

Inspector Martin Eickmann

"Er War Ein Treuer Mann"

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There are many many faces, names and personalities which make up the vast collage of pastors and teachers in the Wisconsin Evangelical Synod. Each in their own way have contributed to the spreading of the Gospel of Christ and to the equipping of the saints for their role in the Maker's plans. It would be fitting and beneficial to have a written history and description of the lives of all of these shepherds, because much of their lives and especially their faith could serve as an example for us as fellow believers to emulate.

What I have chosen to do in this paper ^{is to} give a biography of one of these men from the history of our synod in order to view his life of dedication and faithfulness to his Lord and to his calling. The man I have chosen to set before you is Martin Christian Eickmann. This man was, as the *Gemeinde Blatt* described him, "Ein Treuer Mann." ¹

This paper will proceed by looking at three separate phases in this man's life; his early life and education, his parish ministry and finally his inspectorship at Northwestern College. In each of these three divisions we can see Martin Eickmann as a model of Christian perseverance and faithfulness.

Martin Christian Eickmann was born the first child to Christian Fredrich Eickmann (May 13, 1833 - April 22,

1902) and Wilhemine Christine nee Neumann (April 24, 1838 - August 10, 1899). He was born one year after the marriage of his parents on the 21st of September, 1859 in Friedensdorf in the province of Brandenburg Germany. He was baptized four days later on September 25, 1859. ²

Some of Martin's fondest childhood memories were recollections of time spent in the broad city of Friedensdorf with its one large street running through it. It was also here that Martin learned what would prove to be the rock that he would base his faith upon. Here his parents were members of congregation of the *Breslauer Freikirche*. ³ In this strong conservative Lutheran faith, his parents would raise and instruct not only Martin, but also his three brothers, Christian, Wilhelm and Albert, and one sister, Maria. ⁴

The Eickmann family later moved to Berlin for a short while until their departure from Germany to the United States. They boarded a steamship on June 24, 1866 and headed for their new home. ⁵ Although the trip proved uneventful, the entry of the trip into the family Bible seems to show a little of the excitement and the apprehension facing this young German family. "*Am 24 Juni 1866 verliessen wir Deutschland und landeten am 15 Juli 1866 in New York, Amerika. Gott erhalt uns ferner in seine Gnade.*" ⁶

The family soon left New York and moved to Fond du Lac, WI where Martin's father, Christian, took up his trade

as a wagon maker. There they lived until sometime in the year 1875. The family next moved from their home in Fond du Lac to a farm located one mile north of Deshler, Nebraska. There Christian took up farming and the Eickmann family set down their roots. 7

Martin's entire education was full of Christian teaching and discipline. His childhood education was supplied in the parochial schools of Fond du Lac and Deshler. After graduating from the parochial schools, Martin enrolled in the high school at Watertown where he was confirmed while a student. 8 His teachers at Northwestern quickly noticed his "eisernen Fleiss" and his "peinliche Gewissenhaftigkeit."

Money seems to have been hard to come by for putting Martin through school. This would be nothing unusual for this time in history except for the influence it had on Martin. His teachers noted that although he struggled continuously with finances, this seemed to make him study all the harder at his lessons. 9

Martin's faithfulness to his studies and his perseverance in spite of various troubles help to give us just a glimpse of the attitudes and presuppositions with which he approached the work of the Lord. His dedication and willingness to learn could indeed serve as a good example for all who study God's Word. A pastor as well might benefit greatly if in his own personal study and preparation there could be found evidences of "eisernen

Fleiss."

Martin graduated with his class from Northwestern College in 1879. He entered into the seminary, which at that time was in Milwaukee. He graduated from the seminary in 1882. ¹⁰

On March 12, 1882, Martin received a call to St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Town Center, WI. It is interesting to note that the call came before he was finished with his schooling. What is more is that even as early as 1881, his address was given as Town Center. ¹¹ This early date seems only to be explained by an incidental paragraph in the history of St. John's which states that Martin was a "vicar for one year." ¹²

There is no doubt that the young Martin Eickmann was very popular in this small yet growing community. In a letter to President Bading on the 7th of February, 1882, the president of the congregation, Carl Bahmland, reports the following, "I hereby inform you that the congregation unanimously called Mr. Eickmann and that each man and woman, young and old, praised the young student."

The prematureness of Martin's call from seminary may in part be explained by three things. One was that there was going to be a shortage of pastors from the seminary that year. The second reason was that the congregation was just beginning to heal from a split brought about by a dispute over the church property. Finally, the congregation already knew and liked Martin.

Although the congregation wanted to have their pastor there as soon as possible, nonetheless Martin returned to finish his studies. During that time, Pastor Richard Siegler filled in the vacancies until Martin could graduate and assume his role as their pastor. ¹³

Martin's first call was not the only thing that was new in his life that year. It was on the 26th of October, 1882 that Martin married Emma Melida Eberhardt (October 27, 1863 - September 22, 1945). This blessed and happy occasion took place in the Evangelical Lutheran St Peter's Church in Fond du Lac, by Pastor Ph. Hoelzel, who preached on Ps 55:23 for the text. ¹⁴

It is through the memories of Emma Eickmann as passed down to her son, Paul G. Eickmann and compiled by her daughter-in-law, Emily F. Eickmann, that we receive this first impression of the newlywed's arrival in Town Center.

"Martin and Emma went there immediately following their marriage and arrived there after dark on a cold evening. Grandma was eighteen years old, having celebrated her eighteenth birthday the day before their wedding. They were met by one of the elders of the congregation who took them immediately to the schoolhouse, part of which had been remodeled into their living quarters. The floors were the unfinished floors of the schoolroom and Grandma commented that they were muddy. The elder replied that all they needed was a good scrubbing." ¹⁵

As Martin and his new wife soon found out, scrubbing the muddy floors would be one of the simpler things that needed to be done at Town Center. Yet in the days ahead, Martin

would continue his steady progress toward what needed to be done. His commitment and perseverance would keep his duties before him.

Martin Eickmann was ordained and installed on Cantate Sunday, 1882. His duties included serving not the one but actually three congregations; Town Center, Black Creek and the church in Ellington. ¹⁶

Aside from his usual teaching of Confirmation Class, Pastor Martin Eickmann also served as the teacher of all the day school classes, whose classrooms were in the same building as his home. ¹⁷ There were even students who lived with the family during the week because the distance was too great for daily travel, ^{These students} who paid in produce for their room and board. ¹⁸

Not only was the work load tough but the financial income was scarce.

Food and wood for fuel were the largest part of their salary.... Martin had worn his overcoat for many years in school so that it was worn threadbare but there was no money to purchase a replacement. Grandma ripped it, carefully washed the pieces and sewed it together again on the wrong side by hand as she had no sewing machine. Many years later when she told me this, she did so with an air of pride that it turned out so well. ¹⁹

Yet through all of these hardships, this man of God continued to preach and teach God's Word. And as he did, the Lord blessed his faithfulness by granting an increase to the congregations in members.

In March of 1882, a letter was written to President

Boding which voiced a plea for the *Gesangbuch* to be printed with a melody line. Although the ^{author}~~man~~ was sincere in his request, the comments and arguments which he presents seem somewhat humorous. At the same time they show ^{one}~~some~~ of the small obstacles Martin faced.

The request is made on the basis of two points. First of all, there are many different kinds of Germans gathered together in this congregation. Each one of these has learned a different melody. Secondly, his point is this, "because every honorable pastor is also laden with human weakness." 20

The request then proceeds with an example of the pastor in his own church, Martin Eickmann.

He has 3-4 congregations, preaches mornings in his home church, has a cold upon his chest, so that his voice is weak, then drives, after he has become virtually weak from preaching, to his next congregation, should we then say in storm and rain, and his condition gets worse, he, already weak, begins to sing but his voice fails him, now however the shepherd and his flock, each one has his own melody. ... The dear pastor summons up whatever he can, must still go to the third congregation (in weather), as now however, when because of his illness is no longer able to sing. A weakness in our church, many a scoffer indeed has his mockery over this, and falls into sin instead of having comfort for his poor soul.... if we would have a *Gesangbuch* with notes, many a congregation member, who has learned the notes or still wants to learn them, could faithfully support his dear pastor and song leader, if the pastor desires this. 21

In many cases, it is the little things, such as a weak, worn voice, ~~a~~ scantness of daily necessities and an overabundance of obligations that add up to frustration.

Yet the faithful man pressed onward.

By 1884, a new school was needed because of the increasing number of children who were attending. It was at this time that their pastor asked that the congregation call a full time teacher to serve the children. This would also free himself up for more time to do pastoral duties. But the members of the congregation voted it down. So Martin continued to serve as both Pastor Eickmann and teacher Eickmann as well. ²²

One more responsibility was added to Martin's work load in his latter years at Town Center. In the election of Synod officers of 1889, the Synod elected Martin Eickmann as Synod secretary. ²³ In 1895, his duties with the Synod expanded even more while he was serving his congregations in Menomonie. There he was called to be one of four men to assist the superintendent^{ant} of the church extension program. ²⁴

The collective histories of St. John's congregations seem to think that it was because of the combined and enormous amount of his responsibilities, that in 1891, their pastor accepted a call to another congregation. That congregation was St. Paul's in Menomonie, WI. Again, just as in Town Center, St. Paul's was not the only congregation which Martin was to serve. His call also included the congregations at Beyer's Settlement and at Iron Creek. ²⁵

Here once again, the Lord blessed the congregations

under the care of this faithful man. In 1898, Martin succeeded in separating St. Paul's and the Beyer Settlement - Iron Creek into two separate congregations. Following this division, Martin remained the pastor of St. Paul's. ²⁶

St. Katharine's was the congregation which headed Beyer's Settlement. During the first few months of St. Katharine's new independence, Martin Eickmann worked closely with the leaders of the congregation. Martin's own home was used as the rendezvous for the joint meetings where the finances, the buildings and the calling of the new pastor were discussed and acted upon. In November of 1898, Martin Eickmann installed the Rev Geo. Kirschke as the pastor of St. Katherine's. ²⁷

During the years he spent in Town Center and in Menomonie, the Lord was not only blessing the congregations Martin was serving, but he was also blessing Martin and Emma. From the 17th of December, 1884 to the 23 of June 1902, the Lord blessed his servants with 5 sons, Harold, Martin, Wilhelm, Paul and Gerhard, and 2 daughters, Anna and Frida. ²⁸ "The older children especially had happy memories of the years spent here (Menomonie) when their father was able to ~~to~~ devote some time to his family. He made pastoral calls with a horse and buggy, often taking one of the children with him." ²⁹

Of special note is Paul Gerhard Eickmann who was the 4th son of Martin. Paul served as a professor at NWC from 1924-¹⁹⁶⁸₁. Paul G's son, Paul E., is currently a

professor at Northwestern.

Martin Eickmann's next call would take him back to his alma mater at Watertown. There he would become the Inspector and a professor. In order to understand the atmosphere which was prevalent at the time he took over the position, a little background is necessary.

The office of inspector at NWC was in and of itself a difficult task. The inspector was "to preserve order in the dormitory and to serve there *in loco parentis*, as a father to the students, who ranged in ages from thirteen to twenty-three or more." ²⁰ In the 1903\4 school year when Martin accepted the call, there were 161 students at the College, all living under the same roof. Included in that task of being a pseudo parent was also the responsibility of teaching a limited number of classes and tutoring whoever may be having troubles with their studies.

The concept of an inspector at the dormitory had been around from the beginning of the school. But there was a great amount of hesitation to make this a separate calling from that of the director of Northwestern. The fear that a conflict might arise between the two positions meant that a professor would have to also assume the responsibilities of the instructor. ²¹

In 1866 the Synod called Adolf Hoenecke to be the first of seven men to serve this hybrid position. The first years went by with relatively "few" disturbances. Still there is no doubt that the men serving during the

first few years were continuously kept on their toes, for such is the life of a supervisor. But it was during the years from 1895-1903 that there seemed to be an outbreak of misconduct among the students. ⁹²

The causes for these troublesome years may be a combination of many factors. During this time there were three resignations from the inspectorship. A large number of different men in charge can not help but bring trouble. Different styles of discipline and different personalities of the "discipliners" quite often lead to a lack of discipline itself.

There was an assignment of authority to young men over other students who were only slightly younger in age.

It is easy to see how ~~problem~~ situations could easily arise. Add to that the overburdening of the inspector with his routine work, dormitory supervision and over and above that his classroom duties. All these ~~things~~ potentially volatile situations thrown together into one short time period took a toll on discipline. ⁹³

One final unstable element that had an effect on the disorder that surrounded the dorm life was the character of the students themselves. Although many of the students were raised with a good German respect for authority, there were still trouble makers to be found. Professor Kowalke has this to say:

Supervision was made the more difficult because most of the students were preparing for the ministry, and it was quite generally expected

of such students, regardless of their age, that they be models of good behavior. Not infrequently, especially in the early years, boys would be sent to Northwestern because they had become problems too hard to handle at home. 34

To maintain order and discipline was the duty of the inspector. In speaking about this office, all the predecessors of Martin Eickmann agreed that

"No position in the economy of our institution is as difficult and as full of worry as this one. There are seven working days in every week and every day is virtually a working day of 24 hours. It requires rugged strength of body and character to do this year after year, and above that it requires sacrificing devotion of the highest order." 35

With this as the background and the summary of the call, we can easily see that the position was going to take, as Koehler describes it, "a man of unusual personality and talents." 36

In 1900, the board at Northwestern College sent a call to Rev. Martin Eickmann to hold the position of Inspector at Northwestern. But Martin returned this call. 37 In 1903, again the college sent ~~out~~ the call to Martin Eickmann. This time he accepted the call. Martin Eickmann arrived in Watertown on October 15, 1903 and was installed as Inspector in that same month. 38

Martin took to the task with the same vigor and enthusiasm with which he had attacked his ministry. A discription of his selflessness and tireless devotion has been captured quite well by Professor Kowalke when he wrote,

It was a dictum often expressed that the inspector was to be a father to the students, and that was often taken literally to mean that he was to be held responsible for the health, morality and academic progress of the boys under his care. Being utterly conscientious, Professor Eickmann did attempt to be the paragon that many parents and pastors expected him to be. When admonished to allow himself more time for rest, he replied that he could not rest at ease at night until he knew that every student was back in the building where he was supposed to be. Each morning after the six o'clock bell he would make the rounds of every bedroom on the three floors of both buildings and rouse the sleepers, and often enough he would pay some heavy sleeper a second or third visit in order to get him up and at his business. Those who reported sick required his special attention. In the evening after chapel exercises, which he always conducted himself, the routine of making the rounds on three floors, this time of the study rooms, was repeated. At least once each evening he would make the rounds of the buildings and account for every person in every room. Very often a second or third trip would be necessary to some remote part of the building to round up some errant student. 39

Aside from the routine supervision, Martin had duties as one of the teachers there at Northwestern. Those duties included carrying a class load of twelve hours. 40 These classes included teaching Latin, Religion and German.

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The ease ^{or difficulty} of Martin's work as inspector was directly related to the different actions of the board and activities of the college. For example, Martin's work was not made any easier when in 1903, the board of control banned the playing of football. The resolution of the board seems to have come across in such a way that it made some believe that football would be banned forever. But

due to the insistence of Inspector Eickmann, "forever" only lasted for one season. His insistence was on the grounds that "his difficult task of Inspector was not made any easier in the fall when young men with lots of energy didn't have a good way to channel that energy except through mischief." ⁴² In 1904 the game was once again established.

Martin soon became caught up in another undertaking at the school. In the synod meeting of 1903 in Appleton, the synod approved \$25,000 for a new dormitory. The old dorm, which had been built in 1875, was not able to house all of the students. In 1904 there were as many as 20 boys living off of campus because there was no room. Other points of consideration were that the old dorm did not have bathing facilities and the toilets were located outside. ⁴³

In 1904, Martin became the prodding stick for the Synod to get them to take action on the new dorm. An especially heavy incidence of colds, sore throats, and other sicknesses during the 1903 school year provided a very sound and hard to refute argument. A special synodical meeting was called in November of 1904. President Ernst and Inspector Eickmann had been designated to lay the needs of the college before the Synod. They submitted sketches that provided for a building "large enough to accommodate 150 boys, with showers, lockers, an office, a reception room, music rooms on a fourth floor, a

luggage room, and lavatories on each of the three floors."

44

Upon seeing these plans, the Synod voted to up the funds to \$50,000. On May 15, 1905 the cornerstone for the new dorm was laid. By October, the dorm was being occupied. 45

This new dorm added many modern conveniences which most of the students did not have at home. It also added extra work to the Inspector's work load. He now had more rounds to make over a larger distance. One also hears of how the board at one time decided that Professor Eickmann was to collect 5 cents from each student who wished to take a shower on the designated shower days of Wednesday and Saturday. Often practices such as these soon faded away but the increased responsibilities of the larger dorm still remained. 46

Sometime in the month of February of 1907, a student returned from home having been in contact with small pox and came down with the disease. Understandably so, there was much excitement in the college and in the city as well. One of the students refused to be vaccinated and although he was isolated, he did contract the disease. The board of control minutes record the events which followed in this way, "Now there was near panic. During the night before the quarantine was declared, some twenty students, mostly tertianers, ran away from school and went to their homes." 47

The same boy who had opposed getting the vaccination was also one of the youth who was a trouble maker. This boy was suspended not only because of his refusal to submit to the vaccination but because of "his constant rebellion against Professor Eickmann." 49 His classmates, however, did not see this as an appropriate reason for suspension so they boycotted classes for one day. The faculty and most of the students, with the exception of the students class, "took the whole matter in their stride, stood by Prof Eickmann, the inspector." 49

It was no hard to see that Professor Eickmann was very personally attached to his young men. In the May 29, 1907 minutes of the Board of Control, it is reported that "A thief had got into Prof. Eickmann's office and stole \$75 from his desk. This money belonged to students and was kept there for safety. Prof. Eickmann felt obligated to reimburse the students out of his own pocket." 50

What I have shown you are just a few of the different things which happened in the life of this Inspector. There are more cases of sickness, such as the scarlet fever which hit the dorm in 1910. There are more cases of insubordination as recorded in the faculty minutes of 1909. There are other incidents of theft as in the Faculty minutes of 1909. But no matter what the trouble was, simple or severe, through it all there was one man who was always there for the boys. He was the one who disciplined them, rebuked them, stood by them and loved

them.

The Eickmann household was not a safe refuge from the reaches and demands of Martin's work either. Families of students who came from some distance to visit their sons were always invited to stay overnight at the inspector's house. The younger children were often moved out of their beds to make room for unexpected guests. The story is told by one of the children of how at times they even had to cut in half the double blankets which lay across their beds in order to have enough for all of their guests. ⁵¹

Just after the small pox plague of 1907 had hit the dorm, three of the boys came down with pneumonia. One of those boys was moved into Professor Eickmann's house for him to be nursed back to health. All of these things Martin Eickmann did in love and faithfulness to his calling. He immersed himself in his "work" and his life revolved around it.

One note should be made here to be, ~~if nothing else,~~ a gentle reminder to those who would likewise feverishly involve themselves in their work. Although the boys of the school were blessed immensely by the love and attention of this faithful man, his family suffered because if it as well.

His family saw almost nothing of him as he ate all of his meals with the students and spent the evening hours in his office at the dorm in order to be available to the students. Occasionally he had Sunday dinner with his family and came home for an hour or two after the noon meal. ⁵²

One of those children "keenly" felt his father's absence. Years later when older graduates would return to campus and tell stories of about his father and how much his counsel and gentle discipline meant to them, he felt deprived of his father's companionship. ⁵³

There is no doubt that the grief, the worry and the constant attentiveness of a dormitory supervisor is a great and heavy load to bear. Martin often took daily walks to relieve as much of that pressure as possible. ⁵⁴ His year's end vacation which he took with some of his friends in Menomonie, no doubt served that same purpose as well. ⁵⁵ The vote of confidence that was given to him by the Synod in the summer of 1907, also could only help to boost his commitment to press on. ⁵⁶ So faithfully this man, in the service of his God, continued his labors day after day, night after night, year after year.

The Lord took this "treuer Mann" home to his eternal rest while he slept on the 2nd of June, 1915, at the age of 55.

Students had the first inkling that something was amiss the next morning when one after that other awoke and looking at his watch noticed that the time was long past six o'clock when the inspector made his rounds to summon sleepers from dreamland with his bright call "Aufsteh!" and the inevitable rap of his keys on the iron bedsteads. ⁵⁷

Although he had been feeling some what nervous and tired for the past few days, and was ill on Tuesday, neither his family nor his physician knew that his

condition was in any way dangerous. In fact he was confident that he was going to be getting better since it was getting close to the end of the year when he could take the time to relax a bit more. 58

Tuesday evening Martin Eickmann had presided over the chapel service. The next day when the students were told that their beloved inspector had gone to be with his Lord and that classes would be suspended, the whole campus was "plunged into gloom." About the only activity on campus that day was the draping of the front of the dorm in black and the lowering of the college flag and Old Glory to half mast. 59

On Saturday, June 5th, a short ceremony was held in the school Gym. Then the students and Professors in procession walked to St. Mark's Church. Three sermons were heard that day. First, Pastor J. Klingmann of St. Mark's preached on Lk 22:42. Then Pastor G. Bergeman, the president of the Synod, preached on Ro 14:8. Finally, Professor A. F. Ernst, the president of Northwestern College spoke of his sleeping colleague. Three choirs also sang that day. One was an assembly of the Northwestern students. The second was a quartet from Northwestern. The third was the choir from St Mark's. 60

The procession then proceeded to the Lutheran Cemetery near Watertown. From there the students returned to their dorms.

Martin Christian Eickmann was truly a persistent

and untiring example of a man who was faithful to his Lord and to his calling throughout his life. His memory is one that is well to be remembered as an example for all to follow. The poem that proceeded his death as found in the June, 1915 issue of the Black and Red, summarizes this very same thought.

In memories silent cove his noble name
Shall linger with us as a brilliant flame,
Ne'er more to die because of reverend love.
Within the golden portals there above,
His lovely soul abides in heavenly joy,
Which earthly strife shall nevermore alloy.
A Glorious fight this man of men with might
Hath waged that truth might live with truth's own
right.

He's gone.-- The falling footsteps heard no more
Recall our gentle shepherd as of yore,
And in a vision clear we see his face,
Which frowned at wickedness and beamed on worth.
Would men but follow, tread such as his pace,
Then notorious evils might decrease on earth.

This faithful shepherd of the flock of God served his Lord through the very last day of his life. His life and faithfulness should truly serve as an example and a goal to strive for in our own lives. When the time arrives that we also are called to be with our Lord may it also be said of us that we were "treue Menschen."

"Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." Rv 2:10

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