

# HEINRICH CHRISTIAN SCHWAN

## *The Third President of the Missouri Synod*

BORN: **APRIL 5, 1819** *Horneburg, Hannover, Germany*

DIED: **MAY 29, 1905** *Cleveland, Ohio*

**H** EINRICH SCHWAN CAME FROM a northern German family with many Lutheran pastors. His father was a pastor and his mother's brother was Friedrich Wyneken, missionary pastor in America and later president of the Missouri Synod. Schwan received a good education and was well prepared to continue the tradition.

After pastoral training, Schwan hoped to be a missionary on the American frontier. However, in 1843, he was called to serve as a missionary to German settlers in Leopoldina, Bahia, Brazil. There he worked diligently for six years.

In 1850, his wish to work in America was realized. He was called to Neu-Bielefeld (now Black Jack), Mo., near St. Louis, and he joined the Missouri Synod. President C.F.W. Walther installed him. Schwan's uncle, Friedrich Wyneken, also participated in the service.

In 1851, Schwan followed God's call to Zion Lutheran Church in Cleveland, Ohio, where he would work as pastor for nearly 50 years.

Schwan surprised his congregation in Cleveland on Christmas Eve by placing a large green tree lighted with candles in the church. The people, especially the children, were delighted. A tradition was established: Schwan helped to popularize the Christmas tree in churches in America, and a German custom became an American one.

Schwan quickly demonstrated abilities as a leader and skilled administrator. In 1854, he was elected vice-president of the Central District of the Missouri Synod, and in 1857, he was elected vice-president of the Missouri Synod. From 1860 to 1878, Schwan was

president of the Central District of the Missouri Synod.

In 1878, Schwan was elected president of the Missouri Synod. He would be elected president for seven terms, serving in that position for 21 years. Schwan's tenure as Synod president saw one of the most difficult periods in American Lutheran history as synods were drawn into divisive controversy over the doctrines of predestination and election. Despite challenges, Schwan faithfully led the Synod, affirming the true teaching of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

Schwan was an excellent preacher who could bring the Word of God to people in clear, simple language stirring hearts to faith in Christ and a life of witness to Him.

In 1890, the Synod commissioned Schwan to prepare a new catechism for use in its churches and schools. The "Schwan Catechism" was published in 1896 and would be used in the Synod for decades.

Schwan died in 1905 at the age of 86, a faithful servant of Christ's Church and much loved by all those who knew him.

**For more information about the 175th anniversary of the LCMS, visit [lcms.org/175](http://lcms.org/175).**

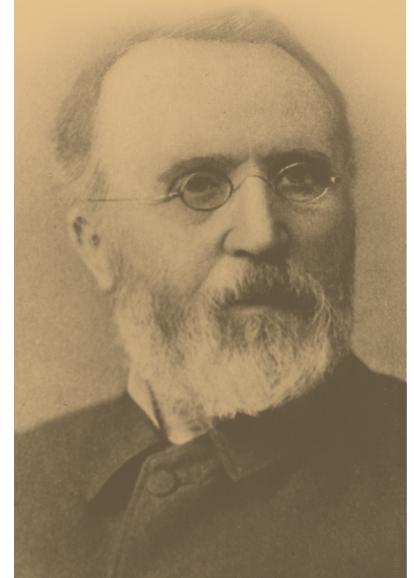


### DISCOVER MORE

Matthew C. Harrison, *At Home in the House of My Fathers* (Lutheran Legacy, 2009), 481–565.

Everette W. Meier, "The Life and Work of Henry C. Schwan as Pastor and Missionary," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (October 1951): 132–139; no. 4 (January 1952): 145–172; 25, no. 2 (July 1952): 72–85; no. 3 (October 1952): 97–121.

Karl Niermann, "Did Schwan Do Mission Work in Brazil?" *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (October 1952): 122–124.



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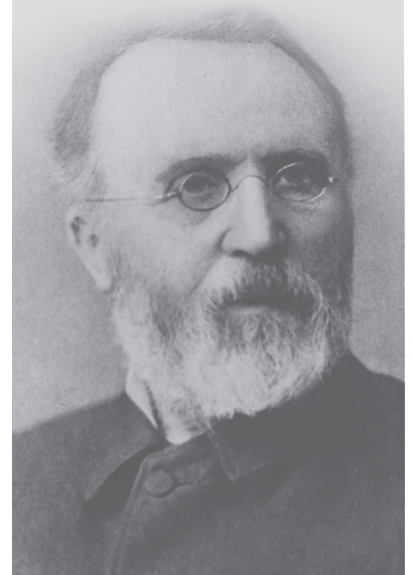


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