

The Bergemann Era—1908-1933

By Armin Engel

Pastor Gustave Ernst Bergemann, whose service at Fond du Lac covers almost half a century (1899–1947), a very important period in the history of the Joint Synod of Wisconsin and other States, recorded this biography over his signature in 1912:

My dear parents were Ludwig Bergemann and Wilhelmine, nee Schulz. They were Brandenburgers. Their crib stood in Wuschewier near Wrietzen on the Oder. About ancestors I can only say that my grandfather on my mother's side was a (small) landowner and besides kept a shop in the village. In 1848 they came to America and settled about two miles northeast of the present Hustisford, Dodge County, Wisconsin, in the virgin forest. There they industriously cleared and tilled the ground. They were farmers and continued thus as long as father could work. Here on the first farm I was born on August 9, 1862. In Town Hubbard, where we belonged to the congregation, I attended the parish school conducted by the pastor until the parents bought a second farm quite close to Hustisford and there joined the congregation of Pastor Phil. Koehler. There they had a two-room parish school, and I attended it the last two years before my confirmation. If I had to work heartily prior to this, I now had to be a man fully and completely. There was much work on the 240 acres for us three brothers, of which I was the youngest. Only in the winter months could I attend the English school in the village. On November 14, 1879, I entered our college and graduated together with Dr. Ott, Prof. Weimar, Pastor Knuth, and Otto Brandt in 1885. In September of the same year I entered the seminary, 621 13th Street, Milwaukee. The shortage of pastors did not permit us to remain in the seminary for three years. Already at the end of the second year I had to accept the call of Trinity congregation in South Bay City, Michigan, and was ordained and installed in their midst on June 26, 1887, by Pastor J. G. Oehlert, then of Bay City. On October 31, 1887, I could lead my dear bride, Miss Emma Anger of Watertown, Wisconsin, home. The sainted Pastor Strassen performed the ceremony. I was situated in South Bay City until near the end of October 1892. Because I could no longer do the work in the school as a result of my weakened health, as already on New Year's 1892 I had a stroke, nervous prostration, in the divine service, I followed the call of St. Paul's congregation in Tomah, Wisconsin, arrived there on November 1, 1892, was installed by the now sainted Pastor Christian Koehler, who was then situated on the "Ridge." The Tomah parish was large at that time. To it belonged to the west the congregation in Sparta—to the north the stations Lincoln (12 miles), Knapp or Marmon Settlement (20 miles) and Goodyear (30 miles)—to the northeast Babcock (30 miles). In November 1899 I accepted the call issued to me by the St. Peter's congregation in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, held my farewell sermon on December 3, arrived on the 5th in Fond du Lac and was installed on the 10th by Pastor Chr. Dowidat.

Official positions.

a. In the Wisconsin Synod besides the presidency, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Synod, member of the board of Northwestern College.

b. In the Joint Synod: chairman of the Seminary board, chairman of the committee for the Lithuanian mission, secretary of the commission for Indian Mission, member of the board of our New Ulm institution.

(S) G. E. Bergemann

Pastor Bergemann was 37 years old when he came to Fond du Lac, with thirteen years of parish work behind him. Coming from a widely extended field in Tomah, he was deeply concerned about mission opportunities and was very optimistic concerning results.

About three miles from the center of the city he found a community centered on the roundhouse and repair shops of the Wisconsin Central Railroad. Among the people who settled here were Lutheran Christians whom Pastor Bergemann sought. He invited them first to attend services at St. Peter's and to send their children to the Christian Day School. Due to the pastor's efforts, St. Peter's congregation acquired property in the new village of North Fond du Lac, and a congregation was called into existence there. In March 1901 it resolved to build a small church on the property. Then Pastor Bergemann appealed to congregations in the Synod through the *Gemeinde-Blatt* for funds to assist the new congregation, a plea which was endorsed by President Ph. v. Rohr.

At the next meeting of the Wisconsin Synod, which convened that year in Pastor v. Rohr's congregation at Winona, Pastor Bergemann was elected as a member of the Indian Mission Commission. Pastor Bergemann's interest in the American Indian was probably aroused when a government school for Indian boys and girls was founded two miles outside of Tomah during his pastorate there. He was a member of this commission for eighteen years and never lost his enthusiasm and optimism in promoting the welfare of the work among the Apaches of Arizona.

In September of 1904 Pastor Bergemann, as a member of the commission, was designated to make a personal visit to the Apache Mission field and upon his return made a lengthy report. A trip to Washington, D.C., was undertaken in 1909 by President Bergemann and Missionary Gustave Harders to appeal to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in behalf of our Indian School in the land of the Apaches.

In 1907 Bergemann invited the Wisconsin Synod to hold its convention in his congregation, St. Peter's of Fond du Lac. As officials of the Synod Pastor Ph. v. Rohr was elected as president, Pastor Bergemann as first vice president for three years. At the next elections held at Columbus in 1910 he was elected as president and continued to be reelected to this office until the amalgamation of the Wisconsin Synod into the Joint Synod in 1917. At the convention of the General Synod at St. Paul, Minnesota, in August of 1917—called the Joint Synod after January 1, 1918—Pastor Bergemann was elected as its president and continued to be re-elected to this post until 1933.

At this point a look back is in place to see how God prepared this servant for his important assignment. He was trained when our Lutheran Theological Seminary still functioned in a remodeled hall in Eimermann's Park at 13th and Vine Streets, Milwaukee. Three eminent theologians of American Lutheranism, A. Hoenecke, E. Notz, and August Graebner, trained him for service in the church. Director A. Hoenecke, the spiritual leader of the Wisconsin Synod, left his imprint on every young pastor sent forth from this seminary, so also on Bergemann.

As previously indicated, candidate G. E. Bergemann was ordained and installed June 26, 1887, as pastor of Trinity mission congregation on the south side of Bay City, Michigan. Pastor J. G. Oehlert, who served Bethel congregation of Bay City, a member of the Wisconsin Synod, found it necessary to organize this daughter congregation. In behalf of the members Oehlert pleaded for a Sunday collection from sister congregations for the mission in need. This plea had the endorsement of President Bading, who investigated the situation at this mission in person. One gift came from the Sunday-school children of Pastor Theodore Jaeckel, Muehlhaeuser's successor at Grace, Milwaukee.

Bergemann was pastor at Bay City during a very crucial time in the Michigan Synod. Two months after he was installed, the new Michigan Lutheran Seminary, founded two years before, was dedicated. During this time the Michigan Synod was becoming more and more sound in confessional Lutheranism, completing its withdrawal from the General Council in 1888. In 1892 it affiliated with the Synodical Conference and also took part in the federation of the three synods of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan. Pastor Bergemann was fortunate during his early ministry in having as his neighbor in Saginaw Christoph Ludwig Eberhardt, pastor of St. Paul's congregation. He was an upright and sincere neighbor, true and faithful in character, wholehearted in his attachment to the Lutheran Church, always ready to contend for the true confession without fear or favor.

This man's life was a tremendous one to emulate as an example of missionary zeal. It could only inspire any fellow pastor devoted to this task in his parish work.

In the year of the federation Pastor Bergemann was suddenly stricken with an illness which compelled him to discontinue his work for six months. Since physicians had urgently advised a change in climate for his health's sake, he accepted a call to Tomah, Wisconsin.

During Bergemann's eight year ministry at Tomah, he learned to know another area of our Synod, the Mississippi Conference. One of its pastors who had a great influence upon him was the president of the Wisconsin Synod, living at Winona, Minnesota, Philip v. Rohr. In 1897 the mixed conference of the Mississippi Valley met in Winona for its customary three days, with President v. Rohr being the host pastor. Pastor Bergemann served as essayist on Article XIII of the Augustana, a work which he continued for several conferences. A month later followed the General Synod at Watertown. Delegates from the Mississippi Conference were Pastors Ph. v. Rohr, J. J. Meyer of Burr Oak, R. Siegler of Barre Mills, and G. E. Bergemann of Tomah. The following year found Pastor Bergemann preaching the mission festival sermon for President v. Rohr at Winona. Throughout his long ministry he found special delight in preaching the gospel on such occasions.

Among the delegates from the Winnebago Conference elected to represent the Wisconsin Synod at the General Synod convention at Immanuel Church at Mankato, Minnesota, in August of 1901 is listed G. Bergemann. Among the many conventions he attended, this was one that especially stood out in Bergemann's memory. Present as advisory delegates were Bergemann's former professors, A. F. Ernst, representative of Northwestern College, and A. Hoenecke, of the Seminary. The latter presented six theses in accordance with the Word of God, characterizing the Lutheran Church. Prof. Ernst had been the first president of the General Synod and, having served for nine years (1892-1901), welcomed the election of his successor, Carl Gausewitz of St. Paul. Two men of early Synod stock were present who had preached in western prairie sod houses: Julius Engel, missionary at large in the Dakotas in former days, and Justus Naumann, pupil of Stoeckhardt, who had served in the western mission field and now served as secretary of the convention. Present also was John Plocher, who had served in the Apache field since 1893 and was now pastor at St. Peter, Minnesota, and Carl Guenther of Arizona, his replacement among the Apaches, who came to the convention to give a progress report.

Prof. F. W. A. Notz of Watertown preached for the communion service. On Sunday John Meyer, then six years in the ministry, preached for the local congregation's mission festival. The newly elected president, Carl Gausewitz, delivered his sermon for the convention closing service in English.

On Saturday a special railroad car brought many delegates to New Ulm for a sightseeing tour. A layman, F. H. Retzlaff of New Ulm, led a long row of horse-drawn coaches on an excursion through the terraced streets. The purpose of this tour was to visit Dr. Martin Luther College at the top of the hill, from which could be seen St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church, served by C. J. Albrecht, founder and first president of the college. Delegates were welcomed by President John Schaller. Many returned to Mankato for the mission festival at Immanuel Church on Sunday. Some, however, remained at New Ulm to attend the mission festival there, which was held on the college grounds. Four pastors, Gustave Harders, August Pieper, F. W. A. Notz, and C. A. Lederer were the speakers. After the close of the convention another group of delegates followed the invitation of Pastor Erich Moebus to visit the Lutheran Orphanage and Home for the Aged at Belle Plaine.

Having been elected first vice president of the Wisconsin Synod at the convention held in his own congregation at Fond du Lac in 1907, Pastor Bergemann soon had to assume the office of acting president, due to the severe illness of President v. Rohr. He had to preside at the next convention held at St. Jacobi in Milwaukee. He called attention to the death of Dr. A. Hoenecke in January of 1908 and said of him: "We are admonished to preserve at all times his memory, which can be done in no better way than thereby that we follow his steps, which he has charted for us, namely, to let Christ alone rule the Church through His Word." Before that year ended, the vice president had to assume the presidency when that post was suddenly vacated by the death of the incumbent, Pastor Ph. v. Rohr, who died December 22, 1908. We can understand how much v. Rohr had meant to him from these words which were part of the funeral address Pastor Bergemann held: "Learning to know him was the same as learning to love and esteem him, as feeling drawn to him. There

probably are few who can point to such a circle of friends as our von Rohr. That is why the sorrow now is so general and upright.”

The change in leadership was reflected already at the 1909 Synod in the presidential report to the convention. A new trend began to emerge. The high sounding name chosen for the training school at Watertown was changed to the more modest name of Northwestern College, which soon became a household word in the Synod.

President Bergemann began an innovation by having the various committees and treasurers present their reports in advance of the sessions. In 1912 a committee was appointed by him to work out a plan which would make it possible to divide the Wisconsin Synod into four districts and to state the powers the individual districts should have. In 1913 the change was made that instead of one doctrinal essay, three shorter papers were to be delivered. The arrangement proved to be practical since each topic could be brought to a conclusion in one session. The 1917 Synod was the first to convene under a new manner of quartering the delegates. The congregations themselves were to pay the way of their delegates.

At the General Synod which met in 1917 at St. Paul, Pastor Bergemann was elected president of the Joint Synod. In his new role of responsibility as head of the Joint Synod, he either preached the sermon or reported to each succeeding convention on matters pertinent to the Synod's work. At the 1919 convention he urged that immediately after the close of sessions one day conferences be held at which the delegates would report. This suggestion has resulted in the delegate conferences which are held in each conference to this day. Beginning with the Synod which met at Milwaukee in 1923, the routine business of the Joint Synod was carried out as planned by the president and presented to the delegates in "Reports and Memorials" printed in advance of the convention. By this method, which is still in use, all delegates can have a complete report of the business matters to come before the convention, but especially also a definite plan of the work to be carried on during the next biennium. The Synod adopted a committee report recommending that representatives of all districts, boards, commissions and institutions meet regularly at least once a year to compare notes and to coordinate their work. This was the beginning of the General Synodical Committee, which now meets annually as the Synodical Council, and which Bergemann helped to organize and energize during its formative years. At the 1925 convention, the president pointed out the need for a synodical statistical handbook to be printed, which has also been done ever since.

When President Bergemann took office, the debt of the Wisconsin Synod was over \$24,000. His goal from the start was to have no deficit at all, and heroic efforts were constantly made to bring this about. A finance committee was created to oversee the Synod's finances. House collections were made, literature distributed, envelope systems recommended, individual conferences alerted by the president to this end. In 1925 the president could announce that the Synod's debt had been liquidated. However, then came the building of the administration complex at New Ulm, the new Seminary project, and several other smaller ventures. At the same time the Synod's operating budgets were growing and outstripping general contributions. As a result the Synod entered the Great Depression already in the red. By 1931 the Treasurer of the Synod reported a total debt of over \$696,000, a contingency against which President Bergemann had fought all during his presidency. If all congregations had carried through with their contributions, our financial misery would never have overtaken us!

The president extended himself. He traveled extensively and in many places preached the gospel in sermons that edified his hearers.

According to the new arrangement, 1918 was the first year for the seven districts to meet in separate areas. By carefully planning his schedule the president proceeded to visit each District Convention. In June this took him to St. Paul, Minnesota; Scio, Michigan; Tomah and Burlington, Wisconsin. Then in July he attended the Pacific Northwest District in the state of Washington. The delegates made the long journey to the convention in their Fords, over the Blewett Pass, on through the Kennewick-Pasco sagebrush wilderness, to Yakima. President Bergemann, who had made the long journey over the Rockies by rail, led the first session as temporary chairman of the new district. On Sunday he preached a mission sermon and then witnessed the close of this first assembly of our District Synod in the Pacific Northwest. It was a moving moment for the president to see the delegates depart over hill and dale as they had come.

In August he visited his own Northern Wisconsin District at New London. Here he preached the opening sermon. Finally, there was left the Nebraska District Synod at Clatonia, Nebraska. He again preached the opening sermon. The president, who knew how to point out so masterfully the blessing and advantages of the union with six other districts of the Joint Synod, had been a major factor in influencing this body with its long and strong tendency to independence to accept the constitution of 1917. At Clatonia in 1918 he preached on Sunday for the annual mission festival. Before the delegates parted, the pastors felt the need to advise and comfort one another on a matter which rested on all hearts like a heavy burden. German preaching had been forbidden in South Dakota. Now also the preaching in German was almost entirely forbidden in the northern parts of Nebraska. What to do? Bow and bring the gospel to the people as well as possible in church and home.

Looking back upon the president's travels, we cannot overlook some events which occurred along the way. He ceaselessly attended district sessions, board meetings of three schools on high school, college, and seminary level, and meetings of mission boards. "These meetings," he reported in 1919, "offered a welcome opportunity to discuss thoroughly and to clarify the new arrangement of affairs brought about by the merger." He urged the meeting of delegate conferences to stimulate interest for and cooperation with the Synod's work. As far as human factors go, it was Bergemann, above all others, who put the Joint Synod merger into effect and who made it work in the first years.

"I have covered over 20,000 miles per train in the last two years and carried on a widespread correspondence," he said. "Because of lack of time and strength it was not possible for me to perform an important part of the work: the visiting of the educational institutions!" Over the years he traveled to Michigan, Arizona, Washington and other western states wherever new congregations were being developed! The time had come for our congregations to come to see that the work of the Synod is not exclusively a matter for pastors but also a matter for the congregations.

There were also special synodical events which Bergemann attended as president and for which he was often called upon to preach. In 1912, as an alumnus of Northwestern College, he proudly accepted, in the name of the Synod, the new gymnasium, the cost of which was covered by former students and friends of the college. In three years came the 50th anniversary of the college, for which he preached. The theme he used for this occasion was *Soli Deo Gloria*. Festival guests by reasonable estimates numbered 5,000. Then there was the 25th anniversary of the Theological Seminary at Wauwatosa on September 22, 1918, at which he represented the Joint Synod. In 1919 he preached the sermon for the 15th convention of the Joint Synod at New Ulm on Luke 11:28. On Sunday two jubilee services were held in the college park, thanking God for 25 years of our teacher seminary's existence in New Ulm as well as 25 years existence of the Indian Mission in Arizona. On July 22, 1928, he assisted at the cornerstone laying of the new seminary at Mequon and on August 18, 1929, he preached in German at the dedication of the seminary, on Romans 3:28.

During these years the president could no longer give his complete attention to his congregation as in former years. "The work heaped up very much at times," he said at one time, "especially in the first year of the biennium. In that time I could work only eight full weeks undisturbed in the midst of my congregation as I did not have to travel then."

The Synod produced ideas for lightening the work of the president. The question came up of separating the office entirely from parish work. However, the Synod resolved not to have a president without a parish so that he might not lose the important contact with congregational life. The vice presidents were to take on some work so as to unburden the president. Later an arrangement was made with the St. Peter's congregation whereby the congregation called a full-time pastor, relieving Bergemann of first responsibility.

The twenty-second meeting of the Joint Synod was held at St. Matthew Church, Milwaukee, in 1933. President Bergemann opened the first session with a brief devotion and read his biennial report. It was to be his last report as president. In the elections which followed, Pastor John Brenner was chosen as president. Bergemann became a regular member of the Seminary Board of Regents, where he served as chairman for the next fourteen years. He was already reaching his 71st birthday, but looked forward to guiding the destiny of the Seminary. He developed a strong attachment for this institution during this service which lasted from 1933 to 1947. Over the span of years he witnessed the calling of thirteen professors to serve on its faculty. He concerned

himself about the buildings and the grounds. Art glass windows for the chapel were installed in 1945. "Our seminary is offering training for the ministry that is Lutheran," he said, "because it is Scriptural, and thorough." He was involved as much in developing the Seminary as the Synod and kept alive his interest in both.

The last decade of the Bergemann presidency was disturbed by the Protes'tant Controversy. As active an administrator as Bergemann was, he could not avoid involvement, even in the early stages when matters were being threshed out at local and lower levels. As *ex officio* member of the Northwestern Board, he saw the first indications of the strife in 1924. When the Western Wisconsin District endeavored to deal with the matter at special conventions, Bergemann was asked to fill the chair, since District officials themselves were under fire. Not even his experience and skill could prevent the outcome, the establishment of the Protes'tant Conference.

In 1929 the conflict was claiming the concern of the general body. A "Peace Committee" was set up, but its subsequent efforts could not achieve the goal implied in its name. After 1933 the perplexing matter was again being dealt with for the most part on the district level.

It is not surprising that Protes'tant literature raises accusations against official handling of the controversy on the part of President Bergeman. It is a matter of record that he failed of re-election at a high point in the controversy. But to draw from these instances the conclusion that Bergemann is somehow chiefly to blame for the fact that the Protes'tant Controversy was not peacefully concluded would be unwarranted. The total record of the matter does not admit of such a conclusion.

As a pastor in the parish ministry, Bergemann served three congregations which were in some ways the same and still very different. Trinity Church on the south side of Bay City, Michigan, was a new congregation in which Bergemann was the first resident pastor, and also the teacher in the Christian day school. He served the congregation for five years. During his time a parsonage was built in 1890 at a cost of \$800. All services were conducted in German.

At Tomah, Wisconsin, he came to a congregation, founded in 1874, which had dedicated its second church only two years before. Located near St. Paul's Church was its schoolhouse. A male teacher was in charge. In 1896 the parsonage was altered and enlarged at a cost of \$700. The interior of the church was renovated for the congregation's 25th anniversary and a pipe organ was procured. The celebration took place in August of 1899.

Then he was called to St. Peter's, Fond du Lac, in existence since 1858. Here he found a Christian day school manned by three teachers. By 1901 a new parsonage was dedicated. In 1902 it was decided to erect a new school with four classrooms and other facilities. Dedication took place on October 25, 1903. Services were conducted mostly in German and attendance at church was constantly increasing, so the balcony was enlarged to accomodate 200 more people. A complete renovation of the church building was undertaken and on June 28, 1908, the renovated church was rededicated. On August 16 of the same year the 50th anniversary of the congregation was observed.

On September 25, 1908, came the last of three fires which occurred during Bergemann's ministry. In the first at South Bay City, Michigan, a devastating fire had reduced a whole section of the city to ashes on July 25, 1892; at Tomah an entire block of business structures had been consumed on September 23, 1894; and now Fond du Lac suffered damage from burning embers which strong winds carried through the air, one of which lodged in the steeple of the church and started a blaze, but Bergemann and his household were graciously defended from all these calamities. Though saddened by the loss, members took courage in their pastor's leadership, set about at once to rebuild the steeple, and finished the work before the year came to a close.

By 1925 plans had again been made for a new school, this time with eight classrooms and an auditorium and modern facilities. The building was dedicated November 8, 1925, and on the following day instruction began for 340 children. This was the second school building erected under Pastor Bergemann's counsel. The staff had increased from three to eight teachers in the time he had been guiding the destinies of the church and school. Soon the ninth grade was added, which developed into the Winnebago Lutheran Academy. The Academy Arrow reported: "Those who are acquainted with the Academy know that Pastor Bergemann added to the work of his ministry by giving himself wholeheartedly to the work of establishing one of the first Lutheran high schools in the country."

President Bergemann lectured at various times and places on the financial status of the Synod. He was fearless in presenting his point of view. He was a fine theologian of the old school—a divider of law and gospel—and yet very persistent in having his own way. Because of this persistency he usually got his way. There were times when he would rub people the wrong way, even while he was engaged in making some far-reaching decisions. When he looked you in the eye, you knew that you were not looking at an ordinary individual.

In the early 30's the District Mission Board of the Northern Wisconsin District wanted to consolidate mission fields and to find out where they could save mission funds. The members of the Board made a tour of the various mission stations, including remote places such as Manistique and Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. President Bergemann, by virtue of his office, went along and made his impressions known to both the missionaries and the people whom he met. Among other things, his comment to one station was: "It doesn't matter much, because we are going to close it down anyway." The missionary got the message but was not encouraged much by the visit!

Not long after, President Bergemann preached the English sermon for the funeral of his friend, Pastor Otto H. Koch, and also officiated at the burial on Hillside Cemetery, Columbus, Wisconsin. Still a candidate for the ministry and on the waiting list, I was among those who sat in the pew on that Wednesday afternoon, February 15, 1933. I can still see him in the pulpit expounding: "The Lord reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the Lord is clothed with strength.... Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever" (Psalm 93).

At his last convention as president, Bergemann took note of the 450th anniversary of the birth of Martin Luther and hoped the Synod would make it the occasion of special praise to Almighty God. He also directed attention to the fact that the year 1935, the occasion of the next Synod sessions, would mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Dr. Adolph Hoenecke. He relinquished his office to Pastor John Brenner, a fellow son of Bethany Congregation at Hustisford.

A good deal of Pastor Bergemann's time was spent in traveling to Milwaukee, but he would not permit himself ever to be denounced as a wasteful person, not even in matters of time. He prided himself on always being punctual. His philosophy was never to be late! In his book there was no such thing as two o'clock sharp; for him it was two o'clock, nothing more or less.

Bergemann was strict in his instruction classes. He would not tolerate any nonsense in his classroom and could, if necessary, pick up an unruly student by the nape of the neck and remove him from the room. He was earnest in encouraging students to attend Northwestern College to study for the ministry. Some of his students still remember how he would sharpen them up, take them to Watertown by train, and march them from the Northwestern Depot to the college. He left to the Synod a number of students who have grown from young and inexperienced fledglings into able servants of the Lord. When the boys found that the going was rough, his advice was not to complain, and not to be "pietists"! It would not help if they put on an exaggerated, pious air when they encountered student life in the dormitory away from home.

Pastor Bergemann's style was to be optimistic. We remember hearing him give a speech on one occasion in which he talked on the subject of "the optimist versus the pessimist"! I remember ever since that a pessimist is a fellow who blows out the light to see how dark it is.

Bergemann was a determined moulder of mind and character. He would not tolerate pupils in school who called their superiors by their first names. Neither had he any sympathy for slang and would correct them and there whomever he heard using it. When a student in his school addressed even the janitor improperly by his first name, he would get a going-over which he never forgot. Some had the impression that Bergemann was self-willed, at times bordering on the dictatorial. For example, he would call people on the phone to tell them what he wanted and then simply hang up!

Early in his career at Fond du Lac he was of necessity obliged to keep a horse for transportation. It was evident to everyone that he was a skilled horseman, whose pride was in looks and showmanship. He took a deep interest in civic affairs; on special occasions the city fathers prevailed upon him to lead parades astride his horse, wearing a stovepipe hat, and no one enjoyed the parade more than he did.

During the last twenty-one years of Bergemann's life this writer was in the Winnebago Conference with him and witnessed firsthand how Bergemann functioned fourteen years as visitor of the conference, giving up the office at age eighty-five (1933–1947). His unruffled manner, firm handshake, and steady voice combined well with his seemingly frail, yet sturdy frame. As hectic as times often were, I do not remember seeing him look tired or ruffled in his front chair.

He was immaculate in his dress, particularly for public appearances. In the fashion of his day he wore business suits of dignified cut and alternated between white and dark vests; his four-in-hand ties were complete with diamond stick pin.

When plans were being laid for the 1945 Synod, G. E. Bergemann was chosen as delegate from his conference; I was chosen as his alternate. As the time drew near, he informed me that he would not be attending and instructed me to go instead. I was anticipating attending the convention at New Ulm in August as delegate, but when the opening came—there stood G. E. Bergemann. He said he would not be voting but could not stay away. I should make the report to the conference on our return.

A month later, on September 6, 1945, Mrs. Bergemann died. She was laid to rest in Rienzi Memorial Cemetery beside their son Hans, who had died in 1918 at the age of 25. Their first-born son, Edward Arthur, lived only four months and was buried at Bay City, Michigan. The marker he set for the family plot after his wife died is a plain granite cross about five feet high. At the next conference I said to him, "I am really sorry you lost your wife, Pastor Bergemann." To this he replied, "I didn't lose her!" There ended our conversation.

He continued to live by himself in the parsonage at 229 E. Second Street. At 83 years he still insisted on driving his own car. Almost twenty years beyond normal retirement age, he still loved his work. He was fond of Fond du Lac and the countryside. He was vitally interested in his Synod's history and in what he called "his people." The Lord was good and gracious to him.

Pastor Bergemann served St. Peter's congregation for nearly half a century (1899–1947), longer than any of his predecessors. His congregation observed the 60th anniversary of the ordination of its venerable servant. Prof. Carl Lawrenz, a former shepherd of St. Paul's at North Fond du Lac, preached for the occasion in German and English morning services. There was a social gathering in honor of the jubilarian, to which his conference brethren were invited. The next Thursday, June 26, 1947, the 60th anniversary of his entry into public preaching, this veteran of the cross retired from the active ministry.

In the opening address of the Academy school year on September 5, 1944, Pastor Bergemann repeated a favorite text: "The Lord reigneth," (Psalm 93:1). Precious words! A truth most precious to the heart of a Christian. "Here then," he said, "we have the answer to every perplexing question, the solution of every troublesome difficulty: The Lord reigneth!"

At the 25th anniversary of the Academy in September 1950 he spoke as its Director in an open-air service, in spite of rainy weather. He said, as he often had before: "We need pastors! We need teachers! More young people should be encouraged to serve their Lord in the direct service of the church. Students who come here to study are surrounded with privileges and beset with blessings."

The Winnebago Joint Conference, consisting of Wisconsin and Missouri Synod pastors serving congregations west of Lake Winnebago, existed for many years. It provoked and promoted lively discussion on matters of doctrine and practice in the Lutheran Church. A healthy relationship prevailed between the two sister synods in that area in those days.

Pastor Bergemann attended these conferences regularly, taking part in discussions of topics of the day. We can fully appreciate the invaluable service he rendered by his appearance, in his person, and in his words, welding sometimes divergent opinions into harmony. His career was coming to an end. His remarks ranged from Lutheran confessionalism to true evangelical joy! His voice was strong and authoritative. He could evoke a gamut of serious thought from deep gloom to swelling pride. He sensed an approaching era of strife and controversy between the synods of the Synodical Conference. The last mixed conference was held near Wautoma on April 16, 1951. Here ended a fine relationship among the conference congregations in this historic Winnebago area.

In 1947 Bergemann went to live with his daughter Margaret in Fond du Lac. He was the last to vacate the house that sheltered his family for so many years. He could now live out his life as he pleased. He found time to visit and to talk with "his people." Occasionally he strayed back to the parsonage where he smoked his pipe and reminisced on former days of his ministry.

Pastor Bergemann had been remarkably well but after his ninety-first birthday his strength declined. He retained his mental faculties fully, even to the end. He waited for his death with dignity. On May 13, 1954, the Lord called this aged and well-known former parish preaching president to his eternal rest. On Saturday, May 15, Prof. John Meyer and Pastor G. Pieper conducted the funeral services. He fell asleep peacefully in his Savior, in whose service he had preached throughout the sixty-seven years of his ministry. What better words might we choose for his epitaph than: **THE LORD REIGNETH!**