his duty to inspire the people with zeal and with love to establish the holy ministry in their midst. Thus if he comes upon several larger or smaller neighboring settlements which are willing to call a Lutheran pastor for themselves, he is to give them directions about what steps they must take for the attainment of this purpose. If however the number of Lutheran families visited in a large circuit is too small to call a permanent pastor at once, he is then to admonish the people therefore to associate themselves with the nearest Lutheran congregation which has a faithful pastor, so that now and then they may



be visited by him and served with Word and Sacrament--however, in the meantime, to be sure that on Sundays they edify themselves from a good sermon book, rather than visit the services of the enthusiasts.

6. He is to advise and direct fathers of households, in cases of great distances from regularly served Lutheran congregations, that when death threatens or in other urgent cases, they should sooner baptize their children themselves than to have them baptized by traveling sectarian preachers. Moreover upon the special request of his fellow believers he is not only to preach to them, but also to baptize their children.

7. It is also incumbent upon the visiting pastor from time to time in the evening hours to take in hand the children who are of school age in the various homes here and there. He should investigate whether they can more or less read, know something from the Catechism, also whether they can perhaps recite this or that good hymn verse and prayer, and particularly the Ten Commandments, the Christian Creed and the Lord's Prayer. He should also instruct them, as much as time and opportunity permits, in the chief articles of the Christian faith.

8. Especially where he finds neglected children, he is to exhort the parents seriously and in a friendly way and to give them advice on the instruction of their children. Especially in the late fall and winter months he is to take an interest in them and do all in his power that they learn to read and gradually to acquire a knowledge of the chief articles of the sacred story of our Lord Jesus Christ as well as of the Small Lutheran Catechism.

9. For this purpose and also for the education of the adults he

is to carry a number of suitable short accounts as well as pictures out of the sacred history.

10. In keeping his diary he is to see to it that his notation as to number, place, locality, external and internal conditions of the fellow believers he is visiting is precise and correct and that he does not neglect to write down unusual particular experiences which have a bearing on the purpose of his visit.

11. In his report to the president every two months he is very specifically to send in the statistical results of his visitation, but of his ordinary experiences to report only the most important matters.

12. He is to watch seriously that he never usurps an office which does not belong to him, even where it is filled by a heretic or heterodox person.

13. He is to render an account to Synod about his traveling expenses.

APPENDIX B

DISCUSSION ON THE REISEPREDIGER

FROM THE 1863 PROCEEDINGS<sup>1</sup>

The previous explanation of Annotation 5 [of Section 21] called forth a long and lively debate regarding our Reiseprediger. It was stated: Reiseprediger go out to their ministerial office without a call, and therefore without ordination; their only call is the call of love. Now when they come and preach to the forsaken people, their consciences often trouble them greatly when they are asked to baptize children; they have even greater trials when now and then in cases of necessity they ought to administer Holy Communion. Up to now administering Baptism has been permitted them, but not the administration of Holy Communion, the latter not because they have no right to but because in regard to Lord's Supper no such necessity can be present as in regard to Baptism. At this point there arose a contest between two different opinions which could not be completely reconciled. The one maintained: Under certain circumstances a Reiseprediger can perform all acts of the office--that is, on the one hand if he usurps no office which does not belong to him, and on the other if he does not assume an improper character. If I come as a Reiseprediger to a place where the people request me to perform the acts of the office, they

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<sup>1</sup>Excerpt from "Verhandlungen über § 21 des Referats von Herrn Prof. Walther über 'die rechte Gestalt einer vom Staate unabhängigen Ev.-Luth. Ortsgemeinde,'" Elfter Synodal-Bericht der allgemeinen Deutschen Evang.-Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten vom Jahre 1863 (St. Louis: Synodaldruckerei von Aug. Wiebusch u. Sohn, 1864), pp. 56-58. Trans. by present writer. See above, Ch. VIII, pp. 151-158.

thus give me a call. Since I am dealing with people who are in great need, if I help them, I am acting as someone who pulls a drowning person out of the water.

In contrast the other side replied: Still one must not forget that the office of the ministry is a divine office and not a human one. Since it is a divine ordinance I may at no time ever trespass against it, except in the greatest of necessity when the salvation of poor sinners is at stake. To be sure, the Lord Jesus created this ordinance not for the destruction of souls but for their salvation; therefore the Reiseprediger may baptize in cases of necessity, and even administer Holy Communion, but this can only be justified by reason of necessity. A Reiseprediger is without office; if he makes it a rule to baptize where people merely ask for it and to celebrate Communion where they only request it, he thus commits a serious offense against God's ordinance. That they say: "He is called," that is nothing; the people do not indeed call him, but merely charge him with a single act of the office. Luther says: "It does not follow that just any citizen may establish a parsonage in his house, for such is permitted to no one; moreover, there is a great difference between a common and public assembly and a household; for what a citizen does in his house means it is done privately." The charge of individual fathers of households to carry out this or that act of the office, therefore, is no calling into the office of the ministry. If he [the Reiseprediger] is requested to baptize, he should say: "Look, I am no minister and have therefore no call to baptize; now I know quite well that in cases of necessity any Christian may baptize, but it is better that you do it yourself, lest

I become a vagabond." If the reply is: "Yes, but I cannot obtain a pastor, he is too far distant, and I myself do not care to perform the Baptism—I cannot read well, I get too nervous, and I would end up doing it wrong," there is then a case of necessity and the Reiseprediger may baptize.

At this point it was asked: If I may not baptize, how is it that I may preach publicly without a call? Answer: There is a great difference between baptizing and preaching. If the people could preach as well themselves <sup>as</sup> at they are able to baptize on their own, it would surely be an offense against God if I, as a person not called, would preach publicly to them; for then I would be usurping an office which does not belong to me and the people would correctly say: "Go on your way, we do not need you for preaching, we can do that ourselves!" That, however, they <sup>cannot</sup> do and therefore stand in great danger of going astray. Consequently, we call upon a brother, compelled by love, to seek out these poor people and to bring them the Gospel. It is another matter with Baptism, which they themselves in cases of necessity can and should administer. If indeed in respect to Baptism the people say: "We are too poorly trained for it," then one may baptize, only let necessity be necessity and let no Reiseprediger pose as a pastor, lest he trespass against God's ordinance.

In contrast it was further brought to mind: We send out Reiseprediger in order to save poor, lost and forsaken people; they come to a settlement; there people live who should hear God's Word; there are children who should be baptized. If one tells them: "I am not a pastor, do it yourself," the people's eyes will pop open and come out of

their sockets; for they are ignorant and lack understanding. Answer: I should not confirm ignorance, but rather instruct ignorant people; I would be committing a serious offense if I did not say to them: "Dear people, you are indeed baptized, and do you not know what a great treasure has been obtained for you thereby? In order to show you this, that is why I have come." Now if they are without God, their eyes will indeed no doubt widen in surprise, but they will also accept instruction so much the more eagerly. If I am asked under the above mentioned circumstances to baptize, I should say: "Very well, I will do it, just as you would yourself, or as your neighbor also could do it."

New counter argument: It remains unclear why apart from regular congregational conditions I cannot do what a common citizen or farmer even can do in cases of necessity, if he has the gift for it. Answer: Baptism and Lord's Supper presuppose congregations where the preached Word has already fulfilled its purpose. An historical example is important. With great zeal our church has testified against the Calvinists who in the last half of the sixteenth century sent about Reiseprediger throughout France in order to convert the people to their church; they did not regard these Reiseprediger as true pastors but decisively maintained that they had no call, were not servants of God, but merely emissaries [i.e., proselytizers?]; they also stole France from the Lutheran Church.

Objection: That was another matter altogether; the whole of France was ecclesiastically regulated and assigned pastors; therefore they were usurping offices which did not belong to them. What the Augsburg Confession says, that no one should teach in the church without a regular

call, refers to countries where the church and congregational conditions have been regulated; but here in America there are conditions which are entirely unique, such as have probably never before existed in our church; here no one usurps offices which do not belong to him if he seeks out and serves scattered fellow believers. It is to be feared that we act amiss if we judge these conditions according to the earlier, already regulated conditions and apply what the Confession states to them. Answer: What was said is not to the point. That our Reiseprediger should preach, to this we are all agreed; only they should not baptize, nor administer Communion except in the most urgent necessity. When as a Reiseprediger I have preached to the people, then I can wash my hands without guilt; for I have done what I was able to do and permitted to do to save them. When it comes to Baptism it is quite the same whether I baptize a child here in Fort Wayne or in Oregon; it may always be only in cases of necessity, either when there is danger of death or when other necessities compel. It is therefore granted: When a Reiseprediger arrives as a stranger at a place, he may baptize if those who are immediately responsible—and of course, fathers are the most responsible—do not have the confidence in themselves for it; in fact, he may even in certain urgent cases of necessity celebrate the Lord's Supper. But he should take care and examine closely whether such cases of necessity really exist, or else his actions could cause him great terrors of conscience to his dying day.

APPENDIX C

TWENTY-EIGHT THESES CONCERNING THE CALL AND POSITION  
OF A REISEPREDIGER, WESTERN DISTRICT, 1865<sup>1</sup>

1. Every New Testament Christian is a true spiritual priest, no longer under tutelage, of which priesthood the sons of Levi and Aaron in the Old Testament were merely the patterns and shadows.

2. Every Christian as a spiritual priest has: (1) the office of the Word, (2) that of baptizing, (3) that of blessing or of consecrating the sacred bread and wine, (4) that of binding and loosing from sins, (5) that of sacrificing, (6) that of praying for others, (7) that of judging and discerning doctrine.

3. The public office of the ministry is the authority transferred through believing Christians to exercise the rights of the spiritual priesthood in the public office in the place of Christ and on behalf of the congregation.

4. The public office of the ministry--and so that no one may administer it unless he is regularly called thereto--is indeed a regulation<sup>2</sup> and not a means of grace, nevertheless not a human, but a divine

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<sup>1</sup>"Achtundzwanzig Thesen über den Beruf und die Stellung eines Reisepredigers," Verhandlungen der Elften Jahresversammlung des Westlichen Districts der deutschen ev.-luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten im Jahre 1865 (St. Louis: Druck von Aug. Wiebusch u. Sohn, 1865), pp. 57-72. Trans. by present writer. For original text see above, Ch. VIII, pp. 159-62.

<sup>2</sup>German: Ordnung. This word, its verbal form ordnen, and the adjective and adverb ordentlich present a problem in translation, especially since subtle distinctions surround their use. Ordnung might be translated "ordinance," but sometimes in the theses it has the more



regulation.

5. Everything which serves the external, indifferent regulation in the church is left by God to the church itself to regulate in Christian freedom.

6. Just as all regulations of Almighty God Himself are made not only for the sake of external regulation but at the same time for other reasons which to us are partly revealed, partly hidden, so also the regulation of the public office of the ministry.

7. To depart from the public office of the ministry is in no case permitted to any creature, unless it be that God's Word itself presents a precedent to depart therefrom. Matt. 15:1-6; Rom. 10:15.

8. Just as all regulations of God in the New Testament are not laws but gracious institutions of God for the salvation of souls, so also the regulation of the public office of the ministry.

9. Love is the queen of all laws, so much the more of all regulations, i.e., in cases of necessity it knows no commandment, much less any regulation. Matt. 12:7; Rom. 13:10.

10. There are cases of necessity in which also the regulation of the public office of the ministry cannot and should not be observed. Exodus 4:24-26.

11. A case of necessity occurs when, by legalistic observance of the regulation, souls would be lost instead of saved and love would thereby be violated.

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general meaning of "order." The single English word which most nearly covers all cases, even the derivative forms, is perhaps "regulation" (hence: "regulate," "regular," "regularly"), and this has been used consistently throughout.

12. In a case of necessity, departure from God's regulation may be made only so far and for so long as the case of necessity exists.

13. Without the preaching of the Word no faith is possible and without Baptism the development of faith is in constant danger of suffering shipwreck in every trial, and with regard to children, Baptism is the only means of grace for them. Rom. 10:14; Mark 10:15,16.

14. Just as the Fifth Commandment concerning love for the neighbor in general follows the Fourth concerning love for parents [i.e., a specific command], so the call of love in general follows the specific call.

15. Just as the call of love in general does not permit setting aside the specific call of the father and usurping his office, so the former also does not permit setting aside the specific call of a public minister and usurping his office.

16. Love does not give the right to do the work of a public minister in the congregation of an already validly called minister, even one who is heretical, and thus to usurp his office.

17. Love has the call and the duty, where there are no Christians previously and the church must first be planted, to come out publicly and proclaim God's Word to souls and to baptize those who thereupon confess the faith.

18. Love has the call and the duty, even where there are Christians but where the church lacks a public minister and souls would otherwise be in danger of being lost, also to come out publicly and teach God's Word if it possesses the knowledge and the gift for this.

19. When it is stated that the church has the right to call, this

does not mean that the church on the whole can create ministers by its call, but that those Christians to whom the minister is to be sent also have the right to choose and to call this minister themselves.

20. For others than those [to whom the minister is to be sent] to call and place ministers without the latter's consent is a usurpation of an office which does not belong to them and is nothing else but tyranny.

21. If the Christian can request and authorize someone to do a work of love in general in his place, then Christians can also request and authorize someone in their place to search out Christians who lack a minister and to undertake the preaching of the Word of God among them as a work of love in general.

22. It does not constitute a case of necessity where, in observing the divine regulation, souls are forced to assume a merely temporal and physical discomfort.

23. The administration of Holy Communion presupposes the existence of a Christian congregation and personal care of souls; it should not take place therefore where no Christian congregation exists and no personal care of souls can be maintained.

24. No arrangement may be introduced by which the departure from the divine regulation of the public office of the ministry is made a permanent regulation.

25. A case of necessity in the administering of Holy Communion without the divine regulation of the holy office of the ministry is perhaps conceivable but only in very unusual spiritual trial.

26. A Christian capable of teaching who searches out the lost

sheep of the house of Christ and preaches the Word of God to them should administer the entire office of the Gospel only where he is called accordingly as regular public minister.

27. Such a traveling minister ought to accept the call of small congregations only on the condition that he thereby retains the freedom always to search out more such small congregations and to serve each one only to the extent that time allows.

28. It is the duty of such a traveling minister to be of assistance to the larger congregations founded by him in acquiring another minister who will reside permanently with them.

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