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"Was Basel All
That Bad?"

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WAS BASEL ALL THAT BAD?

It is interesting to find ties between groups of people separated by time and geography. However, when these ties become hard to determine because of lack of information, frustration sets in. This is the problem that is at hand when we consider just how the mission school at Basel had a bearing on the early history of our synod. There are, of course, a number of men who came from that school, who also figure in the early history of our synod. Some, of these, for example Weitbrecht, seem to justify the traditional view that we have of the mission societies in general, namely, that they are unionistic and doctrinally unsound, along with a certain instability because of a Reformed-pietistic background. However men such as W. Streissguth and G. Reim play prominent roles in our history, and they in no way seem to justify the traditional picture that we have of mission-school graduates. Under the influence of a man like Bading they successfully passed through the time when our synod took up a more confessionally sound position. However, conjecture must also play a part here. The question would seem to be a double one. Did these men simply go along with the synod as it took its stand on the confessions, or was there something in their background that, while not being a positive influence, did at least not hinder them from becoming more confessionally minded? For example, when a letter signed by Reim, Koehler and Bading in 1857 shows a definite confessional consciousness, what are we to make of it? I personally, out of fairness prefer to see it as something genuine. And if it was a genuine conviction that what the Lutheran Confessions taught was biblical, then this raises an interesting theory. Men usually take on the viewpoint of their schools, especially when these

schools stress not only the academic development of the student, but also his spiritual growth, both inside and outside of class. When men trained at such schools go off the beaten path, it is the exception rather than the rule. In view of the way that Reim and Streissguth so easily (I assume) fit in to a church that was tending toward doctrine and practice based on the confessions, would it not be logical to assume that their schooling might have had something to do with it? Now I do not say that this is necessarily the case, for men like Luther and Walther have certainly overcome the handicaps of their original training. My own idea is that since Basel stressed a confessionless, biblical training that these men were at least not influenced against Lutheranism, and so when they were confronted with the confessions they could, with unbiased minds, come to see that they taught what the Bible teaches. To briefly sum it up. Basel was not all so bad. And in trying to show how this is so, I will trace the growth and the development of the mission school at Basel under its first two inspectors, Blumhardt and Hoffmann.

The beginnings of the Basel Christian Society and the Basel Mission Institute are well presented by Koehler in his History of the Wisconsin Synod and so will not be treated here. ² It was in the year 1816 that our story begins. This was the year that Christian Gottlieb Blumhardt became inspector of the Mission School. This man who was born in 1779 in Stuttgart had been associated with the Basel Christian Society as early as 1803. In the call that brought Blumhardt to this position of inspector or dean, which post he held from 1816-1838, the goal of the society's school was stated as follows:

"Wir haben uns vereinigt, eine Missionsanstalt in unserer Stadt zu errichten, welche den einfach grossen Zweck hat, durch einen regelmaes-

zigen Kursus im zweck maesigen Vorbereitungs-
 unterricht Zoeglunge zu bilden, welche von den
 schon lange mit glueclichem Erfolg arbeitenden
 englischen und hollaendischen Missionsgesell-
 schaften als Verbreiter einer wohitaetigen Ziv-
 ilisation und als Verkuendiger des Evangeliums
 des Friedens nach verschiedenen Gegenden der
 heidnischen Welt versended werden koennen."

3

This plan for a mission school was approved in a meeting held on March 7, 1816. At the same time a set order for who would be on the Missionscollegium was adopted. This Collegium would serve as the governing board for the Missionsschule and would also act as a go between for the school and the Missionsanstalt proper. This Collegium consisted of a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and three laymen who were attorneys. This Collegium was to stay at this fixed membership so that business could be done efficiently and with a minimum of debate. The positions were also subject to yearly confirmation or renewal. At this same meeting the guidlines for the schools operation and curriculum were established:

"In die Missionschule werden 10-15 fromme Maenner oder Juenglinge, die das 20 Jahr erreicht haben, nach angestellter Pruefung aufgenommen. Sie stehen unter der unmittelbaren Aufsicht des Missionslehrers, der die Leitung des ganzen Unterrichts uebernimmt und so viele Lektionen selbst ertheilt, als ihm Zeit und Kraft gestatten. Der Unterricht in dieser Schule musz nicht zu weit ausgedehnt, aber gruendlich, durchaus praktisch, mit steter Ruecksicht auf den Missionszweck ertheilt, und fuer die eigene Fortbildung der Zoenglinge berechnet werden."

5

The three year course made up of six semesters was divided up in the following way:

1. Bible Study: a popular explanation of the historic or grammatical meaning of Scripture; memorization of Bible passages. German language study. Rudiments of English. Arith-

metic. Handwriting and spelling

2. Continuation of Bible study. General grammar in connection with the most important precepts of Rhetoric and also practice in compositions based on congregational administration. English alternating with Dutch. Geography on lands outside of Europe with special emphasis on their cultural history. Cartography.
3. Bible study for the purpose of Christian faith and ethics. English. Geography. Instruction in human anatomy. Psychology. One hour weekly in the most necessary elements of Medicine, Surgery, and Botany.
4. Popular explanation of the New Testament for the purpose of Christian faith and ethics. Practical logic. English. The application of collections of passages for doctrine and faith. (New Testament)
5. History of the spread of Christianity. Popular doctrine and ethics. Explanation of Holy Scripture for homiletical use. Instruction in the essentials of homiletics and catechetics.
6. Mission history with regard to the various methods of presenting instruction. Explanation of Scripture for homiletical use. Instruction in Catechetics. Introduction to gaining a purposeful disposition in preaching.

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This was the course envisioned and inaugurated by Blumhardt. Blumhardt was a practical-minded missionary at heart. He wanted the students to be missionaries, not trained theologians. This helps to explain courses such as medicine, English, map and geography, all of which would be of value in a mission situation. And from this course description the picture of a 'Bible college' type of school is well justified.

But what is perhaps just as important as the curriculum in gaining a feeling for the school life is what we would call the extra-curricular side of the school. The students of that school

apparently had little time to themselves. Even their life outside of the classroom was purposefully occupied. Here were some of their assigned activities: (a) instruction in the care of souls. (b) short sketches and plans for a small ordinary established congregation and its records. (c) tips on how one should act in the vicinity of a Roman Catholic mission. (d) instruction in church symbols, music and singing. (e) private lectures on the history of missions. (f) Basic instruction in various sorts of useful technical skills. Even the two yearly holidays granted the students were occupied. They were allowed to go off campus and visit a friend of the Missions Society in the country in order to gain insight into agricultural and economic subjects. After such a 'fieldtrip' they were to compose free compositions on their experiences and deliver a description of those subjects with which they had become acquainted. But above all, the spiritual development of the individual on the basis of God's word was stressed. ⁷

As confessional Lutherans we note an important omission in the curriculum, besides the lack of classical languages. There was no consideration given to the confessional writings: "Vom Studien besonderer Bekenntnisschriften ist nicht die Rede; die Bible selbst ist die grosze, maszgebende Bekenntnisschrift." ⁸

So the curriculum was what we would call an elementary or popular type. The only languages taught besides German were Dutch and English. These languages were taught with the view that the students would be sent out through Dutch or English mission societies. The only subjects that had any philosophical nature were Anthropology, Psychology and Logic, and these even were viewed as having value since they would supply both a cultural and practical

background for the students. They could both understand themselves and the people with whom they would come in contact.⁸ The Collegium purposefully steered accourse midway between the more professional training given to missionaries at Halle, and that of the craftsman type given at the operations of the Moravians. Basel had no specific educational requirements for admission, other than, as I suppose, literacy. They rather laid emphasis on a man's spiritual equipping, i.e. his relationship with God.⁹ Thus they seem to be pietistic in this respect. They not only required an applicant to be a Christian (a pprofessed Christian), as we also do, but they would conduct what would be called a spiritual entrance examination, as we shall see later.

The admission procedures were rather strict and thus betrayed the pietistic nature of the Institute. The steps in gaining admission to be a regular student (Zoeglinge) were as follows. A personal interview with the president of the Collegium was conducted. If as a result of the president's report he was not immediately rejected, then a meeting with the mission instructor (Blumhardt) followed. In this meeting the mission instructor would tell the petitioner about the demands of the missionary's calling, and he would also probe into the physical, intellectual, moral and religious fitness of the applicant. If the mission instructor's report was favorable, the mission Collegium would grant permission for a 'Novizienzeit' of about three to six months. After this period was sucessfully completed a formal reception in the presence of the Collegium followed. When appropriate prayers and admonitions had been given, the applicant would pledge himself to obey the ordinances of the Institute. He was now a full fledged Zoeglinge. Following another half year of testing and observation,

each Zoegling would be requested to attest that he wished further instruction, and that he was still firm in his resolution to preach the Gospel among the heathen.¹⁰

Besides this initial testing there is also much else told us that gives a view of student life at Basel. At the end of the sixth semester the committee examined the Zoeglinge. They wanted to be sure that at the end of their formal schooling the Zoeglinge still had the solemn intention to enter the mission field by way of the Dutch or English mission societies. If the student agreed to all of this, then in the presence of the other Zoeglinge he was certified and ordained as a missionary in general.¹¹

Schlatter, in his work on the history of the Basel mission society, gives a few glimpses into student life that are worth noting. Barring the differences in customs and times, life at Basel was not so much different from seminary life today in our midst. Even life in the dormitory was to be part of the students education. It was to develop qualities of responsibility and leadership. The men, presumably divided throughout the house in groups containing students from various stages of schooling, carried on various activities according to their stage of education. The senior members of the student body had the assignment of seeing that their under classmates kept at the books. Another person, or persons, from the student body had the task of food preparation, cleaning of rooms, and various other domestic duties. This man was called the 'Famulus'. The 'Famulus' or 'Famuli' would apparently portion out these tasks among their fellow classmates and so functioned as executives. Every Friday evening the study supervisors and the 'Famuli' would meet with the

mission school instructor to present reports on the weeks' activities in the dormitory. At this time they would also present their own observations of what went on and also relay the wishes of other students regarding matters of education to the instructor. Thus it would seem that in the classroom there was little give and take between student and teacher, as is usually the case in the schools of Europe.¹²

Food, of course, plays a large part in the life of students of all times. In a meeting of July 29, 1816 the usual bill of fare was set up. For the morning meal soup was to be served. The evening and noon meals were also soup with the addition of meat and vegetables. On Sunday they would be treated to roast and salad. And as far as drink: "Das Getraenk sollte Bier sein."¹³ However this fine menu was impractical because of cost factors. The original plan of having the students prepare their own meals along the line of the monastic cloisters was abandoned. It was felt that it would be more economical to have a professional handle this business. So a certain man by the name of Josef Jaus, who had been associated with the mission society from the time of Spittler, was employed. He initially agreed to feed the students at the rate of 30-35 Batzen per student per week. But even this failed to help for in four months after the opening of school the cost of room and board had to be revised. And in the following year of 1817 things got so bad that students were allowed and encouraged to have one of their weekly noon meals off campus at the home of an obliging friend of the society.¹⁵

So this was the layout as proposed by the Collegium in 1816.

Now we shall see how this plan was set in motion. A building was first of all needed. After some negotiation a building dubbed the 'Panthier' was purchased on May 27, 1816. This building was able to house from 15-20 students.¹⁶ The next thing needed for a school were students. Students had been obtained as early as February of 1816. Seven applicants were procured through a Pastor Bruschi of Eriswil of Bern Canton. Blumhardt himself was instrumental in finding some students. On the 24th of June, 1816 the president of the Collegium inquired as to the exact date of the opening of the institute. However, at the same meeting it was advised that the opening be postponed for a short while. The cause of the delay was not because the 'Panthier' was not yet ready for occupancy, but because time was needed for a suitable testing of the applicants. On July 10 they examined four of the applicants, and three passed. A subsequent exam yielded three more and so on August 26, 1816 the Institute was opened.¹⁷

The support of the now-opened institute depended on interested persons and friends of the Missionsanstalt. Thus 'Hilfsvereine' were established throughout France, Italy, Switzerland and, of course, Germany. The first cities to have such 'Hilfsvereine' were Leonberg and Stuttgart. (1816) Also in 1816 more sprang up in Krefeld, Frankfurt am M., Basel and Barmen. From 1818-1819 more were inaugurated in Bern, Tuebingen, Lauffen, Besigheim, Erlangen, and as far north as Dresden. In 1819 Leipzig, Bremen, and Zuerich joined the association. In addition, there were interested friends and supporters in France, Italy, Holstein and Koenigsberg.¹⁸ In August of 1820 Inspector Blumhardt made a seven week junket for the purpose of strengthening existing ties

between Basel and the existing 'Hilfsvereine', and to awaken an interest for missions and their support. He also hoped to lay the groundwork for a self sufficient German Mission Society. It was during this seven week tour that he had contacts with Jaenicke's operation at Berlin, and with the Missionsverein at Barmen. This enterprise at Barmen had been founded initially by Blumhardt in 1818.¹⁹

In connection with Barmen it is interesting to note how closely Barmen and Basel were connected. The Missionsverein at Barmen had no school at first, but they had an abundance of men willing to attend such a school. During the first year of their existence they sent three students to Basel besides lending support to Jaenicke at Berlin and also helping the Halle Institute and the Moravians. Because of such zeal they decided to found their own school in 1825 under the aegis of Basel. However, Basel was not too satisfied with the low degree of education that the men from Barmen were equipped with. They wanted the Barmen graduates to be subject to the same testing standards as prevailed at Basel. So in accord with the wishes of Basel, Barmen worked out another plan whereby the Barmen school would serve a two fold purpose. It would be a school which would prepare men for Basel, and it would also be a place for the training of mission school teachers. However, since few Barmen students from that time on, made it to Basel, and since by 1828 various Basel 'Hilfsvereine' in the vicinity of Barmen had formed the Rheinische Missionsanstalt at Barmen, the apron strings between Basel and Barmen were cut and the two peacefully parted ways.²⁰

So far we have considered the formative stages of the school at Basel, the time during which it was really little more than a bible college. But events in the very earliest years were shaping up that would transform this school into something more resembling a theological seminary, one more fit for the training of Lutheran pastors. The events which led up to the strengthening of the curriculum were rather unusual. It was not a basic desire to give the students a more thorough training that led to the changes. For Blumhardt was a practical man whose only interest was in getting out men to the mission fields. But it was just this zeal plus some forces from the outside that did actually effect a change in the curriculum. The general mission picture at this time was one that necessitated teamwork among the various mission societies in and outside of Europe. Germany, the land of scholarship, seemingly never had a shortage of students willing to become missionaries. Germany, however, did have a perpetual lack of funds needed to support foreign missions. The Dutch, and particularly the English, had more than adequate funds, but no students. Thus a natural opening existed for further dealings with the Dutch and the English societies. The Germans made a distinction between pastors and missionaries. The pastors destined for service in the homeland were expected to have a high standard of learning. The missionaries destined for work among the heathen had no such need, as they viewed it. The Dutch on the other hand, and especially the English made no such sharp distinction between the training that was to be given to the missionary as opposed to that of the pastor. They wanted both pastor and missionary to have a solid background in the liberal arts and classics. With these several facts in mind, the following historical developments can more readily ^{be} understood. Already in 1815 contact had been made with the

Dutch mission group, the Rotterdammer Gesellschaft, which had come into existence when in 1797 the Dutch had appealed to the London Mission Society for help.²¹ In 1816 Rotterdam informed Basel that they would be willing to support two of their own men's schooling at Basel. In 1818 three Dutch students were transferred to Berkel, Holland for their final preparation. That same year the Dutch appealed for four more men when they had completed their training at Basel. In August of the same year (1818) Blumhardt travelled to Holland to make further arrangements. He proposed that Holland would give their future missionaries to Basel for their training and that from Basel they could return to Berkel for their final preparation. In order to facilitate dealing with the Dutch, who by this time had doubts about the fitness of Basel, Blumhardt proposed that the course at Basel could be upgraded to include courses in Greek, Latin and Hebrew so that the "Zoeglingle als ordinierte Geistliche von Basel ausgehen koennten."²² But after Blumhardt's departure the yet sceptical Dutch rejected the proposal of Blumhardt and even removed their last two students from the school at Basel. Further troubles with their own colonies kept the Dutch from sending out as many missionaries as they wanted. As a result of this, their mission program faltered and eventually stagnated. The final result was that working connections with Basel were severed and the Dutch connection failed to bring about the change of curriculum.²³

But in spite of the failure with the Dutch, events were shaping up that would bring about the necessary change in curriculum. Basel in looking for a market for its men turned its gaze across the North Sea to England. Here were active societies that sorely needed men.

Basel for some time had sought more permanent relations with the LMS, but London informed Basel on July 3, 1818 that no new groups were being accepted into membership at that time since the LMS had all that it could efficiently manage. But there was another way open to Basel, namely, the Christian Mission Society (CMS). This group from the time of their founding had trouble in getting men to send out as missionaries. From the year of its founding in 1799 up to the year of 1814 only 24 men had been sent out by them. And of these 24 men only seven were English and only three of these seven men were fully ordained. Thus in the summer of 1817 a plea from the CMS reached Blumhardt. They asked for two young men of high education, including a knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, who could be ordained by the bishop of Copenhagen and then be sent out as Danish missionaries to Trankebar. But since Basel had no men with such training it had to decline the offer. But this offer sent Blumhardt to propose in the summer of 1818 that Latin be taken up into the curriculum.²⁴

However this one addition was not enough as far as the CMS was concerned. So Steinkopf, who had been associated closely with Basel, but was now involved in England with the CMS made a proposal. In a letter sent out under the authority of the secretary of the CMS, Pratt, to Basel, he said, "solche, die nebst den christliche Herzensfaehigkeiten auch eine wissenschaftliche Bildung (Kenntnis der lateinischen, griechischen und hebraeischen Sprache) und selbst eine gewisse aueszere Bildung besaeszten. Fuer sechs derselben wuerde sie dann die Kosten bestreiben."²⁵ But in reply to this proposal and offer of aid Basel replied that only such education would be carried out as was necessary for missions to heathen peoples. But Steinkopf, acting as mediator, proposed that

a compromise could be effected by adding a second degree that would take care of the proposed change in the curriculum.²⁶ Thus Basel could educate both types of workers. But because of Basel's reluctance a Dr. Owen, secretary of the London Bible Society, acting as plenipotentiary for the CMS came to Basel. He again emphasized that the CMS could not find men elsewhere and a special need existed in the East Indies for cultured and educated men to represent the Gospel.²⁷ Owen's personal appeal seemed to work, for in a meeting during October of 1818 a decision was reached to inaugurate the second degree. There were about 35-40 applicants for this course, twelve of whom already had some background in the classics. So in 1819 the second degree had an enrollment of twenty men.²⁸

Because of the increased curriculum other men were called to assist Blumhard in instruction. Because of the increased interest in the society and the demand for schooling there, the Collegium was approached on July 14, 1820 with the proposal for a one year preparatory class. In 1821 the class was begun. Its purpose was to find out the intellectual qualifications of students who would then enter the regular course of study. These students were not considered as Zoeglunge, but only as guests. However for admission to this preparatory class only a two thirds vote of the Collegium was required. The class was to be kept to a maximum of ten or twelve. The ultimate hope for this class was that it would also serve to unify those students who passed it successfully and so instil some measure of esprit de corps.²⁹

But inspite of the new classes and changes, things did not always go so well. Because of the abundance of students it was

necessary to purchase a new house. The plan for purchase was approved on April 12, 1819. On July 26, 1819 the Panthier was vacated and residence was taken up in the newly purchased 'Baerisch Haus' on Leonhardstrasse.³⁰ But problems more pressing than housing were on the horizon. Trouble was brewing with England. The English were not satisfied with the caliber of education given at Basel. Especially the knowledge of the English language left much to be desired. Also bureaucratic hinderances strained the ties with Basel. The English governor of Sierra Leon, where the CMS had an active mission, wanted only English missionaries. In the West Indies, however, the problem was more ecclesiastical in nature. The desire there was that only English missionaries with English ordinations be allowed to work.³¹

These and similar situations made the future of the advanced course of the institute uncertain. However,^{since} both Blumhardt and the CMS wished to maintain a working relationship, each decided to bear with the other. Things continued pretty much the same since more professors were added. And so it appeared that the institute was determined to give its men an education that included the classical languages. The last years of the inspectorship of Blumhardt were not fruitful ones for the school. Because of prolonged illness of Blumhardt and some of the supervising faculty that lived in the dormitory,³² the academic standards as well as morale and discipline suffered. At the death of Blumhardt in 1838 the Collegium called a new man to fill his post; this time they picked a man that had been theologically trained in a more thorough academic way.

They called a university trained theologian, Wilhelm Hoffmann.

It was under the hand of this man that the institute was finally brought up to an adequate academic standard which during the inspectorship of Blumhardt only existed on paper. The reign of Hoffmann lasted from 1839 to 1850, but his educational standards were an influence for years after his departure to teach at a German university. It was during the time of Hoffmann that Wilhelm Streissguth received his training at Basel. According to the mission's records Streissguth who had enrolled at Basel in August of 1846 was a student still during 1848.³³ And the very year of Hoffmann's departure G. Reim entered the school. Thus these two important men in the early years of our synod's history had attended Basel when its instruction was at a high standard, as shall be shown.

Hoffmann was both a wise disciplinarian and a master educator. He knew how to instill in his students both a love for order and discipline as well as one for learning. Much of what Hoffmann saw when arriving at Basel pleased him. He had, apparently, as a university man severe doubts about the set up at Basel. And the general run of the mill mission school held little attraction for Hoffmann's keen and precise mind. However, Hoffmann was no ivory tower specialist. As a christian educator his main goal was that sort of training which would best equip a herald of God's word, whether at home or abroad. And he was sure that a thorough training along the lines of the classical gymnasia and theological schools would fulfill this function far better than would simply a biblical-oriented popular education. Thus, he was in full agreement with the curriculum as it existed on paper. What most impressed him about Basel was that it had a practical bent. It had, in theory, the advantages of the theological seminary in

Wuerttemberg without its disadvantages that ill-equipped men to be practicing preachers, namely, its critical and theoretical approach to theology. Along this line he appreciated the fact that students from all educational and occupational backgrounds were freely mixed together. This, he felt, contributed towards the development of a practical insight into various people and how they live and work.³⁵

But, although, recognizing the advantages of Basel, he was by no means blind to its deficiencies. He saw much that needed correction. The basic three year, six semester, course of the original plan had been expanded under Blumhardt to a five year course to include the necessary language training. However, in practice this had degenerated to at most a four year course. Thus in four years a student was not only expected to learn the elementary and theological subjects, but also Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, as well as one modern Eastern language that could be of use in a mission field. And as can be expected the Latin was first to go. The students wondered just how a non biblical language, one no longer spoken, could be of any use. (A sentiment also rampant today). And although not stated, it can be safely assumed that the Greek and the Hebrew probably degenerated to the bare rudiments.³⁶ Hoffmann's first reform was to bring back the languages to a real and prominent place in the curriculum. But a few hurdles stood in the way of this. Most of the Zoeglinge possessed only a basic elementary education. And in addition to this, it had been the policy of Blumhardt to postpone the study of the classics for at least one semester so that more work could be done in polishing up the German of the students. Hoffmann,

therefore proposed that the classics be retained during the first year and in this way a good start could be made at mastering the languages and also the new students could be observed as to their ability with the result that unfit students could be weeded out at an early stage. Along with this change, he also introduced courses on thinking and speaking during the first year which would further train the students abilities. And, most important, he made the five year program mandatory.³⁷

But in order to institute these reforms in a practical way, further refinements were needed. It was plain to Hoffmann that to simply drop a student into a classical based curriculum without adequate preparation was out of the question. And at the same time he could not see wasting one of the valuable years of study at the institute in learning subjects that should have been previously mastered. Thus on July 13, 1842 Hoffmann presented a proposal to begin a separate preparatory institute to prepare the students for the regular curriculum.³⁸ But it took the committee a few months to act. The committee hoped that this necessary training would be carried on at some other school and so save Basel that extra burden, but when this turned out to be impossible, Hoffmann was given permission to proceed. On September 9, 1844 Hoffmann opened this preparatory institute at Kornthal. But the committee made it plain that although this institute was geographically removed from Basel, it was, nevertheless, under its control.³⁹

This institute brings us almost to the end of our story. The success of Hoffmann's educational reform at Basel now depended on the success of the trainer school at Kornthal. And for a while

the viability of the Kornthal project seemed doubtful. The far removed location of Kornthal had some advantages. It was in a rural district far removed from the disturbances and influences of a city like Basel. And the rural scene also was of advantage for the students. It was both healthy and productive since the institute had a farm where the students could work off physical energy as well as contribute to the upkeep of the school. But this pastorale locale also seemed to be plagued with a host of troubles. On July 4, 1845 a fire of unknown origin broke out in the dormitory and burned that building plus many surrounding buildings to the ground. Some of the Collegium saw this as a sign of God's displeasure over the revamping of the school system at Basel. But, the more sane minded majority saw it merely as a chastening towards improvement and patience.⁴⁰ So in January of 1846 a new house was purchased nearer the town. The students who mean time had been boarded around the area were collected and the building which had been dubbed the 'Drahtzug' was occupied. However troubles still existed. Influenza and other illnesses were near epidemic in the school. A doctor was consulted and he attributed the illnesses to the excessive drafts and dampness of the old building. Again it was proposed to abandon the school, since at this time because of the political situation and the rumor of war made people^{were} reluctant to make further capital investment, But Hoffmann in an ardent plea pointed out that it was in just such troubled times that preachers of the Gospel were needed. Hoffmann saved the day. It was decided that the school would remain open and perhaps improvements could be made or at least the defects could be endured so that men might be furnished for the school at Base.⁴¹ So Hoffmanns reforms stood and continued for years to come.

In conclusion, we can make the following observation pertaining to the early history of our synod. Basel was a place that formed men such as Reim and Streissguth. Whether what these men did toward the building up of confessional Lutheranism in our synod was because of their background at Basel is a mute point until more records come to light, which is not too likely. But we are indebted to Basel in a couple of ways at least. First of all it is to be noted that although Basel did not stress the Lutheran confessions, it apparently equally omitted reference to those of the Reformed. Thus these men, as I see it, were educated along strictly biblical, although pietistic lines. They were thus *tabula erasa* (in the good sense) who when coming into contact with the confessions saw that what the confessions taught was biblical truth. Another contribution of Basel was that these men brought over a appreciation and aptitude for the classics which was not always the common property of our early men. And since men such as Reim were also given the charge of educating future candidates and pastors for the ministry, no few will deny that it is preferable to have a solid background in the languages for a Lutheran pastor, than not. You are entitled to take or leave my hypotheses; they are my own and I am convinced of them. But if nothing else I hope I have given a picture of the school at Basel that up till now, judging by what Koehler had to say about it, has been somewhat misrepresented. If you would add a study of the confessions of our church to the curriculum at Basel you would have roughly the training which we are now receiving. And my final statement is that I hope we will learn a lesson from Basel. If they saw the value of upgrading their education by way of the classics, can we downgrade the classics as is the trend among our students. We will be doing our pastors of the future a grave disservice by watering down our language requirements. We could

very well end up with what Basel started with: a bible-school curriculum. It is often very difficult to articulate exactly the value of the Latin and Greek classics, but they are real nevertheless. They contribute to a sharpening of the mental powers and a refinement of the sensibilities that no other discipline is able to impart. Luther called a study of the languages the servant of the Gospel, and he was not just speaking of the bare rudiments of Greek and Hebrew needed for translation. Pray God that we do not lose what for so many years has been our treasure. Rather than use the tired argument of the low standards of the public school product let us try to build up the product as was done in the case of the students that came to Basel during the time of Hoffmann. The demise of the German language has not, as we can see, meant the demise of pure doctrine, but the neglect of the languages which has already started most certainly will. The sword of the Spirit is the word of God, but its sheath is language.

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NOTES

1. J.P. Koehler, The History of the Wisconsin Synod (St. Cloud, Minn.: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1970), p. 51.
2. Ibid., p. 19ff.
3. Wilhelm Schlatter, Geschichte der Basler Mission (Basel: Verlag der Basler Missionsbuchhandlung, 1916), p. 28.
4. Ibid., p. 28f.
5. Ibid., p. 29.
6. Ibid., p. 29.
7. Ibid., p. 29.
8. Ibid., p. 29.
9. Ibid., p. 30.
10. Ibid., p. 31.
11. Ibid., p. 32.
12. Ibid., p. 32.
13. Ibid., p. 32.
14. Ibid., p. 32f.
15. Ibid., p. 32.
16. Ibid., p. 34.
17. Ibid., p. 36.
18. Ibid., p. 38-46 passim.
19. Ibid., p. 51.
20. Ibid., p. 51f.
21. Ibid., p. 58.
22. Ibid., p. 60.
23. Ibid., p. 61.
24. Ibid., p. 62.
25. Ibid., p. 62.
26. Ibid., p. 62.
27. Ibid., p. 63.
28. Ibid., p. 65.
29. Ibid., p. 68.
30. Ibid., p. 69.
31. Ibid., p. 73.
32. Ibid., p. 151.
33. Magazin fuer die neueste Geschichte der evangelischen Missions- und Bibel-Gesellschaften, Jahrgang 1948, Viertes Quartalheft, (foldout).
34. Koehler, op. cit., p. 50.
35. Schlatter, op. cit., p. 152.
36. Ibid., p. 152.
37. Ibid., p. 153.
38. Ibid., p. 153.
39. Ibid., p. 154f.
40. Ibid., p. 156.
41. Ibid., p. 157f.