

# The Significance of Dr. Adolf Hoenecke for the Wisconsin Synod and American Lutheranism

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[This article appeared in German in four installments in the *Theologische Quartalschrift*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (July 1935) and three subsequent issues. Professor Pieper taught at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary from 1902 to 1941 and so was for six years a colleague of Dr. Hoenecke on the faculty. For the translation we are indebted to Rev. Werner H. Franzmann, a former editor of *The Northwestern Lutheran*, who is now living in retirement in Westfield, Wisconsin. Pastor Franzmann is the translator of two volumes of Lenten sermons by Dr. Hoenecke: *A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1939) and *Glorified in His Passion* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1957).]

The above topic was furnished to the *Quarterly* through a 1933 resolution of our General Synod [the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod today-ed.] The synod at that time was reminded that its next convention would coincide with the one-hundredth anniversary of the year when its one great theologian, Dr. Hoenecke, was born. The synod resolved to celebrate the event at its convention this year [1935] and to assign to the theological faculty the necessary preparations. In keeping with that, we in our seminary classes have already pointed more often than usual to Dr. Hoenecke's significance for our theology and the distinctive character of our synod. At the commencement service this year the preacher on the basis of Psalm 4:3, took note of this same theme, although with the brevity required by the circumstances.

The topic before us was to be treated in our synodical periodicals for the people of the synod in general, while the *Theological Quarterly* was to do the same for the pastors and teachers in particular. But the latter objective presented some difficulties. Who was to do the writing? Finally the assignment fell to the undersigned. Although he by this time had grown old and was carrying a heavy overload of work, he was the only member of the faculty left who had worked together with Dr. Hoenecke. But I feel hardly equal to the task, and so I beg the indulgence of my readers in advance.

If I, nevertheless, go at this task, I do so with my eyes trained on the future of our synod. The words of 2 Peter 1:14ff are very much on my mind. Together with the men of the present generation who are influential in the synod, I sense myself to be a link between the past and the future of our synod. Muehlhauser died on September 15, 1867. My personal recollection of our synodical life reaches back to the year 1870. Johann Weinmann and Wilhelm Wrede and the other participants in the formal founding of the synod had disappeared from the picture very early. Jacob Conrad was the only one I got to know personally.

Over the course of the years since 1871 I gradually learned to know most of the prominent men—and many not in that category. But I became acquainted with Hoenecke and several of his 17 Watertown students only after I had entered the ministry. All of these have now passed on, as far as I know. There are those who personally were students of Hoenecke and are active presently in the ministry of the General Synod or of the district synods or who have come to us from elsewhere. These have only in a limited measure gone through what we older men have, namely, the doctrinal controversies and the debates on church and ministry during the past 50 years. Both of these groups could, no doubt, get along without this literary effort of mine as they observe the Hoenecke anniversary this year. But my deep concern is for our younger generation. They did not hear Hoenecke personally; they did not go through the doctrinal battles of Hoenecke's time. Nor have they heard much of anything concerning his earlier activity that brought about a healthier, sounder doctrinal position and a

firming up of discipline in our synod. This observation applies with particular force to the students at our Thiensville [Mequon] seminary.

Our young American students have a very poor feel for historical connections. They are not concerned as to how things in our synod developed as they did. But in their future pastoral office they will be beleaguered by the modernistic, unionistic and secularizing forces that so strongly make themselves felt. Now, if they are to hold their own and win the battle, they need not only the deepest immersing of their souls in the gospel and a thorough knowledge of Holy Scripture. They also need a trustworthy introduction into the historical development and decay and renewal of the New Testament church from the beginning to the present day, with particular emphasis on its history during and after the Reformation. An equally strong emphasis should be given to the wondrous transplanting of genuine Lutheranism from the land of the Reformation to this land, in which material interests are given the priority.

For a long time past there has persisted in my mind what Luther says in his "Sermon on Keeping Children in School"<sup>1</sup> and in "To the Town Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"For we have the gospel and the preaching office only by the blood and sweat of our Lord. He won them by his anguished, bloody sweat. He earned them by his blood and cross, and gave them to us. We have them without any coat to ourselves, having done nothing and given nothing for them. Ah, God! How bitter it was for him! Yet how kindly and gladly he did it! How greatly the dear apostles and all the saints suffered that these things might come to us! How many have been put to death for them in our own time!

"To boast a bit myself, too, how many times have I had to suffer-and will yet suffer-the pains of death for them, that I might thereby serve my countrymen! But all this is nothing compared with what Christ, God's Son and our dear heart, has given for them. Yet by all this suffering he will have earned from us only this, that some men persecute, condemn; blaspheme, and consign to the devil this dearly-bought office of preaching the gospel, while others keep hands off, supporting neither pastors nor preachers and giving nothing toward their maintenance. Besides this, they turn the children away from this office, so that it will soon go to destruction, and Christ's blood and agony will be in vain. Still, they go their way undisturbed, having no qualms of conscience, no repentance or regret, for this hellish and more than hellish ingratitude, this unspeakable sin and blasphemy. They show neither fear nor awe of God's wrath, neither desire nor love for the dear Savior in return for his bitter pain and agony. Instead, with these terrible abominations they still claim to be evangelicals and Christians!

"If this is the way things are to go in the German lands, then I am sorry that I was born a German, or ever wrote or spoke German; and if I could do it with a good conscience, I would give my aid and counsel to have the pope come back to rule over us, and with all his abominations to oppress and shame and ruin us worse than before. Formerly, when people served the devil and put the blood of Christ to shame, all the purses stood wide open. There was no limit to men's giving to churches, schools, and all sorts of abominations. Children could be driven, pushed, and forced into monasteries, churches, foundations, and schools at unspeakable cost—all of which was total loss. But now when men are to establish real schools and real churches—no, not establish them but just maintain them in a state of good repair, for God has established them and also given enough for their maintenance—and we know that in so doing we keep God's word, honor Christ's blood, and build the true church, now all the purses are fastened shut with iron chains. Nobody can give anything. And besides, we tear the children away. We will not allow them to be supported by the churches (to which we give nothing) and to enter these salvatory offices in which, without any effort on their part, even their temporal needs are met. We will not allow them to serve God and to honor and preserve Christ's blood, but push them instead into the jaws of Mammon while we tread Christ's blood underfoot—and yet are good Christians!

"I pray that God will graciously let me die and take me from here, that I may not see the misery that must come over Germany. For I believe that if ten Moseses stood and prayed for us [Exod. 17:11], they would accomplish nothing. I feel, too, when I would pray for my beloved Germany, that my prayer rebounds; it refuses to ascend as when I pray for other things. For it simply must be so: God will save Lot and inundate Sodom [Gen. 19:29]. God grant that in this matter I must be lying, a false prophet! This would be the case if we were to reform and honor our Lord's word and his precious blood and death differently from what we have been doing, and if we were to help and train our young people to fill God's offices, as has been said" (*Luther's Works [LW]* [St Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1955-1986], 46:255f).

<sup>2</sup>"Let us remember our former misery, and the darkness in which we dwelt. Germany, I am sure, has never before heard so much of God's word as it is hearing today; certainly we read nothing of it in history. If we let it just slip by without thanks and honor, I fear we shall suffer a still more dreadful darkness and plague. O my beloved Germans, buy while the market is at your door; gather in the harvest while there is sunshine and fair weather; make use of God's grace and word while it is there! For you should know that God's word and grace is like a passing shower of rain which does not return where it has once been. It has been with the Jews, but when it's gone it's gone, and now they have nothing. Paul brought it to the Greeks; but again when it's gone it's gone, and now they have the

In reference to Hoenecke's work as well as to Luther's I should like to sound the call: "*Willingis, Willingis, unde veneris!*"<sup>3</sup>—the words once written on the door of the self-confident Archbishop of Mainz—at least to all those who have been my students. To be sure, church history and world history are not God's Word that in its charity and easy accessibility unfailingly guides every student in all the questions of life. Yet history is the almighty God's working and ruling in grace and judgment among a lost and defiant generation that always insists on pursuing the way of error and on finding buyers for its own wisdom. Through a thousand, yes, twice that many, concrete examples history sets before our eyes the fulfillment of God's promises of grace and his threats of judgment. And always it draws us to the "one thing needed" of Luke 10:42. At the same time it leads us to a humble marveling at the unsearchable ways of God (Rom 11:33-36), so that we do not nurse the conceit that we know something and can do something, and that we do not think the gospel could never have been lost to us.

So, too, God has demonstrated himself to be wonderful in the history which tells that he transplanted the pure gospel in the language of Luther to a people which in its earliest times as a nation had adopted English as its official language. Thus God has given repentance for life also to English-speaking people through the gospel restored by Luther. There, among them, lies our assignment for the future. I say, ours too. It is the assignment of our synod as well as that of our big sister synod [i.e., Missouri]. By God's marvelous grace we have the Word as pure and clear as they do—I say this from a personal knowledge of both synods—thou it became ours in a different way.

The Missouri Synod emerged out of grave turmoils in its beginnings and became what it is through the activity of a fiery champion of God's Truth—an activity that resounded far and wide and that, like a mighty stormwind, leveled all opposition blocking its path. We of the Wisconsin Synod had to overcome something that had crept in to mar our early history, namely, the unclarity and indecisiveness of men who personally were truly godly. The change came about through a man as devout as was his Missouri counterpart—a man solidly anchored in Scripture and Lutheran doctrine, razorsharp mentally, decisive, and quick and surefooted in debate. Yet he was a calm and prudent man who exercised his influence quietly, bore the weaknesses of our older men, though yielding not even a particle of God's Word. Even when practicing polemics, he never offended against Christian courtesy—just read the *Gemeindeblatt* and *Der Lutheraner* of that period. He strengthened and guided his coworkers in the synod and gave his students a firm grounding in sound Lutheranism, and with great patience he eagerly pursued peace with all who loved divine Truth. That is my immediate recollection of Dr. Hoenecke. Therefore we ought to follow the exhortation of Hebrews 13:7-9 in regard to him as well as Walther.

But we dare not make idols out of one or the other. Both had their particular weaknesses, which have come down to their students and synods as part of their inheritance. Concerning that matter, as it pertains to Dr. Hoenecke, I do not wish to speak in this introductory part. Those weaknesses do not diminish the honor due him. He himself exercised criticism, privately and publicly, of many things that surfaced in his own synod. In some very concrete cases he also pressed successfully for discipline of doctrine and life and for faithful discharge of the pastoral office. Even in dealing with Walther he prevailed with his insistence on careful wording in formulating the doctrine of election. Our last word dare not be: So says Hoenecke, or: So says Walther, but: Thus says the Lord! The former spells deifying man, and it leads to a party spirit and to splits in the church. If we want to preserve peace in the church, we must stay with Scripture as the sole authority. Under this head belongs this that we constantly busy ourselves with the Scriptures and put aside our personal pursuits.

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Turk. Rome and the Latins also had it; but when it's gone it's gone, and now they have the pope. And you Germans need not think that you will have it forever, for ingratitude and contempt will not make it stay. Therefore, seize it and hold it fast, whoever can; for lazy hands are bound to have a lean year" (*LW*, 45:352f).

<sup>3</sup>"Willingis, Willingis, remember where you have come from."

It is fitting that I point out the sources from which I have drawn the material to be presented here. Naturally, among them belongs some general knowledge of the history of the church since the Reformation and its checkered development as it took the form of the state church at the turn of the 18th century and into the 19th. The literature for our own history is sparse. It is a feature of the particular character of our synod that in its early years it produced no books. Whatever was written was stuck away in the attic—something that a later generation called "the archives." These naturally began with Muehlhaeuser's presidency and extended even beyond Bading's presidency. These archives, on the one hand, have large gaps in them and, on the other, are too detailed. In addition, they were unorganized until Prof. Joh. P. Koehler arranged and edited them.

Koehler knew the history of our synod's founding in part from his father. But he had to journey to Germany in order to get a true, full picture of that history, to verify it by visiting the locales involved in it, and to have the gaps filled in for him. That was an arduous piece of work. We have the result in his *Geschichte der Allgemeinen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin, und anderen Staaten* [Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1925]. Serving him as guides in his work, in addition to materials he had gathered privately, were his general knowledge of history and a number of articles in encyclopedias, especially those concerning the Protestant mission societies. But his work has a wider purpose than does our commemoration this year. Therefore the first part of it treats only the founding period with a wealth of details which are unessential for our purpose. This part of the book covers a period too early for Hoenecke to appear in it.

It is indispensable, however, in forming a judgment regarding Hoenecke's significance, because it portrays the confusion marking our synod's beginnings—a confusion which Hoenecke brought to an end. It is upon the factual material which Koehler uncovered that our judgment, largely, must be based regarding the diverse confessional stance and personal character of the pastors in that early period. For the evaluation of Hoenecke I have at my disposal the oral and written accounts of his sons, Walter and Otto, especially that of the latter. But the main sources that must serve me are Hoenecke's own writings: his articles in the *Gemeindeblatt*, especially those from the early years (from 1865 onward) in which he gives instruction and wages polemics; his essays at synodical conventions; his articles in the *Quartalschrift* written later on; further, most self-evidently, his homiletical books. Nor dare we forget his public addresses at synod conventions and at conferences in the earlier and later times of controversy. Last of all, if we wish to remain objective, we must take into account the polemics of Walther and this and that criticism by his synodical brothers directed against the conditions in our synod in its early years. We find these in *Der Lutheraner* and *Lehre und Wehre* of the years 1855-1868.

Even this incomplete listing of the pertinent literature shows that it is no easy task to gain a correct judgment regarding Dr. Hoenecke's significance for our synod. Here years of thorough study, great impartiality and a well-developed sense of history are required. What I am prepared to present in a few brief articles is drawn from a somewhat superficial knowledge of the literature adduced above, from the accounts of Hoenecke's sons, and from a closer acquaintanceship with Hoenecke of about 16 years and a six-year period of working together with him in times of battle and times of peace. It is a personal judgment that makes no claims of validity for all. Yet I hope that in this or that respect it will command a measure of attention on the part of the students at our seminary, both in its Wauwatosa and its Thiensville [Mequon] years.

In order to place the work of Hoenecke in the right light, we must take a look into the conditions in our synod upon which he was called to make an impact.

At stake was genuine, sound Lutheranism; in other words, the gospel of God in its original form. In what does that consist? The answer is:

*There exists only one Truth, and its name as Jesus Christ* (Jn 14:6). This Truth is divided into three great aspects: *grace, the Word, faith*. *Grace*—Ephesians 2:8f; *the Word*—John 17:15,17; John 5:39; *faith*—John 6:47; 11:25. These three are one, and they are always together. Where one is present, there the other two are as

well; and when one is lacking, the others are lacking, too. Concerning these three as being one, Luke 10:42 is valid in its application. This one thing is indispensable.

This Truth of God is so vast that it encompasses heaven and earth, all the acts of God and of human beings. It is so powerful that it makes good again everything that our sin has corrupted; but it is also so fragile that every corruption which debases the glory of our Savior jeopardizes the salvation of every Christian and brings ruin to the church. Despising it spells judgment upon the peoples of the earth and the destruction of the world (Mk 16:16; Jn 3:18; 1 Cor 16:22).

This is the gospel of our God. In just this way the Lord proclaimed it with his own mouth, and so did Paul and Peter and John. This very gospel Luther brought to light again. It was this same gospel that our truly great American teachers have taught us. For it they contended and suffered much, saying with Luther: "Of this article nothing can be yielded or surrendered, even though heaven and earth, and whatever will not abide, should sink to ruin."<sup>4</sup> By this yardstick we, motivated by the love of Christ, by the zeal of a Walther, but also by the patience and discretion of a Hoenecke, must measure all who boast of possessing the pure gospel and sound Lutheranism—and that applies also to the devout fathers of our synod.

The Lutheranism of these men was not what it should have been—just as little as things were in perfect order in our big sister synod when it was young. The warning call, "*Recole, unde veneris*," is a very necessary and wholesome one (1 Cor 4:7). For that matter, how could things have been right, humanly speaking, if we consider the time and the circumstances in which these synods were formed and developed, and if we take human weakness into account? For we know the unhappy fate of Lutheranism among the German people. In Germany it never made a complete breakthrough and never achieved a pure form. At the beginning such a development was thwarted by the ignorance and laziness of the pastors. (Compare Luther's Preface to the Small Catechism.) After Luther's death Melancthon's unionism devastated Lutheranism from within, and under the church state system its religious life was reduced to no more than a fleshly complacency and a servile submissiveness. The exposition of pure doctrine in the Formula of Concord and the excellent dogmatic works looked good on paper but did not, like a good leaven, permeate the life of the people. Then came the promising, but poisoned medicine of Pietism.

Finally philosophy came on the scene. It had its roots in the humanism of the pre-Reformation period—the humanism to which Luther had denied the right hand of fellowship. As it raced through the civilized peoples of the world, philosophy made free thinking and unbelief high fashion in the minds of educated men. In Germany it became established under the label "the Enlightenment." In theology it became entrenched in the form of Rationalism. With its so-called Bible criticism it undermined faith in the divine character of Scripture and in the gospel of Christ. In the name of science, which had recently come to the fore, it denied the possibility of any such thing as revelation and miracles. In stentorian tones it shamelessly blared out into the world of cultured people this new wisdom: everything in the world happens in a purely natural way.

The gospel was first driven out of the universities and the pulpits of the state churches, but then out of the circles of the educated world as well. In the course of the 18th century—mind you, exactly in the period when classical literature and the natural sciences were coming into flower!—there went into fulfillment in the theology of Germany the warning which Luther at one time had sounded out to his colleagues in Wittenberg: "The devil will light the lamp of reason and will wrest you from the faith!" Into the place of Christianity now stepped human reason with its "scientific experience." It was regarded as the sole source of all knowledge of truth and as the reliable rule for human conduct. Soon it controlled public opinion completely. Faith, when it ventured to appear, was mocked, and those whose faith was not deeply rooted in their hearts were ashamed of it.

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<sup>4</sup>Smalcald Articles, Part II, par. 5 (*Triglotta*, 463).

All this is not to deny that, in spite of everything, there were still thousands upon thousands in all parts of Germany and in all classes of people who honored and loved the Lord Jesus and his gospel. But under the conditions of the state church they perceived themselves as isolated and driven into a corner. Those who still believed tried to evade the open contempt and ridicule of those who were "enlightened" by seeking out the brotherly fellowship of like-minded people. They did so to find comfort for themselves, to be edified with them through God's Word and to preserve Christianity among their own German people. In Southwest Germany there had been a weak distinction between Lutheranism and the church of the Reformer since the Reformation period. The contrast faded even more in the face of the Napoleonic threat. Later, on the Lower Rhine, too, when Protestants and Catholics had for a long time lived peacefully side by side, the same thing happened. Confronted by a Rationalism that destroyed all faith, people forgot about the faint dividing-line between the Lutheran and the Reformed churches and combined to form private societies for the mutual nurture of Christian faith. In Old Prussia, Frederick William proclaimed a confederated union of the Lutherans and the Reformed, in order to counter the politic radicalism fostered by the Rationalism that dominated the churches

That was in 1817, after the defeat of Napoleon. But even the courageous summons of Klaus Harms and others to return to original Lutheranism proved incapable of overcoming the religious and confessional apathy spread by Rationalism. Nor could it arouse the leaders in the Lutheran state churches who had remained believers to take energetic, concerted action. Except for some small group; this situation prevailed: not only in the Prussian Union of church and state, but also in the provinces that had remained Lutheran there was unionistic practice with the nationalistic university and church leaders who were in control of things.

Instead of conducting a thorough house-cleaning at home in the state churches that were sunk in unionism, many newly awakened circles, spurred on by individual men, threw their energies into spreading the Lutheran gospel abroad and founded mission societies. These, in part, trained and sent out missionaries on their own initiative. But in part they also worked in concert with the unionist mission societies in Basel and the Prussian Rhineland which had developed from the devout circles mentioned above, and from time to time they cooperated with these, notably in the mission work in America. The pastors sent out by the Basel and Rhine Mission Societies, with few exceptions, came from a Union background. Most of them, though not all, also had a unionistic bent while those trained by the Lutheran mission societies took the limited Lutheranism of their homeland abroad with them. *In these two kinds mission societies the founders of our synod and most of their co-workers in the days before Hoenecke came had their origins.* The societies gave our synod its character at that time, its doctrinal position and its manner of doing the work of the church.

As to the actual founder of our synod, that title rightly belongs *Johannes Muehlhaeuser*, from Wuerttemberg. Johann Weinmann and Wilhelm Wrede, who joined him in 1849 and 1850 in bringing about the synod's formal founding, play no important role, because they soon disappeared from the picture. Muehlhaeuser, a young man from the craftsmen's class, was filled by the gospel with a strong urge for mission work among the heathen. He had been active as a traveling Bible salesman, making a journey through Austria and the neighboring countries that lasted four years. He had proved himself to be an exceptionally fervent disciple of the Lord, who possessed great modesty, humility, a love for his fellow men and a capacity for self-sacrifice. He had shown himself faithful under persecution, in a number of imprisonments and in all kinds of privations.

Muehlhaeuser was enlisted by the Rhenish Mission Society for the work in America. True, in the mission school at Barmen he received a unionistic training. Yet he was filled with a certain preference for Lutheranism. In the year 1837 he was sent to friends of the Mission in New York. His traveling companion was a highly educated candidate for the ministry. Muehlhaeuser was to serve under this man as the teacher of his school. When the undertaking there showed little promise, Muehlhaeuser had himself licensed for the pastoral ministry by the Lutheran General Synod and in this fellowship he became the pastor of a Lutheran congregation

in Rochester, New York.<sup>5</sup> There he worked for about ten years and became, so to speak, "Americanized." In 1846 Weinmann and Wrede joined him in Rochester, but soon moved on to Wisconsin. In 1848 they persuaded Muehlhaeuser to move to Milwaukee. The plan was that for a time at least he resume his mission work as a seller of Bibles, because Milwaukee and its vicinity were swarming with Lutheran immigrants who needed to be gathered into congregations.

In Milwaukee, Muehlhaeuser soon won favorable recognition, even among English-speaking people, with his outgoing personality and his pastoral endeavors. As a result, members of sectarian churches presented him with voluntary gifts toward the building of a modest little church, which was then named "Grace Church." Here Muehlhaeuser began his congregational activity. With Pastor Weinmann [of St. John in Oak Creek, "on the Kilbourn Road"—now served by Pastor Gerald Meyer] and Pastor Wrede of Granville [Salem Church on the Fond du Lac Road—now served by Pastors Winfred Nommensen, Daniel Simons and Mark Voss] he made the first attempt to found our synod. And the founding did come about in 1850 at Granville. Now he developed his whole personal and churchly style among the many pastors and teachers—most of them immigrants from Germany—who were attracted to him by his personality.

Muehlhaeuser had not received a scholarly kind of theological training. What he had learned at the Chrischona Pilgrim Mission School consisted only of rather formal matters. He was prepared for the work in America in a minimal way at the Mission School in Barmen. This type of training was one the Rhenish Mission Society had turned over to the Langenberg *Hilfsverein* (Auxiliary Society) which belonged to the Rhenish organization. The schooling Muehlhaeuser received there did not remove from his heart the preference for Lutheranism he had brought from his home in Swabia. Rather, the school left its students completely free to choose affiliation in America either with a Lutheran church body or a United one or even with a Reformed one. But the students, naturally, did not get a thorough instruction in the doctrines that divided the Lutherans from the Reformed.

Recall that Muehlhaeuser was sent out as a school teacher who was to serve under the pastoral candidate sent out with him. This fact seems to indicate that his instructors in Barmen had misgivings about entrusting to him the independent exercise of the pastoral ministry at that early stage. It seems, too, that he was not exceptionally gifted. When he entered the mission school at the age of 31 in order to be sent as a heathen missionary to Africa, he was considered too old to master the languages of the nationals. For this very reason he was sent to work among Germans in America with an uncommonly significant recommendation.<sup>6</sup> We also note that during his stay in the eastern United States he joined the General Synod and was colloquized, licensed and ordained by that body. Here is proof that he was unclear regarding the doctrine of church and ministry just as much as it indicates his indecisive confessional stance. The disorderly business of licensing pastors and of synods ordaining them was something he also retained during the early period of his presidency of the Wisconsin Synod. The first of these was indeed an abuse that developed in the East of our country, while that of ordaining originally was based on false, high church views in Germany—views of a supposed ministerial caste that had been set in and over the church. Accordingly, such a ministerial class could pass on the authority of the pastoral office even without a call from the congregation. So Muehlhaeuser as president of the Wisconsin Synod became the middleman in filling pastoral posts, the licenser and the ordinator of the men sent from abroad and other men coming into our synod.

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<sup>5</sup>This is the English Zion church of today [1935], Dr. Heyd, pastor. Muehlhaeuser's son John was the organizer of St. Matthew's Church in Rochester, later served by Rev. Herbert Plehn, a son-in-law of Prof. August Pieper. Another son, Gottlob, an 1874 graduate of Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin, served for many years as pastor of St. John's Church in Hamlin, New York. Both St. Matthew's and St. John's belong to the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. A third son, George, also made his home in Rochester.

<sup>6</sup>See Koehler, *Geschichte*, p 123.

Regarding Muehlhaeuser's activity in the synod there is, to be sure, many a story, but there is very little reliable documentation of it. It is said that in the conventions he spoke most earnestly and forcefully. But when it came to the discussion of doctrinal issues, he usually put a strong check on himself. In this area he did not feel at home. Men trained in the mission schools who arrived later, especially those with strong Lutheran convictions, far surpassed him in this respect. He detested controversy of any kind. For that reason he had no stomach for the "scolding" Old Lutherans, the Missourians and the Buffaloes. Of discipline in personal conduct he had as little conception as he did of doctrinal discipline. The subject of church discipline came to the fore much later in the synod's history.

But now we ought to turn our attention back to Dr. Hoenecke. Adolf Hoenecke was born on February 25, 1835, in the city of Brandenburg on the Havel River, fifty to sixty miles southwest of Berlin. There, after his elementary schooling, he finished the *Gymnasium* [a combined high school and college]. His father was not a church-goer, to say nothing of being a believer, for the age of Rationalism was in full swing. He concerned himself very little with the religion of his sons. His mother, personally a believer, taught him to pray in his childhood, but had little influence on his later religious training.

When Hoenecke graduated from the *Gymnasium*, he did not know what he wanted to be. His older brothers had entered the Prussian army after their *Gymnasium* years. The choice of an army career was barred to him by his weak health, to which a severe case of typhoid fever had contributed a great deal. Always a lover of flowers, he thought of taking up horticulture. But a joking remark by the unbelieving music director of the *Gymnasium*, named Taeglichbeck, whose son was a classmate of Hoenecke's, became the outward impulse for his pursuit of theological studies.

Hoenecke had been invited to the Taeglichbecks' for the evening after his final examinations. There the conversation naturally revolved around the future of the two young men. As an old friend of the music director, Pastor Soergel from Plane in the vicinity of Brandenburg, had also come for the occasion. He had a very healthy, strong frame. In the course of the conversation, the music director slapped the corpulent pastor on the knee and said to Hoenecke, "Look, Adolf, become a pastor and then you will have a good thing." Later, Hoenecke often was a guest in the parsonage at Plane. He took such a pleasure in the beautiful parsonage that he made a careful drawing of it and of the very old church and saved the picture. This pen-and-ink sketch for many years hung in the living room of his son Otto, who was the president of our synodical school in Saginaw.

Yes, yes, a pastor "has a good thing"! In that profession even a person in weak health could become healthy and robust. That really meant much to Hoenecke. So he decided to study theology without sensing an inner urge in that direction. That was in 1856, and he was 21 years old. He went to Halle, an old institution that had become renowned for its long line of outstanding scientists and theologians of the most diverse persuasions. He did so without bothering his head about which of the professors he particularly wanted to study under. At the time there were these among others: Hermann Hupfield, the successor to Gesenius; August Tholuck; Julius Mueller (since 1839); and the thorough-going Lutheran, H.E.F. Guericke.

Since Hoenecke, however, while at the Brandenburg *Gymnasium* had no idea of studying theology, he had learned no Hebrew, and temporarily he had to be enrolled at Halle as a *studiosus philosophiae*. At once he went at the study of Hebrew with a vengeance. After six weeks he believed he could pass an examination in the language, but he failed it. After another six weeks he passed the examination, and then he was registered as a *studiosus theologiae*.

How he regarded his teachers at Halle individually, he often expressed in private conversations. Hoenecke found the Orientalist and Old Testament critic Hupfield uninteresting simply because of his boring lecture style. Mueller appeared to him to be a melancholy pessimist, and Guericke was downright unbearable to



him because of his Lutheran orthodoxy and his longwinded style. The teachers of philosophy took no personal interest at all in their students. So Hoenecke quite naturally turned toward the well-known dean of students, August Tholuck. Tholuck received him, as he did others, with a pastoral love. After he had learned to know this young man with his simple, unassuming manner, his honest—humanly speaking—disposition, his mental keenness and his diligence, he brought him to the saving knowledge of Christ. He more than all others made this young man, who at that time was highly indifferent in spiritual matters—made him, I say, what he has become among us and what he remained to the end: a genuine Lutheran and a reliable theological leader of our pastors.

This fact must dumbfound us, since we usually know Tholuck only as a pietist and a unionist. But both designations would be erroneous, if we were to take them in the strictest sense. Tholuck, to be sure, had a strong pietistic bent, and he was not without unionistic tendencies. But we dare not forget this other fact: At his time rationalistic theology boasted of its "scientific method" in all its branches, especially in "biblical science." Add that its practitioners branded as pietists all who, in defiance of Rationalism, still were Bible believers. Very special targets of such stigmatizing were the scholarly university theologians who still adhered to the Bible and preached Christ. The Bible-believing Julius Mueller, too, was counted among the pietists after he had written a book on original sin, a work that was thoroughly biblical in its first part. The "scientific" theologians then honored him with the epithet "Sin-Mueller."

Tholuck consistently resisted the theology of Francke, Lange and Anton. He perceived their emphasis on the subjective in the doctrine of conversion as something unhealthy, something legalistic, after the pattern of the Reformed, even though he was not entirely free of the emotionalism that marks Pietism. His "experiences" were great physical trials, sickness and frequent spiritual temptations, as well as periods of despair over his alienation from God. This continued until he stayed in the home of the Orientalist Dietz in Berlin. There Tholuck received a warm welcome, daily bread and the true comfort that his sins were forgiven. From this time forward he—a man who by nature had a very volatile temperament—gained peace and such a fervent love for Christ that he made the motto of Zinzendorf his own, namely, "I have but *one* passion, and that is Christ."

Tholuck was one of the most gifted, brilliant and learned theologians of his time. He reportedly knew nineteen ancient and modern languages. He was at home in all areas of theology. Moreover, in contrast to the university theologians of the time, he did not teach in the spirit and tone of an objective scientific method. No, with his childlike faith in the word of Scripture as the Word of God, all his teaching was at once an exercise of pastoral care for the souls of his students, a testimony concerning sin, grace and sanctification.

Nothing was more important to Tholuck than to transmit to his youthful auditors the peace which had taken possession of his own heart. He sought to become personally acquainted with them. He invited them to take walks with him, either individually or in small groups. He endeavored to penetrate their inner being and to meet each one's spiritual need (Lk 12:42). Only two others are known to have practiced care for souls among their students. They were Hengstenberg and Neander in Berlin. All three sought, on the basis of God-given Scripture, to preach Christ Crucified into their students' hearts.

In regard to Tholuck's confessional stand, as the spiritual son of Professor Johann Gottfried Scheibel in Breslau, he brought with him the legacy of Lutheranism, and he never disowned it and never lost it. In fact, he became ever stronger in emphasizing the Word as the foundation of faith and as the only power of God for salvation, especially after Hengstenberg had made an unmistakable turn from Reformed theology to Lutheranism. The antithesis to both these men was the rationalistic unbelief of the university lecture hall, which at this time boasted of the scientific defeat of faith in the Bible. Tholuck, together with Hengstenberg, the men of Erlangen and those of Leipzig, contributed much to the preservation of Lutheran Christianity and Lutheran theology at the universities.

Moreover, Tholuck was not an active promoter of the Union. What might have given that impression was his strong emphasizing of Scripture and of personal faith in the matter of being saved and a strong aversion to all confessional controversy—something which he held to be unnecessary. For that reason he could not bring himself to support Hengstenberg's theoretical defense of a Lutheran separation [from the Union]. We must not, however, measure a German university professor in a state church situation with the yardstick of our American situation in which the churches are independent of the state. At heart Tholuck was and remained a genuine Lutheran and with his public and private testimony worked in the spirit of the Lutheran doctrinal position.

Thus we can understand that Tholuck became the man who led the young Hoenecke to Lutheranism. Was Hoenecke already a Christian when he came to Halle? We cannot assume this—not with what we know about the course of his life to this point. On the other hand, it is sure that Tholuck had warm feelings toward Hoenecke. He supported the young man in a material way by furnishing him with a free dinner now and then, for Hoenecke was entirely without means of support, since he received nothing from his parents and got very little help from his brothers or his uncle. Tholuck often invited Hoenecke for those walks which he utilized to give spiritual counsel to his students.

Toward the end of Hoenecke's student days, Tholuck recommended an academic career to him, for he had learned to know Hoenecke's intellectual acumen and his calm and resolute character. He directed him to the study of Lutheran dogmatics, pointing especially to Calov and Quenstedt as men who in intellectual sharpness and their very deep sincerity in regard to Scripture far surpassed all the shining lights of the first and second rationalistic periods. And Hoenecke was not the only one whom Tholuck influenced for the cause of Lutheranism. Many others, even Harless, and, yes, also Wyneken, owed their sound Lutheranism to the personal impact of Tholuck on their hearts. He exercised such a strong influence not out of loyalty to a church party. Rather, all he did stemmed from his direct experience of Scripture truth, as his *Letter to the Romans* sufficiently attests.

How soon after Hoenecke had completed his work at Halle did he plunge into the study of the dogmatists whom Tholuck had recommended to him? This is not quite clear. He took his examinations in 1859. He was then twenty-four years old. Again he had to confront a decision as to the future course of his life. His lack of financial means was enough to prevent him from committing himself to a career as a professor, as Tholuck had proposed to him. Moreover, the dependence of a university on the church authorities went against his grain.

At this point Tholuck did what for a long time past had become a custom in Germany in regard to theological candidates, because the overproduction of such men was constantly increasing. He secured for Hoenecke a position as a private tutor in Switzerland. Regarding this Hoenecke wrote in a letter dated November 24, 1859, to his brother in Torgau: "My lot . . . has finally been decided. I shall go as a private tutor for Mr. Major of Wattenwahl to Rubigen near Bern." On January 1, 1860, he began his work there, and was active in this occupation for two years, occasionally sending Tholuck a report on how he was faring.

Life there in the Highlands of Bern was much to his liking. The climate of this region was exactly the kind he needed for the development of his physical well-being. Here, too, he now had some pocket money out of his salary, which, to be sure, was modest enough. Here he had a very good opportunity to associate with people of refinement and of wide experience in the world. It was here as well that he acquired his smart personal bearing, somewhat suggesting the braced carriage of the military. It was one he maintained with everyone in his pastoral and private contacts, even with the young people he instructed in America; and he never gave it up even in old age. Here he also found the treasured sweetheart of his youth, later to become the

mother of his five sons and four daughters.<sup>7</sup> She was the daughter of the Reformed Pastor Rudolph Hess in Hoechst, in the Canton of Bern.

This happy time in Switzerland also furnished a fine opportunity to read his way deep into Lutheran dogmatics, as Tholuck had encouraged him to do. We conclude this from his later circumstances, because between his sojourn in Switzerland and his journey to America but a single, very stressful year intervened. On the other hand, his situation in his first years in America as pastor of a small congregation afforded him the necessary leisure to gain a thorough acquaintance with Lutheran doctrine. This, in turn, enabled him to arrive at a solid, sound judgment regarding the way of doing things in our synod in theological and ecclesiastical matters and regarding the general situation of Lutheran church bodies in America.

Tholuck was still expecting that Hoenecke, even if he did not pursue an academic career, would enter the pastoral ministry in his Prussian homeland. He would have full freedom of conscience in doing this because of the governmental restrictions which had been placed, in short order, on the demands first made by the Union. Finally it came down to this: One would preach and do private pastoral work as a strictly Lutheran pastor or as a Reformed one, just as he pleased, as long as he refrained from polemics against the Reformed confession. Hengstenberg had accomplished that much with his appeals to the king.

But this was something which Hoenecke could no longer go along with—not after he had gained an insight into Reformed theology and had learned to know the nature of Reformed church life by personal observation. Although he was thoroughly averse to all unnecessary "orthodox" polemics, as he saw it practiced here and there, it was an established fact for him that even a merely outward union of the two Protestant church bodies was an untruthful denial of the Word of God, and that one dared not accommodate himself to the government's prohibition of contending against the Reformed errors. On this point he now came into unreconcilable conflict with Tholuck, the man to whom he owed so very much. Tholuck now broke off the relationship which had been carried on through correspondence.

Once again Hoenecke stood face to face with difficult decisions. Here the Berlin Mission Society, founded by Johann Jaenicke (1748-1827), enters the picture. Tholuck had participated wholeheartedly in the founding and work of the Berlin Mission Society in foreign fields, as had the Baron von Kottwitz, a faithful Lutheran and a man of wide experience in the world, the Gerlach brothers, and a number of other prominent men in the church. A short time before (1858), Johann Christian Wallmann, the former inspector of the Barmen Mission, had been called to be the head of the Berlin Mission. This society was basically Lutheran, but officially represented the position of the Lutherans in the Prussian Union—a position which Tholuck kept defending more and more as time went on, also against Hengstenberg.

Hoenecke too had acquaintances and friends in the Berlin Society. So one might have expected the two men to come together here, as on common ground, and to resume their former close relationship after Hoenecke had personally entered his name with the Berlin Mission Society, because at this time there was an oversupply of academically trained candidates for the ministry as far as the needs at home were concerned. Then the Berlin Society had turned to the High Consistory with the request that it be allowed to call a number of such candidates for mission work among their fellow Lutherans who had emigrated and were still emigrating to America. These men were to strengthen and guide the missionaries already on the scene in the struggle against the sects, for the mission societies themselves had given the latter only a more or less practical training.

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<sup>7</sup>In America he trained his wife to be a kindly but sharp private critic of his sermons so that he might break himself of unconscious bad habits and of disturbing pulpit mannerisms. But she was also intelligent and knowledgeable enough to tell him now and then in an unabashed and half-joking way regarding the edifying value of his sermons: "Well, Papa, today was one of those times when it didn't come off well at all."

The Prussian church officials willingly acceded to this request. In a public circular letter they called on the various universities to call to the attention of graduating candidates for the pastoral office the request of the Mission Society. As a result, quite a number of such candidates, and not only from Prussia, volunteered to be sent to America. Quite a few of them came to our synod in this way. Among them were, for instance, Gottlieb Thiele, E. Mayerhoff and Theodor Jaeckel—and Hoenecke. Not a few of the academically trained candidates were men of dubious character. They were looking for something in America other than service in Christ's kingdom. Strange to say, Tholuck entertained the suspicion that Hoenecke, whom till then he found most worthy of trust, was seeking material gain with his plan to enter the American mission. In a letter he told Hoenecke just that.

How did Tholuck arrive at this totally unjustified suspicion? He was angry that this prize catch, on whom he had expended much effort to win him for teaching theology on the university level and on whom he had set high hopes, had now slipped through his fingers. There seemed to be a certain basis for Tholuck's suspicion. Hoenecke's whole youth, and especially his student years, had been made bitter by his terrible poverty. He never had even a little pocket money in his purse, because he had to depend entirely on himself and on the free meals furnished him at Tholuck's request. Such intercession was a reward one had to earn through diligent study and by passing rigorous examinations coming in close succession. The free meals themselves were an alms gift on the part of the donor. To a man of Hoenecke's sense of honor that was a humiliating thing which was hard to take. He would have rejected it from the start if he had been able to acquire the necessary funds in some other honest way. The begging became very hard for him, but he was always forced to resort to it.

How great his poverty was, is evident from a letter dated February 20, 1857. It was to his brother Karl, who had asked him to act as a sponsor at the baptism of his first son. Hoenecke answered that he could not come because he did not have the necessary money for travel. When the position as private tutor in Switzerland had been procured for him by Tholuck, he at first wanted to pay a visit to this same brother, but had to write him in a letter of November 24, 1859: "But now, dear Karl, I must expect that you bear the travel expense...since you, without using a lot of imagination, can get a pretty accurate picture of my financial situation." Concerning the examinations that had to be passed to be in line for the free meals, he once wrote: "Right now I am having a bad time of it. There are only four weeks until we close for Easter vacation. And to prepare for the free meal examinations being given before vacation, we shall have to put in some hard, hard work."<sup>8</sup>

After he had finally gotten to eat his own well-earned bread during his two-year stay in Switzerland, Hoenecke looked into the future and found himself face to face with the same financial need that had made his student days so hard. That would surely be the case if he followed Tholuck's advice to take up the career of a professor or to wait for a position as a pastor in Germany. The former would cost a great deal of money (which he simply did not have and which he could no longer bear to get by begging) and, in any case, entailed several years of waiting and intense study. To wait for a pastoral vacancy could take five to seven years, or more. And was he to let his fiancée, who had been placed at his side in a way that appeared predetermined—was he to let her wait for him through years of uncertainty?

Just at this time came the call of the High Consistory to the pastoral candidates trained at the universities to volunteer for service in the work conducted in America by the Berlin Mission Society. He quickly decided to put himself at the disposal of the society. He did this so much more readily because the Consistory promised the candidates who proved themselves in the missionary work a future position as a pastor in the established church [in Germany]. This pleased him for the sake of his bride, because for her the prospect of a permanent

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<sup>8</sup>Regarding his father's nagging lack of money, one of his sons made this remark: "By the way, this constant financial pinch of Pa's had its repercussions much later to our—I mean his sons'—grief. Pa could or would never understand that boys at Watertown need a little money."

emigration to America was proving difficult. He himself harbored no misgivings about making a go of it in America.

But Tholuck interpreted such thinking as lust for material gain in Hoenecke, his protege till now. He felt disappointed in Hoenecke and believed that all his pastoral care for Hoenecke had been wasted. That fateful letter of Tholuck's [expressing his suspicion regarding Hoenecke's motives] tore once and for all the bond between the elderly, distinguished man and this young man moving unwittingly toward his own position of distinction. As Tholuck was embittered toward Hoenecke, so there could not but be a certain bitterness on the part of the latter. He let Tholuck's unfortunate letter go unanswered, and permitted the Berlin Society to send him to the Wisconsin Synod. He did so without having a clear picture of the confessional stand and practice of our synod and of conditions in the Lutheran churches of this country.

He made the hard separation from the fiancée he had won in Switzerland, but promised her he would send for her or would return to Germany. He had been given the prospect—very likely through the agency of Muehlhaeuser—of going to the La Crosse congregation, which the itinerant preacher Fachtmann had served till then. So he let himself be ordained in the Dome at Magdeburg, and in the spring of 1863 he boarded ship for America.

But when he came to President Muehlhaeuser in Milwaukee, he learned that the vacancy at La Crosse had already been filled. Muehlhaeuser then recommended to him the congregation at Racine, where a vacancy had just then occurred. He preached there for a time and received general approval. In spite of that he was not called because the daughter of a well-to-do, influential man in the congregation had, quite innocently, cast a longing eye on the young, but quite poor pastor. But her father did not want to give her to "such a poor bugger" and blocked Hoenecke's being called. If the people had known that the "poor bugger" was no longer free and posed no danger for the man's daughter, Hoenecke could well have become pastor in Racine. Afterwards, when it became known that he had a fiancée in Switzerland, the Racine congregation extended a call to him and still another after that, but now without success.

In the meantime, he had become pastor in another place. Seven miles south of Watertown on the road to Jefferson a Lutheran teacher conducted regular reading services, and he had gathered seven or eight Lutheran families. The place was called Farmington. Upon the request of these people for a preacher, Muehlhaeuser directed Hoenecke there. Without any hesitation he went to those people. They called him—and he accepted without even asking about his salary! Now he was a duly installed American pastor.

After he had surveyed the situation a bit, he at once sent the High Consistory a letter in which he permanently relinquished a position in the Prussian state church. He was happy and thankful that he had found a place where he could preach the gospel as he had come to know it without let or hindrance. That hardly looks like lust for material gain.

Hoenecke felt very comfortable in this small country congregation. For one thing, the small membership provided him the finest opportunity to deepen still further his knowledge of Lutheran dogmatics. For another, since he was only seven miles from Watertown, he was near a growing center of our synod's life. Here he had the opportunity to become acquainted with its most prominent men as well as a number of Missouri Synod pastors and also some Iowans and several others.

Above all, it was Pastor Johannes Bading with whom Hoenecke entered into the closest kind of relationship. Bading had been in the synod as early as 1853, and since 1860 he had been pastor in Watertown (after securing his release from the Theresa congregation). Now Hoenecke let his fiancée travel alone from

Switzerland because he lacked the money [to go get her]. He had Bading perform their marriage. The period in unpossessing Farmington became the happiest time of his life.

About the time when he came to the Wisconsin Synod, 1863, a significant part of its history had taken place. It had enjoyed rapid growth, thanks to the sending of the men trained by the various mission societies in Germany. Many Lutheran families had settled in the American forest in colonies. These turned to Muehlhaeuser to supply them with preachers and teachers. The first big waves of emigres came in the period of 1838 to 1844, the people of the Buffalo and Missouri Synods. Then, especially in the 1850s, many single German families had emigrated. These, however, were not seeking God's Word and the church in the new land, but a better material life. Wherever they had a leader among them, they gathered into congregations even before a pastor came to them. Then, too, the people of one place were in contact with those of another place. They learned from each other that through Pastor Muehlhaeuser in Milwaukee, who was a kind of superintendent, they could secure a German pastor.

That was, in fact, the situation. The German mission societies sent their candidates particularly to him to take care of the congregations that were forming. They did so because they knew him as a churchman of their own confessional disposition and proven trustworthiness. The Wisconsin Synod became the veritable darling of those mission societies because in it the men sent by the Berlin, Barmen and Basel societies apparently had good fraternal relations and worked well together.

At the time of Hoenecke's coming, the Wisconsin Synod numbered about 35 pastors and more than 80 congregations and preaching stations. Geographically, its eastern boundary extended from Kenosha to the present Algoma. Its northern boundary ran from there over Green Bay, Hortonville, Appleton, Neenah, Oshkosh, Beaver Dam and Columbus as far as La Crosse and Fountain City. The western boundary was the Mississippi down to Prairie du Chien and Platteville. The Reformed Swiss congregation at New Glarus, from which Streissguth had come over to us, fell into the hands of the rationalists who came later. Even at this early date, the largest congregations were those in Racine, Oakwood, Milwaukee, Manitowoc and Fond du Lac. Those in the area of Theresa, Lomira, Addison-Allenton, and the one in Columbus had been taken into our synodical fold—but not as yet the congregation in Watertown. In this city Lutherans of another origin, especially Missourians, had preempted the field. And yet, in the near future Watertown was destined to become one of the main centers of our synod.

We should not imagine that the Wisconsin Synod up to Hoenecke's arrival had continued to develop fully content with the unionistic slovenliness marking the period of its inception. Ecclesiastical unionism possesses little vigor to form and sustain a church. As we well know, unionism is based on indifference to God's Word, on a carnal love of peace and on faith in the power of external big numbers. It prospers only in combination with secular power, as in Prussia, or in an age of the church's actual corruption—the very corruption brought about by the despising of the Word.

Nor could unionistic indifference hold its own in the Wisconsin Synod, for in the Reawakening of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Germany it was Lutheranism, that is to say, faith in God's Word and faithfulness to Scripture, which was revived, not the Reformed establishment, which from Zwingli on had cast itself in a strongly rationalistic mold. All those out of the Reformed church who shared in the awakening were, unconsciously, awakened to the Lutheran faith in Scripture and the diligent use of it. The only thing of its own that the Reformed position contributed to the movement was the element of pietistic busyness and confessional indifference.

Therefore it was natural that also the candidates trained by the "United" Basel and Rhine Mission Societies were from the start inclined toward Lutheranism and not toward the Reformed persuasion. Even with

Muehlhaeuser that was true. For in America, too, those societies sought contacts with Lutherans, not the Reformed. The later trainees coming out of Barmen had been instructed by Inspector Wallmann. He had deliberately "inoculate" them with the Lutheran consciousness, for Wallmann had been strongly influenced toward Lutheranism by Tholuck, just as Hoenecke was later on. The men sent out by the Berlin Society from the beginning had been trained as Lutherans, even though that was in the sense of the Prussian "United" Lutherans. Then, when Wallmann became the guiding spirit, here, too, the Lutheranism of the men with a Berlin training developed into one with anti-unionistic inclinations.

As a result, we see a resolute Lutheranism and an anti-unionistic spirit stirring in several pastors of the Wisconsin Synod even in the early 1850s. Two men stand out. They were Johannes Bading and Philipp Koehler, able pastors who had received a thorough theological education. Publicly and privately they fought the unionism which was cutting a wide swath in the synod wherever they found it. They stood up for firm discipline in regard to confession and pastoral practice. Bading, from Rixdorf near Berlin, had acquired his unequivocal Lutheranism in Hermannsburg from Ludwig Harms. Then he had gone to Barmen, and there he had the further benefit of Wallmann's instruction. In 1853 he had come to Wisconsin and to Muehlhaeuser, ten years before Hoenecke. Koehler came out of the Lutheran congregation in Neuwied near Coblenz on the Rhine. He, too, received from Wallmann in Barmen a thoroughly Lutheran training for the mission in America. In 1854 he completed his studies there and was commissioned in the Lutheran church in Barmen for the work in America. He was perhaps the most determined foe of unionism in the whole synod of that time.

It is a strange thing about this twin constellation, Bading and Koehler. They were men of completely different temperaments. Bading was ingenious, cheerful and friendly, with a fondness for joking. Koehler was always very earnest and stern, often melancholy, and deliberate and solemn in his speech. Yet the two were one heart and one soul in the Lutheran faith and in their firm advocacy of a clear Lutheran confession and of Lutheran practice.

C. F. Goldammer had come from Barmen to Muehlhaeuser as early as 1850, had been licensed by him, and in 1851 was ordained in Newton. He still had a thoroughly unionistic bent. When Bading came in 1853, President Muehlhaeuser sent him to Goldammer for the purpose of being licensed. But Bading refused to agree to this, and from there he went to Calumet on Lake Winnebago. When Muehlhaeuser together with Conrad wanted to ordain him there, Bading insisted that he be pledged to the Lutheran confessional writings, and he prevailed with this demand. Soon after that he traveled by way of Fond du Lac to Theresa. There and in Lomira and further south he served little groups. When Koehler came in 1854, he was sent at first to the area of Hustisford and Woodland, but soon after was called to Town Addison and Allenton, not far from Bading. Thrown together thus in the same locality, they soon became friends. Together with Elias Sauer, Jacob Conrad and a few others they founded what was called "the Northwest Conference." From that time on, it became—in direct opposition to Muehlhaeuser—a refuge for sound Lutheranism.

A striking example of that fact was a rather lengthy document which this conference sent to President Muehlhaeuser on February 22, 1857. In it the members of this conference wrote that they had been compelled to exercise discipline against one of their brethren because of his avowed unionism. In a postscript Bading made the remark that they were expecting the President's approval of their action.<sup>9</sup> IT was characteristic of the role which Koehler played in the "sound Lutheranism group" at that time that that document sought to avert suspicion from him, as though the whole matter had emanated from him alone. Koehler was the most determined of the men opposing the terrible looseness of the unionists. The circumstances in the country at that time demanded action by such men. Of special significance was the energetic and well-publicized drive of

<sup>9</sup>See Joh. Ph. Koehler, *Geschichte der Allgemeinen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin and andern Staaten* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1925) pp 255 ff, and *The History of the Wisconsin Synod* (St. Cloud, Minnesota: The Protestant Conference, 1970), pp 50f.

Walther and the Missourians for a genuinely Lutheran position. Everywhere things were pressing for a decision between the old unionism flourishing in the East and the young, virile Lutheranism of what was then the West.

Muehlhaeuser at one time, by virtue of his colloquium, licensing and ordination, had become a member of the New York Ministerium, and it was a part of the General Synod. Other candidates sent from Germany had come to the Wisconsin Synod after a stopover with the Synod of Pennsylvania. From that source Muehlhaeuser received an annual amount of \$200-\$400 for the support of poor Wisconsin pastors. The Wisconsin Synod had also sent its first student, J.H. Sieker of Newton, to the Gettysburg Seminary to receive his training for the pastoral ministry in its midst. The "Mother Synod" gave him his education without taking reimbursement. Whether the Wisconsin Synod during Muehlhaeuser's presidency ever formally resolved to join the General Synod, the author of these lines does not know. In any case, our synod was aligned with the General Synod as long as Muehlhaeuser was president.

The General Synod since its founding in 1820 had lost all the marks of true Lutheranism and had become a hodge-podge of individual synods whose leaders fought each other to the death. The reasons for this were: the loss of a common Lutheran confession as Rationalism made its inroads; church fellowship with a number of Protestant sects (even the revivalism of the Methodists made inroads among them); the fast transition to the English language on the part of many young pastors and professors.

On the conservative side were arrayed these proponents of a more or less sound Lutheranism: Dr. Mann, Charles Philipp Krauth and his son, Charles Porterfield Krauth, Dr. Reynolds, Dr. Brown and some others. On the other side stood these radically liberal opponents: S.S. Schmucker, Benjamin Kurtz and S. Sprecher. The first of these was the author and the rest were the defenders of the misnamed "Definite Synodical Platform" (written as early as 1855). This was nothing else than an unabashed mangling of the Augsburg Confession, a rejection of the remaining confessional writings, and a program for an "American Lutheranism" this term meaning the establishment of church fellowship with all the Protestant sects in the country.

That finally led to a split. The immediate occasion for it was furnished (as early as 1859) by the reception of the un-Lutheran Melancthon Synod and in 1864 the reception of the even more liberal Frankean Synod in defiance of all protests made by the conservatives. The break came in the year 1866 at a Fort Wayne convention. The conservatives stepped out of the General Synod, and, under the leadership of the younger Krauth, founded the General Council in 1867—likewise in Fort Wayne.

In that split the Wisconsin Synod—Muehlhaeuser had died shortly before, in September 1867—also distanced itself from the General Synod and entered the General Council at the Fort Wayne meeting. But already in the next year (1868) it separated from the General Council as well because it had not carried out the well-known "four points." Those points were: 1) exclusion of all chiliasm; 2) no pulpit fellowship with the heterodox, or 3) altar fellowship with them; 4) termination of membership for "the brethren of the lodges" [that is, pastors who tolerated lodge members in their congregations].

In this time—between 1866 and 1868—the decision of the Wisconsin Synod was also made in favor of a strict Lutheran doctrinal stand and a clean Lutheran practice. And since 1865 Hoenecke, as the co-editor of the *Gemeindeblatt*, established in that same year, exercised his influence, one that went beyond the confines of our synod. But he had laid his hand to the task of changing the synod from within somewhat earlier than this.

Up to this time the synod had stood in a fraternal relationship with the "United" mission societies of Germany, with the Berlin Mission Society of the Prussian state church, and even with the United Church of Prussia. From these sources it had drawn any additional pastors and teachers it needed. But this way of doing things no longer corresponded to the needs. A number of congregations appealed in vain for pastors to be sent



to them. Already in 1852 in the convention at St. John's Church in Milwaukee, thoughts of founding its own theological seminary came to the surface. But those ideas did not become acute until Bading became president in 1860 and, somewhat later, became pastor in Watertown/ Practically speaking, this spelled the founding and construction of our own seminary. In 1863 the synod resolved on the construction project. In the debate over the site for the institution—Milwaukee or Watertown—Watertown won out by a big majority.

From this point forward we can also perceive evidence that Hoenecke was actively concerning himself with the inner workings of the synod. He had come to Farmington in 1863. Bading was his close neighbor. With him Hoenecke had formed the closest kind of friendship. This bond became even closer through the friendship of their devout wives. The friendship of these two men is very deserving of our attention if we want to understand the eventual victory of Lutheranism and synodical discipline over the "ragged individualism" which had prevailed till then and which lay like a choking blight on a great number of its pastors/

Bading, like Koehler, was a resolute Lutheran, as we have heard. The two men, in standing together for a firm Lutheran molding of our synod's life, had exerted themselves most successfully in that direction. But both men were deficient in a knowledge of the biblical languages and in systematic training in the doctrine of salvation. Therefore they also lacked the doctrinal clarity and the doctrinal certainty which alone convinces others and wins the day in doctrinal disputes. This was precisely what Hoenecke did have. To be sure, he was not a smooth-tongued, imposing orator. On that count he was not the equal of his immediate predecessor, Eduard Moldehnke, at the institution that was still to be erected. Even his printed works are not distinguished by rhetorical beauty. But this is what made the difference: He had an uncommonly sharp mind, was precise in his definition of terms and concepts, and—he knew his subject from the ground up. In exegesis and in clear dogmatic exposition he simply was the unexcelled master in our circles.

Among ourselves, we called this his "combat readiness." This writer had to experience the uncomfortable proof of it personally more than a few times. Anyone who could not stand that soon withdrew from public debate with him and from any closer personal contact with him. Bading could not claim a scholarly theological training. He acknowledged Hoenecke's superiority in the field of doctrine. He learned much from him, and was very expert in shooting the cannonballs that Hoenecke had poured—and he did this, too, in the proceedings then being taken against un-Lutheran practices in the synod. On the other hand, Hoenecke lacked much of the inclination for administrative work and adeptness in it. Bading possessed this gift in a high degree, and he gave ample proof of that as he conducted the business of the synod as its president. In exercising this talent, he now and then went as far as Alexander did in the capital of Gordium, but then he did so without Hoenecke's advice to that effect.

The external arrangements and structures of the congregations were of little concern to Hoenecke if they did not run directly counter to the gospel. In his preaching he was a model of clarity, simplicity and correctness. His sermons were edifying in the right sense of the word. In the private care of souls he limited himself to what was necessary. In this respect he was decidedly the opposite of Tholuck. All gushing over people was something he detested; he did not cultivate human friendships as such. All big, demonstrative gatherings, and that includes public church celebrations and rallies, ran counter to his inner make-up.

Hoenecke's world was largely an inward one, whereas Bading was more attuned to external things. Thus Hoenecke became, in the good sense, the power behind the throne in the synod. That is how things shaped up in the course of time. Before that development—we are still in the year 1863—Bading had to carry out a resolution of the synod to make a journey to Germany and Russia for the purpose of collecting funds to build the new institution, the seminary and college at Watertown [Northwestern]. For the congregations served by the synod till now had little, and gave even less, for the simple reason that they had not been trained to give for such purposes. Even the money for the immediate needs of their congregations they raised only with the greatest

difficulty. While Bading was collecting money for the synod in Europe, two neighboring pastors took care of his congregation.

Now the decision regarding the future confessional stand of the Wisconsin Synod had to be made. The German mission societies and the Prussian state church were not displeased as they saw efforts begin made in our synod to found its own seminary. Recall here the promise made by the government that if the candidates coming from its universities did not find service in the American mission to their liking, it would hold open for them a return to candidacy for the pastoral office in Prussia. But even this promise did not increase appreciably the number of candidates who emigrated out of an adventurous yen for America. In the 1860s massive numbers of Prussians emigrated to the Northwest states of our country (i.e., of the Northwest Territory), but few able pastoral candidates. In part, even the able men among them made a fiasco of it as pastors here. This was because they—puffed up with the dignity of a German *Herr Pastor*—could not adapt themselves to the straitened circumstances over here.

As a result, the Prussian High Consistory not only opened the door to Bading, the collector, for a fund-raising journey through their country. They also commended him to their pastors for their support, under the condition that a designated part of the collection be applied to academic purposes and that the entire collection be deposited in Berlin until the portion collected for the Wisconsin Synod's institution [the college and seminary] could be properly forwarded. When Bading had completed the collection in Prussia, he went by sea to Russia to collect in the Lutheran churches there. Here he gathered a sum of 3,500 rubles. Then he did more collecting in southern Germany and Switzerland for another half year before his return home.

It is very doubtful that Bading in the presentations he made over there was able to give an accurate picture of the confessional situation prevailing in the Wisconsin Synod. Why? Because it had not yet been fully clarified. Till then the synod did indeed possess a kind of Lutheranism, but it was the "mild Lutheranism" of Lutherans in the Prussian Union. It was one that privately could get along with the Reformed churches in this country, though it could not do so with the American sects. When, however, the Prussian High Consistory learned from another source that the Wisconsin Synod might arrive at confessional unity with the Missouri Synod, it held back the 7,000 dollars [Taler], Prussian currency, that had been collected in Prussia until this matter had been settled—and it has the money to this day. In spite of that, the erection of the Watertown school structure was undertaken anew the next year with the funds which Bading had brought back with him. It was completed in 1865, and on September 14 it was dedicated as a theological seminary and an American college.

Exactly the founding of this institution and its beginnings demonstrate how much unclarity prevailed as to its purpose and character. Another thing was revealed, namely, how little of Lutheran firmness governed the board and the synod in filling the teaching posts, to say nothing about the Christian way of supplying the funds needed to maintain the institution. The first faculty consisted of the following men: Adam Martin, a product of the old Hartwick Seminary of the New York Ministerium, which, when this synod left the General Synod, had stayed with the departing English division of it. Though German in his roots, Martin had become a full-blooded "American" in his views in regard to the church and education. He was elected president of the new school. He had set as his goal to make the college in Watertown the top-rated and most influential school of higher learning in the country. From him came the name "Wisconsin University," later, "Northwestern University." He also originated the selling of scholarships to all sorts of people. These caused the synod great embarrassment, and their failure to stay within bounds finally moved Martin to back away from the practice.

Moldehnke, till now the roving missionary of the synod in western Wisconsin, was a pastor from the eastern part of the Prussian State Church and was a Lutheran in the Union. He became the first theological professor. In 1866 he returned to the Prussian State Church. In the same year a certain Seemann was an instructor in the college. Professor Lewis O. Thompson, who taught Latin and history and then English and

mathematics, came from the Union Seminary in New York and was a professing Presbyterian. Johann Kaltenbrunn, instructor in mathematics, belonged to the Christian Brethren (Moravians). He was a master in mathematical calculations. He was hardly a temperate man, but he was a proficient pedagogue. Finally, Hoenecke was called as the theological professor and succeeded Moldehnke the head and dean of the seminary department. He lived in the classroom building as the "house father" who was responsible for Christian order and conduct in the whole school.

When the synod resolved to publish a synodical paper, the *Gemeindeblatt*, and named Moldehnke its editor-in-chief, Hoenecke and Bading were named associate editors. After Moldehnke left, Hoenecke became the responsible editor-in-chief of the periodical. That came about with the first number of the second year, dated September 1, 1866. Thus he became the theological spokesman for the synod in both offices.

His assignment was set for him by several factors. The situation in the synod as to doctrine and practice was still unclear. Doctrinal controversies were being waged in the General Synod and in the General Council. Most weighty were the attacks by Walther and eminent co-workers on the alleged indecisive doctrinal stance and the toleration of unsound practices in the Wisconsin Synod. These factors and his own systematic presentation of biblical doctrine that followed later will furnish a rather correct and complete picture of Hoenecke's significance for the Wisconsin Synod and American Lutheranism.

We now have before us this question: when, how and with what success did Dr. Hoenecke intervene in the course of the Wisconsin Synod with reforming intent?

It is not necessary to stress that he had not come over to this country with the set purpose of reforming our synod. His coming over here from Germany, as we have seen, had something forced about its motivation. We refer to his personal disillusionment with the conditions [in Germany] in the church, in theology and in society and his rupture with Tholuck, his spiritual mentor. He was seeking—more unconsciously than consciously—a Lutheran parish like that in Plauen, one where he could preach the Lutheran gospel as he had learned to know it, free from governmental chicanery and far from the social burly-burly. Though in this search the Lutheranism that had become his own was an indispensable treasure to him, still he did not have a clear picture of the strongly unionistic pastoral practice prevailing in the Wisconsin Synod, though its written confession gave it a correct enough stance. Nor was he, as a very young pastor, clear on the principles governing Lutheran pastoral practice in a free church federation of congregations and pastors, such as this country made possible. Hoenecke, to be sure, did not have to alter his basic confessional position, but he did have to learn how to conduct the office of a Lutheran pastor. That being the case, there could be no thought of his suddenly intervening in the confused goings-on in our synod, especially in view of his personal make-up.

We cannot understand his full influence on our synod and on wider circles of American Lutheranism, if we imagine him to have been an energetic militant in the church such as Walther was. The latter, in the position he occupied in relation to the wider circles of American Lutheranism, was not only quite suited [to the task], he was absolutely essential for it. And exactly through his kind of activity he made a greater impact on our synod's coming to a state of sound health than the great majority of us are inclined to admit. Not until these two men became acquainted and discussed matters with each other did the mutual recognition between Missouri and Wisconsin become possible and actual.

But this recognition, humanly speaking, would never have come about if Hoenecke had been of the same natural temperament as Walther. We know that Walther never achieved peace with the doctrinal leaders of the Iowa Synod, even though he defeated them in every controverted point. He had cut personal wounds so deep that they were not able to bite down the pain. The Wisconsin Synod as well often felt the sword of Walther to be much too sharp, and none of our older leaders ever got over the painful memory. A number of times

Hoenecke rejected Walther's criticisms as unjustified. But there were two factors that finally brought about agreement: the actual basic unity of both men in their Lutheranism, and the objective, quiet and discreet way that Hoenecke had of doing battle. He was deeply conscious of his youthfulness, and he sensed that he still had not fully worked his way through biblical doctrine. As a result, he met the battle-tested champion with becoming modesty, and he opposed Walther more with the shield than with the sword. In his natural temperament, Hoenecke was neither a conqueror, nor a leader of assault troops, nor a fiery champion, but simply an unrelenting defender of the Lutheran fortress against every attacker. Otherwise, he was altogether a man who sought peace in the church and the calm edification of his fellow Christians in the genuine gospel.

This trait of his personality also explains something else that otherwise might strike us as somewhat surprising. It is the calmness with which Hoenecke seemed to observe, over several years, the very unsound goings-on in the synod—without rising to oppose them. The first period of the Wisconsin Synod's history, the years of Muehlhaeuser's administration, was over. Because of the infirmities of old age, Muehlhaeuser had definitely laid down the reins of his presidency in 1860. His way of doing things in the church bore these marks: a Lutheranism that for him personally tended toward unionism; a lack of a thorough theological training; his association for ten years with the lax, unionistic groups in the Lutheran churches in the East; his almost total ignorance of sound pastoral practice. These were characteristics shared by a line of missionaries out of the same school who had come over after him. They were men of the same spirit and of the same pastoral incompetence. These men had given the Wisconsin Synod its image as a church.

Add that this was the image of "moderate and mild" Lutheranism on which the Lutherans coming out of the Prussian state church prided themselves as the right one, but never translated into reality. For under "moderation and mildness" they, after all, understood nothing other than what they, in the Prussian state church, were compelled by law to do, namely, to refrain from witnessing against false doctrine and practice. In other words, that meant to practice church fellowship with the Reformed and those of the United persuasion.

Taking this same stance were the Langenberg and Berlin mission societies and to an even greater degree the leaders of the Chrischona Mission School, from which, to be sure, relatively fewer brethren came to us than from the first two we mentioned. Besides, among the candidates from Lutheran state churches and universities there, indeed, came several who proved to be soundly Lutheran and morally beyond reproach, but there were also men of a very questionable character on both counts. The really bad thing was the superficiality of the examination through which, in most cases, reception into the synod was carried out. In the early days, licensing of pastors was still being practiced, until the protest of some able pastors put an end to the abuse. But even after the business of licensing had been abolished, the examination of those seeking the pastoral office could not safeguard the synod against incompetent pastors. This was so because the men on the examining committees themselves were often not competent for the pastoral office.

Until the later time of Hoenecke's activity, the great majority of Wisconsin Synod pastors lay captive to an unclear teaching regarding the pastoral office. They, in contrast to the Erlangen theologians, did not derive the public ministerial office, in its essence, from the spiritual priesthood of believers. Instead, together with Loehe, Kahnis, Muenchmeyer and others, they saw the ministerial office as a class directly ordained by Christ to be in and over the church. To it alone, in contrast to the laity, the ministry of the keys had been entrusted, and it could and should directly transfer this power from itself to other persons. Accordingly, it could by means of ordination and the laying on of hands create pastors. This is basically the Roman and Episcopalian error. And as the Wisconsin Synod in this fashion "made" pastors who understood little about the right administration of the office, so in cases of discipline it also proceeded on its own knowledge of the facts and simply deposed pastors of congregations without any participation by the congregations in question, as though such a procedure were the exercise of an authority given it by God. Remnants of this delusion can still be found today.

Meanwhile, the connections of the synod with the German mother societies grew ever closer. Every year the synod obtained a new supply of candidates through their good offices. Or there were individual pastors who, with this or that motivation, even though not for scruples of conscience, were seeking a pastoral post in America. In the Wisconsin Synod they found it, too, because many large groups of German immigrants in many localities had become acquainted with the Wisconsin Synod through the effective work of the *Reiseprediger* [traveling preachers] and then turned to the president of the synod to supply them with pastors. With every new arrival who was taken care of here the synod knit a closer bond with those mission societies. One can not help noticing that at every synodical convention there were repeated fervent votes of gratitude and confidence for the workers sent to it, for the material support, and for the communications, inquiries and counsel directed to the synod. These resolutions occur just as often as those addressed to the president acknowledging his faithful efforts for the welfare of the synod.

Nevertheless, the number of candidates sent from over there met the needs here less and less as time went on because immigration increased sharply at the end of the 1850s and the beginning of the 1860s. Already the idea of having our own theological seminary had come up quite often. When these thoughts began to press for realization in 1859 and 1860, Muehlhaeuser, because of his waning strength, felt conscience-bound to lay down his office as president, in order to conserve his remaining energy through more rest and, if possible, to see his German homeland once more before the end of his earthly pilgrimage. Bading became his successor as president. That was in 1860.

The synod perceived Muehlhaeuser's journey to Germany as an excellent opportunity to renew its fraternal relationship with the German mother societies through a personal contact with the influential members of the societies over there, to win new friends for the sending of more workers, but especially for assistance in founding the theological seminary that was becoming necessary. To a great extent he was successful in that endeavor. The Langenberg people promised to further the cause as much as possible, and they advised him to win over the wealthy and benevolent Gustav Adolf Society, which was meeting in Nuernberg that year, for the Wisconsin Synod project. Muehlhaeuser also sought and found in other areas of Germany frequent opportunities to give addresses before large and small groups on the work of the Wisconsin Synod. In a number of places, even in Alsace, he was able to establish new connections in support of the mission work in America.

The immediate result was that he brought back with him one ordained pastor and three candidates and at the Chrischona Mission School pried loose a number of the brothers who were working there. These followed him over somewhat later. The synod rejoiced over this fresh increase in manpower, and it voted its fervent thanks to its former leader and to the friends in Germany. Thus in the first period of the Wisconsin Synod the devout, but confessionally ambivalent, mission spirit of the German mother societies still held sway in a decisive way. This spirit, however, measured up to the special requirements of the American mission only in the case of a few especially gifted men. In the main, it was hardly equal to the able leadership of congregations that was needed here. Whatever able and effective mission was performed for the synod in this period was done by the aggressive, indefatigable Fachtmann (who later sad to say, fell away). He, to be sure, had not been trained by the German mission societies.

Whatever was done in the way of providing able leadership in the congregations in a soundly Lutheran manner can in the main be credited to a half dozen men who had received a more thorough training and who stood up for solid Lutheranism and conscientious practice. These men soon distanced themselves from the synodical spirit that emanated from above. The real pillars of the synod were people like Philipp Koehler, Johannes Bading, Gottlieb Reim and Wilhelm Streissguth. The rest of the pastors were satisfied to take care of their parishes as well as each one knew how—and that knowledge did not always amount to much.

During the second period, that of Bading's administration, the weaknesses of the synod came to light more glaringly than in the first period. For now the men who shared his convictions were making their influence felt. Muehlhaeuser had left to Bading a synod of some 20 pastors and about a dozen parishes. In addition, there were the important field served by the traveling preachers. The synod enjoyed the proven friendship of the mother mission societies and their readiness to assist the work of the synod, a readiness confirmed by recent promises. The Pennsylvanians, too, had remained through the years in their friendship toward the synod. Obviously, however, the synod's relationships toward the outside had expanded and held out the prospect of possibly uniting with other Lutheran bodies or of engaging in conflicts with them.

The Missourians, the Buffaloes and the Iowans were hard at work. In the old General Synod rumblings began to be heard in 1864. Cases of dispute, such as the Lebanon-Watertown case in the last two years of Muehlhaeuser's presidency, seemed to be in the offing for our synod, given the critical attitude of the Missourians—one which our men perceived as unfriendly and unjustified. These clashes seemed all the more likely since the young and forceful Bading [he was 36 when he became president of the synod] wasn't exactly the kind of man who would let others snatch the bread out of his mouth. The requests of pastors and congregations to be taken up into the synod were increasing and, naturally, so was the volume of work for the praesidium. For Bading, in his first annual report (1861), had not only put a strong emphasis on adhering to the Lutheran Confessions, but he had also, by means of an essay given by Pastor Reim, presented the confessional stand of the synod as genuinely Lutheran, both fundamentally and historically. Subsequently, he had a committee cast the content of the essay in the form of theses which were intended for public discussion. All the pastors individually signified their approval of the essay. Pastor Fachtmann was called on to deliver a paper on private and general confession and the position of the Wisconsin Synod as being in agreement with the Lutheran Symbols. Both essays were really aimed at the Missourians, who disputed the authenticity of Wisconsin Synod Lutheranism—and never tired of contesting it.

By the synodical convention of the following year, 1862, in Columbus, Wisconsin, the list of pastors had already grown to 32 and that of the congregational delegates to 13. Among the former, we direct special attention to Pastor Eduard Moldehnke. He had been sent over by the mother societies in the autumn of 1861 to serve as a traveling preacher for the synod. Since he had already been ordained in Germany, he had gone into action at once. Starting at Watertown, he had already traveled through the northwestern part of the state particularly and had already submitted a report through the president of the synod, then in session. We must make mention of him here, not only because he considerably widened the synod's field of work, but also because he was one of the main champions of the plan promoted by Bading to call our own seminary into being. Later on he involuntarily furnished the occasion for Hoenecke's being called to the established seminary.

The founding of our own seminary was the chief work which Bading had set as his goal. As early as 1858 and 1859, in a word, still during Muehlhaeuser's presidency, the project had come under discussion. On his journey to Germany Streissguth had informed the societies of it. But then it had been put off to the future as a project that for the time being could not be carried out. Bading, however, through his annual report at once put the project on the docket as one demanded by the circumstances of the time. But he got little encouragement from the floor committee on the president's report consisting of Muehlhaeuser, Koehler, Boehner and Sauer. They viewed it as plainly impracticable. He fared the same way with a second committee. It recommended a continued use of Gettysburg Seminary, which had trained the able Sieker for us. That was in 1861.

But Bading did not relax the pressure. At the 1862 synodical convention in Columbus, he first pressed for completing the revision of the synodical constitution because that was absolutely necessary for the sake of a clear confession. But then he again steered under full sail for the founding of our own seminary. In giving his reasons for it, he pulled out all the stops:

Ever since the synod has come into existence, never has the lack of pastors been felt as keenly as in the past synodical year. Old congregations of the synod have been standing there like orphans, and they are struggling with the sects and the schismatics for their very life....Petitions have come in from new, unaffiliated congregations in which they beg for pastors, and we have not been able to grant their requests. How is this going to end if we do not think more seriously about the founding of our own seminary and do not put our hands to the task more energetically and with a greater courage of faith? Rely on Germany? We cannot and dare not do that. Why, that is like a drop of water on a hot stone. In our country, in our synod we must dig a well from which the needed workers will flow to us. If we plan to wait for the founding of such a school until we are rich, then nothing will ever come of it.

Then he pointed to the possibility of starting in a small way. He cited August Franke, Pastor Harms in Hermannsburg and even the Missouri Synod as examples we should emulate in childlike reliance on the Lord. Then he would acknowledge our cause as his own by putting his blessing on it.

Bading's address carried the day. This was evident in his being reelected as president (with Koehler as secretary) shortly after and in the open discussion which followed. Speakers went him one better as to his arguments and even as to his plans. It was imperative, they said, to establish a college along with the seminary, either at once or later. An institution was needed that would further the education of the children of pastors and of the church members and would also train German parochial school teachers. Then our synod would become strong and united. It would flourish, and the fine spirit that was now filling hearts in the synod would be strengthened and nurtured. Gettysburg was too far away to rouse any interest in our people. Our Synod could not approve the exclusive course being followed by the Missouri and Iowa synods and could not let its future members be filled with the same spirit.

Then the assembly turned to a discussion of the prospects, the means and the right location. With a unanimous vote it resolved to establish the school, but postponed the implementation until the next synodical convention. That was held in June 1863 at Grace Church in Milwaukee. Muehlhaeuser had returned from his journey to Germany the preceding November with a very encouraging report and with a number of candidates for the pastoral office. Here at home, the time since the previous convention had been used for an intensive discussion of plans to raise the money for building the school the synod had resolved upon and in a search for able teachers. A few months before, Hoenecke, who had been sent by the Berlin Society, had arrived and was stationed as the pastor in Farmington. He, too, had come to this synodical convention and was received as a member of the synod. For the first time he gained an insight into the character and ways of the synod: the new constitution, the plans for the projected school, the spirit reigning in the synod.

That spirit at this time was, above all, the spirit of Bading, a spirit that with great intensity espoused vigorous Lutheranism and the greatness of the Wisconsin Synod. Now, in the most impassioned of all his synodical addresses, he urged the building of the projected school. He began with the synod's unpromising beginnings, the early difficulties and various sad experiences with impure elements, the bitter opposition of other synods, especially "the unfeeling and unjustified attacks" of the Missourians, which had been answered by silence, "almost without exception." He stressed the peaceable character of the synod. Its goal and calling was not participation in the confessional wrangling that was always tearing the Lutheran Church farther apart. Rather, its goal and assignment was to build the kingdom of God, to give the congregations a solid foundation in the knowledge of the saving truths, "to call the individual souls entrusted to us to repentance, to lead them to Christ, and to bring home to their hearts the whole wealth of the glorious grace in Christ Jesus." That is our responsibility, and we dare not lose sight of it, if we want to be saved together with our members, and if we want to be found faithful on Judgment Day. That is the express will of Paul. In the same vein the trial-tested village on the Lueneburg Moor had written a short time before: "I assure you that in the sending of pastors from

the mission house here I will keep you in my thoughts, as long as you and your synod stand solely on Lutheran ground and refrain from the bickering and quarreling, from which no good has ever come....For the sake of God and the congregation do not let yourself and the members of your synod become involved in disputing, for then as a rule all edification in Christ will come to an end."

Once more Bading pointed to the raging with the sword in the Lutheran Church of our land. He expressed a hope for the peaceful union of all Lutheran synods on the basis of the Lutheran Confessions. Most preferable would be a big general synod which would be marked by a mutual and considerate love among all its members. And then, "as it cast out the net of the gospel, it would stand as a Christian and church power with closed ranks to oppose the kingdom of the devil and of the world, until finally the kingdoms of the world became the kingdoms of God and his Christ."

To reinforce his message, he now directed attention to the scourge of God, the Civil War. It had already been raging in the land for two full years—that was the hand of God stretched out in judgment over our people (Is 9 and 10). Then he moved on to the blessing and protection of God experienced by our synod till then, to the door now opened for it into a field of labor holding out great promise, to the incontestable necessity of building the seminary, and to the help promised anew by the friends in Germany. "Now all depends on carrying out the founding of the seminary with great energy and courage....So, then, forward in full confidence! The Lord will support this undertaking and will bring the work we have begun to its glorious goal!"<sup>10</sup>

What impression did this address make on Hoenecke? More generally, what did he think of the whole project and its execution under the prevailing circumstances? History has not recorded answers here. Remember, he was so brand-new to the synod that any participation by him in the discussions of this matter would have appeared as in bad taste, uncalled-for and brash. He had too much tact for that. Besides, the external business matters of the synod were of no great concern to him, the theoretical theologian. But he did have an interest in the founding of the school, as he showed by referring to a customary practice in Germany and declaring himself in favor of locating the school in a small city. At this synod convention he was also a witness as a number of disciplinary actions were taken against grossly unionistic practice, and he found no reason to express an opinion regarding them.

He heard the synod pass a resolution to send Bading to Germany in order to collect the necessary funds for the seminary that was to be built. He was a captive listener as Bading pointed to Moldehnke and him as suitable substitutes for himself in his congregation while he was gone in Germany. He heard a number of pastors remonstrate against taking Moldehnke out of the *Reisepredigt* [the work of a traveling preacher]. Thereupon he listened to Bading express the desire to have Moldehnke temporarily exempted from the *Reisepredigt* so that the latter might begin at once with the seminary instruction of the students that were at hand. Hoenecke was a silent listener, too, as Moldehnke declared himself willing to undertake the work, if the assembly would give him till autumn to complete his duties as a traveling preacher, and as he then took matters into his own hands by proposing that, for the time being, Hoenecke alternate with neighboring pastors as substitutes for Bading, but that then "I will move to Watertown some time in September and at once begin instruction at the seminary and college with the students who are at hand."<sup>11</sup>

His proposal involved a snubbing of Hoenecke—surely, one that was unintended—especially since the synod accepted Moldehnke's proposal, although some spoke up for retaining Moldehnke as *Reiseprediger* and others urged caution in filling the principal teaching post in the school. At the close of the convention came the decision that Hoenecke was to receive \$8.00 per month for substituting in Bading's congregation and Pastor

<sup>10</sup>Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1863, pp 6-10.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, p 30.



Friedrich Hilpert was to get \$12.00 a month as Hoenecke's substitute in Farmington. But Moldehnke for his work as substitute for Bading was simply to "submit a statement to the synod."

There was a good reason why Bading had pressed with such energy for his being sent to Germany. His public advocacy of a resolute Lutheranism, also in the matter of the new constitution, had roused in the mother societies and other friends in Germany the concern that under Bading's leadership the synod might forsake its original confessional stance of a "moderate and mild" Lutheranism and might align itself with the decidedly Lutheran synods in America. The Berlin people had asked for fuller, more detailed report regarding the circumstances and activities of the synod. They had asked the synod why it did not join the General Synod in the East. In response to the first request, the synod had authorized every conference in the synod to send regular reports to the societies, the reports to be subject to critical review by the president. But the synod had entrusted to its officials the somewhat ticklish business of answering the societies' inquiry regarding affiliation with the synods in the East. It had done this "in order to avoid any possible misunderstandings."<sup>12</sup>

Baling had the desire, and he was given the assignment, to remove the distrust that had arisen over there. He was not only to secure the energetic assistance of the societies for the building of the school, but also to gain their intercession with the United Prussian High Consistory to allow a general collection in the (United and Lutheran) churches of Prussia. To carry out this resolution, Baling needed a synodical letter of recommendation. A member of the committee which was to prepare this document, in addition to Muehlhaeuser and Fachtmann, was none other than Hoenecke. And Hoenecke did draw it up! We can explain his doing so in only one way: at this time he had not yet gained a clear and firm confessional position. After Pastor Gottlieb Reim had been elected as vice president and as Bading's proxy in the office of president, Baling departed for Germany.

Reim was now the acting president. In that same year (September of 1863) he had to take action against a pastor of the synod against whom his congregation had lodged charges with Reim. To investigate the case, the president called on Pastors Ph. Koehler, A. Lange and Hoenecke to assist him, and the last-named dutifully helped along to depose the pastor in question at once from his pastoral office in the congregation by the authority of the synod[!].

In the next year, 1864, the synod met in Pastor Koehler's church in Manitowoc. It was the year for elections. Since Bading had not yet returned from abroad—remember, he had also gone to Russia to collect funds from the Lutheran congregations there—Reim was elected as president, Streissguth as vice president—and Hoenecke as secretary of the synod. Bading's reports about the success of his efforts were unexpectedly favorable and encouraging. He asked that the time for his fund-raising travels be extended. That request was granted. Then the question was: how could the funds gathered by Bading be invested safely and most advantageously?

This convention of the synod had uncommonly much business to transact. It centered mainly about the completion of the school in Watertown. To begin with, this part of the minutes attracts our attention: "Given the importance of the general collection in Prussia, for which approval had not yet been received, the assembly wanted to know, first of all, whether the clarifications regarding the confessional stand of the honorable synod which had been given to the Most Honorable Prussian High Consistory (by the Muehlhaeuser-Fachtmann-Hoenecke committee) had proved satisfactory to the Consistory. The document in question was read to the assembly (very likely by Hoenecke as the secretary). The convention adopted the resolution that the officials of the synod (these now being Reim, Streissguth and Hoenecke) prepare a letter to the Most Honorable Prussian High Consistory to clarify any possible misunderstandings."<sup>13</sup> Secretary Hoenecke did not record a word or syllable of the answer that was given by him or by the other members of that committee.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, pp 28f.

<sup>13</sup>*Proceedings*, 1864, p 10.

But Hoenecke did record that Moldehnke had demanded \$150 from the synod for his work as Bading's substitute and that he had received it after his statement had been examined by the customary accounting committee. Then one pastor reported that the confessional position of the Ohio Synod was similar to ours and was inviting us to enter into a closer relationship with it. This statement prompted another pastor to mention the most recent developments in the General Synod, to point out that a split in that body seemed likely, and to urge sending a delegation to a meeting which had already been called for the purpose of forming a new major synod on a basis that was genuinely Lutheran. He believed our synod perhaps would be able to join such a synod just at this juncture when we were founding our own seminary. The synod gave this idea favorable consideration, but the projected meeting did not immediately take place. It was not until two years later that the synod sent as its delegates President Streissguth, Professor Martin (who had come from the Hartwick Synod in the East and had already been inducted [as president] of the college in Watertown), and Hoenecke to Reading, Pennsylvania.

More generally, in the conventions of 1864, 1865, and even 1866 the transactions regarding the school to be founded in Watertown and, later, regarding the school that had been founded, took on a very wide scope, going into the minutest detail. As a result, it is easy to lose sight of the individual actors in them and even more so of the specific part they played in discharging the items of business at hand. We are here concerned only with Hoenecke's participation in the work of the synod and, above all, with his involving himself in the life of the synod in such a way that it was radically changed, in short, became genuinely Lutheran in doctrine and practice. Therefore, we must limit ourselves to picking up the threads that, to a lesser or greater degree, will lead us to our goal.

Until now we have found nothing of this kind. He was too young and too new on the scene to intervene in such a way. In fact, until his election as secretary of the synod in 1864 [he was 29 at the time] he was entirely unknown to many. Only a few had privately focused their eyes on him for the leadership of the seminary. Then the choice fell on the eminent itinerant preacher Moldehnke in such a muddled way that very soon the question was being asked: Should Pastor Moldehnke, who the year before had been designated as the theological professor "for the time being," be kept on as such? Or should another available candidate with a thorough training be put in his place? The synod reaffirmed Moldehnke's professorship and passed this resolution as a self-evident matter: "that always only men who adhere faithfully to the doctrine of our church are to be elected to positions as teachers of theology and shall be pledged to all the confessional writing of our church."<sup>14</sup> This resolution left open the matter of confession in regard to the professors to be elected for the college, and it made possible the appointment of professors at the college who held to another faith—something that, in fact, was carried out in that way.

We should expect that Hoenecke would have objected at least to this resolution and later to have protested against the calling of such men. But of that we hear nothing in the *Proceedings*. The appeal drawn up by Streissguth and Moldehnke asking the congregations for their support and use of the institution speaks in an entirely different way of the requirements to be made of Christian educators, in contrast to the irresponsible procedure of the sects. Hoenecke meanwhile gained a small measure of recognition when he, together with Koehler, Mayerhoff, Streissguth and Giese, was appointed to the standing committee for examining newly arrived ministerial candidates.

If Moldehnke even at this meeting played an important role, such was much more the case at the next convention of the synod, held in Watertown in 1865 at Bading's congregation. Shortly before, Pastor Reim had turned the presidency over to vice president Streissguth and had given him his annual report to read to the synod convention. Streissguth read it, and he functioned as the chairman. First, Reim gave a review of prevailing conditions and reiterated the confessional stand of the synod. Though the synod was receiving unjustified criti-

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<sup>14</sup>*Ibid*, pp 13-14,22.

cisms from Missouri, Reim did admit the failings of the Wisconsin Synod. But he pinned the hope of improvement on the new seminary. It would train its students to become a homogeneous generation of Lutheran pastors. He lamented the lack of support for the seminary on the part of many pastors and congregations, in contrast to the generous gifts of the old homeland. Professor Moldehnke had been so busy with initial preparations at the seminary that he had been forced to discontinue entirely his former work as an itinerant preacher. In the fall, the newly erected building would be put into use. Now the most pressing task was to secure able professors for the college.

At this point we read that Hoenecke asked to be relieved of his office as secretary because the writing was proving too much of a strain for him. He stayed on, however, because the synod elected Pastor G. Vorberg to serve as assistant secretary. In the convention business that followed, Moldehnke predominated. He presented his personal needs. (Everyone at the convention was to put his personal contribution down in writing and thus make himself responsible for bringing up Moldehnke's salary.)<sup>15</sup> He read, in installments, his essay on modern German theology. He spoke of his successful efforts in obtaining two professors for the college. He gave a report on the funds collected by Pastor Bading in Europe and on the expenditure of the money for the erection and equipping of the new building. But he became especially expansive in his detailed report on the past school year at the seminary. He spoke at length about his own arduous labors, about the success of his work as seen in eleven students, and about the trip of three and one half weeks he made to collect money for the seminary. He went into minute detail as he made public the scholarly and strange class schedule he had introduced. He described how he had made use of the students in the work of beautifying the seminary grounds with ornamental trees and bushes sent in from Rochester, New York. He went on at great length about housekeeping items and about contributions of cash and foodstuffs by congregations and individuals, for the upkeep of the seminary. He also mentioned that a debt of more than \$700 had been incurred. But he did not notice that people really were dissatisfied with his pedagogical efforts.

The discussion of his report led to complaints about inadequate support for the seminary by the congregations and about the lack of students, for how far would an enrollment of eleven students take the synod? Such comments had two results. One was a resolution to publish a synodical periodical in order to foster in our people a greater interest in the seminary. The other result was a plan to establish in Germany a pre-seminary for our ministerial seminary. A committee consisting of Pastors Bading and Hoenecke and "the honorable Mr. J. Buntrock" were to pursue this plan—but in the end nothing came of it. But the first concern led to the beginning of the *Evangelisch—Lutherisches Gemeindeblatt*. Professor Moldehnke was appointed as its editor-in-chief, and Pastors Bading and Hoenecke were made associate editors.<sup>16</sup> For the time being, Hoenecke and Pastor Vorberg and the honorable August Gamm were chosen as the visiting committee for the seminary. Bading and J. H. Sieker became members of the school's Board of Trustees. Later Hoenecke was also elected to the same boards.<sup>17</sup>

Otherwise, the conventions of 1865 and 1866 were so preoccupied with matters relating to the Watertown school that an unexpected development at the seminary took people by surprise. The training of students for the ministry had not gone at all according to expectations. Their number was small. The selection [at admission] had been done superficially. Finally, the starting number of 11 was down to one candidate for the preaching ministry, one candidate for the teaching ministry and two students who were undecided. The head of the seminary, formerly an effective itinerant preacher, had grown fond of traveling about and had suspended his teaching duties for weeks at a time. To the officials charged with the oversight [of the seminary] discipline did not appear strict enough. Therefore they proposed creating the office of an inspector [dean of students]. A committee recommended the establishment of such a post, the prospective holder of it to be competent to teach

<sup>15</sup>*Proceedings*, 1865, p 19.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid*, pp13,25.

<sup>17</sup>*Proceedings*, 1866, p 28.

as well. It at once proposed Pastor Hoenecke for the post.<sup>18</sup> In its next session (June 12, 1866) the synod elected Hoenecke and empowered the Board of Trustees to make him the inspector and at the same time to install him as theological professor.

Then we read this in the *Proceedings*: "In consequence of this resolution, Professor E. Moldehnke declared that he was resigning his office (his professorship and the editorship of the *Gemeindeblatt*)."<sup>19</sup> This declaration evoked astonishment and regrets. Even earlier Moldehnke had expressed a desire to return to Germany. He possessed a rather strong hankering for travel and adventure. People thought that by means of the professorship at Watertown they had anchored him down. Now his sudden resignation caused surprise, and some urged him to stay. They had grown fond of him because of his congeniality and his mild Lutheranism. But he could not take the criticism of his performance in office that was implicit in the election of the young Hoenecke.

Even in the past year of his work as editor-in-chief of the *Gemeindeblatt* he had perceived Hoenecke's work as associate editor to be a brake on himself. He was pleased with himself in the double office he had held till now, and also in his spiritual leadership of the synod as it pursued its accustomed course of "mild Lutheranism." Since 1864 there had been rumblings in the General Synod. The Wisconsin Synod through Muehlhaeuser was attached to that body up to this time, though it did not actively participate in its life. Yet it had close ties to the old Pennsylvania Synod. Moldehnke, a short time before, had made some contacts with the acknowledged leaders of the General Synod and other synods of the Midwest. Moldehnke wanted to cement those contacts. The task of uniting the Lutheran churches of America in a peaceful way would have been one worthy of the noblest minds.

Hoenecke had worked harmoniously with Moldehnke for a year in producing the *Gemeindeblatt*. But his eyes were focused not so much on the broad American scene as it was on the area of his own synod, though even at this time he did not feel a special call to be its reformer. But when he was called to share the editing of the *Gemeindeblatt*, he had entered upon a work that appealed much more to him than did all the activity connected with conducting the affairs of the synod. He was, basically, a learner and a teacher; and so he found, first here in his editorial work on the *Gemeindeblatt* and then in his seminary post—he found in them, we say, the calling which God had given him. We recognize that only by hindsight, and we know it only as it became apparent in the period that followed.

That calling was to make our synod, if not exactly a model Lutheran synod, still one that stood through a long future as a solidly Lutheran church body and as a haven of the gospel. All this came about in an entirely different way than human reason might have plotted it out. Till now Hoenecke had spent his time in quiet study of the Lutheran Confessions, as well as of Lutheran dogmatics and of Luther's writings—all this combined with a study of the Bible. Slowly, midst many afflictions and crosses in his family, he came to a clear knowledge of the pure gospel and to convictions regarding it deeply rooted in his heart. In the years that followed, his eyes were opened to the grave weaknesses of the synod. First of all, he took note that so many pastors lacked a thorough theological training—a defect that pervaded their ranks from the venerable, oldest pastor (Muehlhaeuser) down to the latest worker sent from abroad. For that reason he had been a proponent of our own seminary, and he still was that. But he finally came to perceive the root ailment: the ties of the synod to the German mission societies and its spiritual dependence on them. And God brought this about much faster than Hoenecke's theological development thus far might lead one to imagine. Deeply averse to doing battle in a fiery, vehement way, he took a more quiet road. It was the road of calmly and simply instructing the readers of the *Gemeindeblatt* in the Lutheran Confessions and grounding them in those writings.

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<sup>18</sup>*Proceedings*, 1865, p 21.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid*, p 30.

Since the individual articles of the periodical almost never indicate who the writers are, it is not very easy to determine which ones in the first volume can be attributed to Hoenecke. But it is certain that the whole series on Lutheran *Confessions* which appeared in sequence beginning with the second number of the first volume and later at intervals flowed from Hoenecke's pen. Bading's articles can be recognized by their personal and concrete style and by his special concern, promoting the new school in Watertown. Moldehnke's offerings are marked by easy readability, his varied interest and a lack of profound thought.

Aside from that, the three men wrote in apparent unity and harmony on the basis of the Wisconsin-Lutheran confessional position obtaining till then and in personal brotherliness. But Moldehnke, as we heard, remained as editor for only a year. Beginning with the second volume, Hoenecke was the editor-in-chief and, along with Bading as associate editor, was responsible for the entire contents of the periodical. We search in vain in the next volumes that follow for anything more than a general emphasis on a more rigorous Lutheranism—until the break-up of the old General Synod. Then Hoenecke, with Streissguth and Bading, set forth the confessional stand of the Wisconsin Synod with some brevity, yet with telling force. They renounced the General Synod because it had made a shambles of the Lutheran confession. In December 1866 they gathered with representatives of 13 other synods in Reading, Pennsylvania, in order to found a major synod with a stricter Lutheranism. There they stood up for a pure and decisive Lutheranism. Then in 1867 they reported at home on the proposed constitution. Our synod suggested a number of changes [in the document]. Thereupon, by synodical resolution they went to the second gathering of the new church body, held on November 20, 1867, in Fort Wayne. There they, together with delegates of the Ohio and Iowa synods, had to protest against the well-known Four Points: exchange of pulpits with the heterodox, admission of Reformed people to the Lord's Supper, church fellowship with lodge "brethren" (the authority of the general synod over the individual member synods), and chiliasm—the last named being one, to be sure, which the Iowans defended. Our delegates made Wisconsin's membership in the General Council being formed contingent on a firm confessional stand.

Meanwhile—on June 21—representatives of the Iowa Synod appeared before the 1867 convention held in Milwaukee, in order to win our synod over to their Theory of Open Questions. On June 24 came our synod's action taking a position against the Union and the break with the German societies.<sup>20</sup> Then on June 12, 1868, a decisive struggle led to the departure of the unionists from the synod. Meanwhile, in November a colloquium had not healed a separation between Iowa and Missouri. The final event in this sequence was that on October 22, 1868, Wisconsin and Missouri recognized each other as orthodox and concluded peace with each other.<sup>21</sup> In all these decisive actions Hoenecke was the leading spirit. It is well worth our efforts to observe him closely in every forward step he took.

It all began quietly with his editorship of the *Gemeindeblatt*. He did not come on with a lot of saber rattling, but, as we had occasion to point out earlier, with a calm and plain exposition of the nature and content of our Confessional Writings. Even in the first issue of the first volume he started with this and continued with it to the end of the volume. Later he wrote some articles on the same subject at intervals. In addition, he offered many narratives, stories, short and long, reports and evaluations about events in the church world, particularly, happenings in his own synod and, more particularly still, about the development of the school in Watertown. Through all of it, however, he aimed to ground his readers—first in line, naturally, those in the synod—on the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions as the correct exposition and the practical summary of scriptural doctrine. As to his rationale, he expressed it thus in the preface to the fourth volume:

Doctrinal articles are to be the main fare in this periodical; they should be what is most wanted and desired in it by all readers as well. Without clear, thorough teaching there is no edification, at

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<sup>20</sup>*Proceedings*, 1867, pp 22f.

<sup>21</sup>*Proceedings*, 1868, pp 15-17.

least, not of the right kind. A mere exciting of feelings, a stirring up of hearts, a deep rousing and stimulating of emotions—these are not edification. So-called edifying articles which aim at that and nothing more—these do not edify, do not fortify people in the faith. If doctrine alone edifies, then doctrinal articles are necessary.

Now, those are quite simple words. But they show that Hoenecke had recognized the chief failing of the pastors and the congregations of that time: the general lack of acquaintance with the Lutheran Confessions and their most important doctrinal articles, especially with those regarding the church, the ministerial office and authority in the church.

At the time when Hoenecke became influential in the Wisconsin Synod—the year was 1866—things of note were happening in the Lutheran Church of the East. This was the church body which, since 1820, had assimilated many smaller individual synods over the course of the years to become what was called the General Synod. Now it was in a state of uncontrolled dissolution. We have heard that our synod, too, belonged to it by virtue of being the darling of the mother Synod of Pennsylvania. Mark that from the outset the ominous words: "There is death in the pot!" (2 Kgs 4:40) applied to the "mild" Lutheranism of the mother synod, since Muehlenberg (its leader) promoted what is unionism in practice. For "mild" Lutheranism spells indecisive Lutheranism, and indecisive Lutheranism spells indecisive Christianity—always and everywhere the beginning of the end for all spiritual life.

In the General Synod pietistic indifference paved the way, as it always does, for rationalistic unbelief and then for "American Lutheranism," that is, the sects' idea of a "world Christianity."<sup>22</sup>

The mortal illness of the General Synod was revealed when it took in the un-Lutheran Melancthon Synod in 1859. Receiving as a member the rationalistic Frankean Synod in 1864 brought on the death-rattle—and the old mother synod [Pennsylvania] had to serve as its grave-digger.

Looking to the West [Midwest] in this period beginning with the 1840s, we see the young Missouri Synod (officially organized in 1847) engaged in energetic labors—and, with a confessional resoluteness disregarding all else, mounting fierce attacks against every church body in the land that was not solidly Lutheran in every detail, our synod not excepted. We might pass over as less important for our purposes the Buffalo Synod, which was roughly contemporaneous with Missouri, and which in its controversy with Missouri

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<sup>22</sup>Here we must be careful not to lay into *Weltchristentum* (world Christianity) a meaning that would fit the situation as it exists today among American church bodies professing to be Christian. Professor Pieper was writing about circumstances and events roughly in the period of 1850-1880. At that time the sects (Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, etc.) still maintained their distinctive doctrines and practices. But they refused to take the step that the Lord of the church in the Scriptures requires of his faithful followers, that of pronouncing all those whom they regarded as guilty of unscriptural doctrines and practices to be heterodox and of declining to practice fellowship with them. To follow such a course, they thought and said, would be "harsh" and "loveless" and "unbecoming for Christ's followers." They failed to take a confessional stance and were, in a word, unionistic. The majority in the General Synod, hankering to be "in the mainstream of American religious life," had become like these denominations in their doctrinal indifference and unionism. This is what Professor Pieper, writing in 1935, was referring to.

Today we see the mainstream Protestant denominations bearing the last, tragic fruits of unionism. By and large, they have given up cardinal scriptural doctrines they once upheld. Such doctrines as the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the deity of Christ, his miracles, his substitutionary life and death and his physical resurrection are denied by their seminary professors, their ministers and the people in the pew with full impunity. The gospel, in wide areas, has been reduced to: "Practice love toward others as Jesus did; in other words, to salvation by works. Anyone who professes belief in a Higher Being or even one who shows himself as a person of some principle is regarded as a member of God's people.

Note how this tragic development bears out fully Professor Pieper's pronouncement above: "Indecisive Lutheranism spells indecisive Christianity—always and everywhere the beginning of the end of all spiritual life" (WHF).

broke down on the extremism of its own leader, J. A. A. Grabau, in 1866. Still we must reckon with the separation between Missouri's C. F. W. Walther and Wilhelm Loehe (of Neuendettelsau in Germany) that took place in the Saginaw Valley in Michigan. One result of that was the formation of the Iowa Synod, [the leading spirits being] G. M. Grossmann and Joh. Deindoerfer, later the brothers Sigmund and Gottfried Fritschel and others. Under great adversities the Iowa Synod was organized at St. Sebald in Iowa, in 1854, four years later than the Wisconsin Synod. This new synod was to play more than a minor role [in our future history].

The Iowa Synod's leaders were followers of Loehe and pupils of this or that so-called positive university theologian in Germany. As such they considered their special assignment to be that of counteracting the Missourians' "excessive demands" in regard to a correct confessional stand. The sad thing about them even then and until a few years ago was that they never arrived at a unanimous and firm confessional position. To be sure, they helped to bring about the break-up of the General Synod, and they sought kindred minds and leadership among the better Lutheran elements who were then separating themselves from their old synod; they did this also in regard to leading men in the Ohio and Wisconsin Synods and other synods—all for the purpose of forming a better major synod. Among us they had found a hearty welcome and, for practical purposes, an acknowledgement of them as brothers in faith as early as 1867.<sup>23</sup> And, humanly speaking, that relationship would also have been confirmed by synodical resolution then and there if Hoenecke and several other pastors, even at that same synodical convention, had not intervened.

At this point, for the sake of our younger pastors, we must briefly set down in sequence the events that transpired in the old General Synod since 1864 and that eventually brought about its dissolution.

Note, first of all: the break-up of the General Synod resulted from an open clash between two forces. One was the minority led by the Pennsylvania Synod. In the beginning it had advocated a "mild and moderate" Lutheranism—even its insistence on accepting the Augustana had been a very "mild" one. But in the course of time it had gradually achieved a somewhat greater decisiveness. The opposing force was that part of the General Synod which constituted the great majority and which at that time was in full control of things. Confessionally, it was steadily moving to new lows, in fact, had become thoroughly infested with the spirit of the American sects ("American Lutheranism"). Accordingly, it no longer wanted to be bound by the Augustana but sought to have what passed for Christianity among Americans generally accepted as a common confessional ground.

The collision between these two forces came about on May 5, 1864, at the convention of the General Synod in York, Pennsylvania. It happened in this way. The delegates of the Pennsylvania Synod protested against receiving the Frankean Synod, which had become totally bankrupt confessionally. They were most determined in their protest, for they declared that, in case that synod should be taken up, they would suspend all further participation in the future business of the General Synod until their own synod took decisive action in the matter. Quite a few delegates from the individual synods joined in the protest of the Pennsylvanians. The controlling majority took the Frankean Synod into membership and turned deaf ears to the protesters. That was the actual break.

A few weeks later, on May 25, 1864, the Pennsylvania Synod at its convention in Pottstown resolved to carry out the long-intended founding of its own seminary in Philadelphia. In contrast to the liberal seminary of the General Synod in Gettysburg, it was to take its stand on all the Lutheran Confessions. In the fall it was opened, with Dr. William Julius Mann, Dr. Charles Porterfield Krauth and Dr. Charles Frederick Schaeffer on its faculty. Now the split could no longer be avoided.

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<sup>23</sup>*Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, 1867, pp 1, 9, 13.

In June of 1865 the Pennsylvania Synod, meeting in Easton, made its own the protest laid down by its delegates in York the year before, and it sent some emissaries with a message to this effect to the 1866 convention of the General Synod in Fort Wayne. They accused that body of having broken the constitution. But they were no longer recognized as members of the General Synod.

A few weeks later, in June of 1866, the Pennsylvania Synod, in its convention at Lancaster, gave its answer. It formally declared its withdrawal from the General Synod. Further, it sent a general letter to all Lutheran synods in the country that were determined to stand on the Augustana. After announcing its own withdrawal from the General Synod, the Pennsylvania Synod called upon all these synods to meet with it on December 12 of the same year in Reading, Pennsylvania, in order to discuss with it the founding of a new general body that would be fully loyal in its Lutheranism. In its letter, which had been drawn up by Dr. Charles Porterfield Krauth, the Pennsylvania Synod proposed the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as the doctrinal basis. In matters relating to the outward conduct and governance [of the new body] simple brotherliness was to be the basis. A tentative constitution was also proposed. It was, in the main, such as is suited to the free church situation, but it also contained the customary American rules of parliamentary procedure for the transaction of business. If ten synods should declare themselves satisfied with the essentials of this proposal, the unification endeavor would move forward.

And it did move ahead. Our synod, in its convention in Fond du Lac on June 12, 1866, accepted the invitation and sent President Streissguth and Professor Martin as its representatives to Reading. This came after the two men, as well as Bading and Moldehnke, had already made extended and successful efforts toward a closer fraternal relationship with the Iowans. They had also reached agreements with its leaders to take concerted action at Reading. Hoenecke had just been elected as inspector [dean] and theological professor at Watertown. Moldehnke, after resigning his professorship, had returned to Germany. Hoenecke was now the theological leader of the synod and the editor-in-chief of the *Gemeindeblatt*. As such he became, more so than before, the [close] observer and critic of things that transpired within and without the synod. And that circumstance soon led to a turn-about in our synod's position both as to its confession and its practice.

So, then, from December 12 to 14, 1866, the representatives of 16 Lutheran synods assembled for earnest discussions in Reading, Pennsylvania. (This is the count given in the *Synodical Proceedings* of 1867 and the *Gemeindeblatt* of August 1 of the same year; 13 is the correct number.) They were: the Pennsylvania Synod, the five districts of the General Synod of Ohio, the English Synod of Ohio, the Pittsburgh Synod, the Michigan Synod, the Wisconsin Synod, the Minnesota Synod, the Missouri Synod, the Iowa Synod, the Norwegian Synod, the Canada Synod and the New York Ministerium (a part of which had suffered some losses in the separation from the General Synod). The delegates accepted the platform laid before them by Dr. Krauth almost without change. Only the Missourians thought the matter was going ahead with undue haste. The delegates resolved to present the platform to their synods for critical review and, if ten synods should give their approval, a constituting convention for the purpose of founding the projected major synod would be convened by its president.

On October 24, 1867, the chairman, Pastor Gottlieb Bassler, sent a convening call to the above-named synods under the name "The General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of North America," the meeting to be held on November 20, 1867, in Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Now the future of the Wisconsin Synod also hung in the balance.

But man proposes, and God disposes. In our synod, even at the convention in St. John's Church, Milwaukee, on June 20-27, 1867, with President Streissguth in the chair, everyone was filled with wholehearted approval of the platform agreed upon in Reading—only quite unessential emendations to it were made—and there prevailed a joyous hope that the new major synod would come into being. Even Hoenecke, in a report in



the *Gemeindeblatt* of August 1, 1867, still expressed approval and joyous hope in this matter—evidently because he, as one who had not been present in Reading, was not yet fully cognizant of the factors that had brought about the break-up of the General Synod. The men who were the leaders of our synod till then had already met privately with the Pennsylvanians in connection with our synod convention of 1864 in Manitowoc, and they had been informed of what had transpired in York and what the planned sequel would be. Even at that early date they had decided to send two delegates, without knowing to what meeting-place but knowing full well for what purpose, for they were of one mind and heart with the leaders of the mother synod, and they were thoroughly acquainted with the state of things in the General Synod in regard to confessional matters.

But Hoenecke was not. He had barely gotten his feet wet in Wisconsin Synod waters when he had been chosen as theological professor and inspector (dean of men) at Northwestern and had been named associate editor of the *Gemeindeblatt*. Now he was concerning himself with the demanding enterprise of the new school. He was writing doctrinal articles, letting Moldehnke handle the external affairs of the church—something that suited him. And he was studying dogmatics. During Moldehnke's time as editor-in-chief (1865-1866) we find in that first volume an item submitted by the Iowans in which they expressed a desire for a closer relationship with Wisconsin (June 1 issue). In the second year there is a half-column report on the break in the General Synod (July 1, 1866). In the next volume, of which Hoenecke was editor-in-chief, in the issues from September 1, 1866 to August 1, 1867 (with a continuation in the August 15 number), apart from a brief notice about a part of the New York Synod and a part of the Illinois Synod stepping out of the General Synod—we find not a single word about the whole business that was troubling the East.

Moreover, what Hoenecke offered in that issue (August 1, 1867) was merely a report, not very extensive at that, about the action our synod had taken in regard to these matters. This seeming lack of interest on Hoenecke's part in events in the East we dare not reckon as an actual one. His talent was as little suited for a wide area of activity as it was for making a lot of noise in a more limited sphere. His special gift was thoroughness, his forte, deep study, and his workshop, the school [in Watertown]. He was not cut out to be the "wide-awake" American journalist whose eyes go roving over the whole world, and he was deeply averse to all sensationalism. He never was a popular man in the American sense, nor was he a so-called magnetic personality. He liked to be alone, away from the crowd, and even in his own synod he occupied a somewhat isolated position.

And such was precisely the case in that period of decision. At that time there was in the church a great deal of behind-the-scenes maneuvering, American style, and a great deal of abominable politics, one siding with this party, another with another party.

And our synod was no more free of it than were the two big parties in the East as they were parting their ways. Our old leaders were "worked on," and they "worked on" others. In small circles and in one-to-one talks they were trying to enlist allies, including, at this point, such as favored the new major synod. Our treatment of the Iowans is a glaring example. At the founding of the seminary and college in Watertown we had declared them to be "Ultra-Lutherans" whose help we could not possibly use in carrying out our educational objectives. Now we courted their friendship and invited them to our conventions. And it was exactly this circumstance that the God who governs all things employed as the immediate means to safeguard us against joining the new, but thoroughly unsound super-church project—the General Council.

In order to see things clearly at this point, one must read the *1867 Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, pages 13ff, and the *Gemeindeblatt* of August 15, 1867 (Hoenecke's personal report on the same events).

By mutual agreement no fewer than ten representatives of the Iowa Synod and two from the fractured Buffalo Synod had made their appearance at our convention in St. John's Church, Milwaukee. Professor

Sigmund Fritschel was the invited preacher on the evening of the opening day. In the third session Ex-President Streissguth formally introduced the Iowa-Buffalo guests to the synod. "By resolution of the synod a most hearty welcome was extended to all." At once the guests were given the floor, although the convention was unprepared [for what they might present]. And what came next? These gentlemen, especially the brothers Sigmund and Gottfried Fritschel, the foremost "theologians" of the Iowa Synod, had come before our synod as propagandists for their peculiar theology and for the equally peculiar confessional position of their synod.

They had received their theology, in essence, from Loehe by the training method of the mission schools, which emphasized the practical, though Gottfried had spent a year in Erlangen. Generally speaking, both men were intelligent, able and devout in the spirit of Loehe. Still, they had never gotten to the heart of the theology that rightly bears Luther's name. Rather, sad to say, they had imbibed enough of the scholarly conceitedness of even the so-called positive modern theology of the universities, so that they could approach pristine Lutheranism, that is, the Lutheran confessional writings only with a scholarly *reservatio mentalis*. The study of the later Lutheran dogmaticians and, above all, agreement with these they regarded as a sign of unscholarly narrow-mindedness, of repositioning theology, just as did the German theologians. The inevitable result of this superior-minded stance was an unsteady heart and mind and an ambiguous way of presenting matters—one that in the course of debate they had to correct again and again to avoid being branded a heretics.

So right from the start the confession of the Iowa Synod was vacillating one: "The synod makes all the Symbols of the Lutheran Church its own confession, and it does so for this reason that it recognizes that all the decisions in the Symbols regarding controversies before and during the Reformation period corresponded to the divine Word. Because, however, there are different directions within the Lutheran Church, it confesses its allegiance to that one which, by way of the Symbols and on the basis of God's Word, strives toward fuller perfecting of the church."<sup>24</sup>

With such a half-hearted confession they would become evident as unsure Lutherans even to less formidable opponents than Walther was. Just as sad, perhaps even sadder, was the situation in regard to the personal, learned theology of the two spokesmen for Iowa. They were exactly like the great majority of the modern so-called positive university theologians in Germany—energetic, yes, rather fanatic champions of the theory of open questions. That means: they stoutly maintained that in minor points of doctrine in the Lutheran Confessions one could deviate from them or teach something different from them without losing his claim to Lutheranism. Among these points they counted the teachings of the Confessions regarding Sunday, of the Pope as the great Antichrist, the Thousand-Year Kingdom, of the future general conversion of the Jews and of the perpetual virginity of Jesus' mother.

To be sure, the Iowans did not teach these things as a church body, but they wanted to keep the option to do so open for an individual pastor or professor. That explains the term. Take the case of Dr. Joseph A. Seiss, an archchiliast. A member of the Pennsylvania Synod, he had stepped out of the General Synod and into the General Council—without a word of protest from anyone. The Iowans could practice fellowship with such a man without a scruple of conscience.

If the Iowans' synodical confession had brought down on them the severe, well-earned chastisement of the Missourians, such was much more the case with their position on the "Open Questions." We need not approve of everything that was written in the series of articles, "The Iowans' Mistaken Opinions and Mantles of Deceit," which came out of Missouri at that time. For example, the tone adopted to conduct the polemic and prevailing throughout was of the kind that dare not be used if one wants to win over the opponent. But the

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<sup>24</sup>Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1867, pp 8ff, 13ff.

theory advanced by the Iowans in regard to the "Open Questions" and the manner and method of advancing it would have done indescribable damage to Lutheranism if it had won acceptance.

Why didn't their theory infect our synod, too? Because God prevented it through Hoenecke. Unable to maintain their position in the debate with the Missourians, the Iowans had turned to various "eminent" theologians in Germany, especially to the "Lutheran" theological faculty in Dorpat, and from them they had secured a theological opinion (*Gutachten*) which they believed would be an effective shot that would smash all opposition. Armed with that, they came to our synod convention on June 21, 1867, receiving the warmest welcome from our people by and large. They would have easily bagged us as adherents to their position on "Open Questions" if Hoenecke, together with a few pastors, had not stepped in to oppose them very politely but resolutely and victoriously.

Professor Fritschel read several passages in the Dorpat Opinion. "At once a discussion arose as to whether the so-called 'Open Questions' could be acknowledged as a part of the [Lutheran] Confession. A number of differing views came to light. Agreeing with Professors Sigmund and Gottfried Fritschel, a number of our synod's delegates defended the position of the Dorpat Evaluation.<sup>25</sup> But we do not, have the space here to reprint the whole discussion recorded in the *Synodical Proceedings*. It touches on the doctrine regarding Sunday, the expression *Maria, semper virgo*, in the Smalcald Articles, the doctrine of the ministry and that of chiliasm, the distinction between fundamental and nonfundamental doctrinal articles and that between doctrinal articles consciously enunciated as confessional and those mentioned only casually."<sup>26</sup>

Then the debate surged back and forth between various and opposing opinions, the names of the speakers being omitted [in the *Proceedings*], with the exception of Prof. Fritschel's. It is only from the report in the *Gemeindeblatt*, written by Hoenecke himself, that we learn it was he who refuted the Fritschels with their whole theory. We also hear what arguments he used in doing so. We mention here only a few significant points. Professor Fritschel allowed himself a barbed oblique remark in which he referred to the Missourians as men who in controversy "carried a varying degree of persuasion and weight." Thereupon we read in the minutes: "Pastor emeritus Muehlhaeuser expressed his full agreement with that and then, passing over to the Last Things, he adduced a statement of Bengel's: 'You chiliasts can subscribe to the Confession with a good conscience. The Thousand-Year Kingdom is not found in the Augustana, but it is in the Bible.'" In opposition to that Pastor J. Brockmann, whose roots were in the Hermannsburg Mission Society, said: "Chiliasm is being placed under the rubric of Open Questions. My questions are: 1) Can that be brought into harmony with what we confess in the Second Article, 'From there he shall come to judge the living and the dead'? 2) With the teaching of the Thousand-Year Kingdom, how can the church remain a kingdom of the cross?"

<sup>25</sup>*Wisconsin Synod Proceedings*, 1867, p 13.

<sup>26</sup>The mention of the expression *ex Maria semper virgine* (in the fourth section of the first part of the Smalcald Articles) on the part of the Iowans historically was a sorry disappointment. The Reformation historian Theodor Kolde has definitely demonstrated that Melancthon underhandedly thwarted the official acceptance of Luther's Smalcald Articles there at the convention and then slipped in his own tractate in place of it, because it appeared to him that Luther in the article concerning the Lord's Supper had used a wording that was too strongly Luther-like. He was able to pass off the deception because Luther was sick and could not participate in the discussions in person. [In fact, the Smalcald assembly requested the scholars present to draw up as an addition to the Augsburg Confession and Apology a statement on the pope. This assignment was carried out by Melancthon (*Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books, Concordia Triglotta*, pp 58-62) -ed.] Luther's Articles had been drawn up only in German and not simultaneously in Latin. The Latin translation of Luther's Articles, in which occurs the *ex Maria, pura, sancta semper virgine, nasceretur*, did not come from the pen of Petrus Generanus until the year 1541, and the translation that was taken up into the Concordia in 1580 and 1584 very likely was written by Selnecker. At any rate, the expression is not symbolically binding. Luther's German Articles, too, did not win acceptance in the form in which he wrote them for the Smalcald meeting, but in the altered and expanded form which he wrote in the next year.

The argumentation which Hoenecke used in opposing Professor Fritschel was roughly as follows. The distinction between fundamental and nonfundamental articles originally was not found in Lutheran dogmatics, and the supra-naturalists (rationalists) used it to practice a mischief that finally shatters all the foundations. Other dogmaticians have objected strenuously to the admissibility of open questions. In making the concession that they may be tolerated we can perceive only a dangerous concession to modern theology. It offers a welcome handle for bringing everything in the church that stands firm and solid into a state of flux and for recasting everything in contradiction to the Symbols of our church. Moreover, it is one thing when we talk of tolerating and bearing with individuals who in this or that minor point deviate from the Symbols, so long as they do not overturn the foundation. But it is quite another thing when the demand is made that theories running counter to the Symbols be given authoritative status in the Lutheran Church. For example, in dealing with people who as individuals still cling to certain chiliastic opinions, we dare not immediately deny to them further church fellowship. But as soon as we are dealing with the abstract question as to the right of chiliasm as a whole to exist in the Lutheran Church—In other words treating chiliasm as an open question—then such a claim must be rejected most decisively.

Others (besides Hoenecke) continued the discussion with Professor Fritschel, some speaking in agreement, others in dissent. Professor Fritschel conducted his part of the debate with a special zeal as he tried to use the doctrines of the ministry, of the Antichrist, of the conversion of the Jews, and of chiliasm to prove the necessity for the "Open Questions." President Bading suspended the normal order of business in order to allow the Iowans an opportunity for a full discussion, since they had to leave soon on their trip home. But Hoenecke refrained from giving any further answer under the circumstances, saying, "In view of the importance of the whole matter, it is only regrettable that our convention was not prepared to a degree desirable to deliberate on it, and for that reason the discussions have resulted in no conclusion worth mentioning. That will make it all the more necessary that our next synodical convention take up the subject again and deal with it in a thorough fashion. Until then let all weigh very seriously the anxious question whether perhaps now again, as happened once before in a somewhat similar way, the Open Questions could become the door through which enemies who might not be easy to overcome might force their way into our Lutheran Zion."<sup>27</sup>

Hoenecke's comments served to separate us for all time from the "Open Questions" Iowans. In fact, they also served to keep us from remaining in the General Council, for the doors had to be held wide open to admit the chiliasts and other proponents of the "Open Questions" if the new federation was to come into being at all. As is evident, the attempt was actually being made to erect something on the substructure of the same old unionism which had brought the General Synod to its collapse. And what happened to unionism, that spiritual climate in which so many pastors and the synod as an official church body had lived and worked for 16 years in spite of their Lutheran confession? Hoenecke dealt it the finishing blow at that same synodical convention of 1867. The full clarification of the issue would come later.

We know the relationship of the synod to the German mission societies. It had its origin in the persons of the first missionaries sent over by them. It had experienced an appreciable measure of growth through the many men sent over later by them. It had been strongly supported these many years with sizable offerings sent over by the again and again. Yes, as we have heard, we had wooed the unionistic societies—self-confessed as such—for their friendship and support time and time again—very recently in the interest of founding the school in Watertown. We had not only sent a personal representative over there at three different times in order to collect funds. We had even passed a formal synodical resolution through which we turn to the unionistic High Consistory in Berlin for their sponsorship a support, and Hoenecke, at that time still very young and theologically immature, had to draw up the most submissive petition and sign it, together with the president and the treasurer.

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<sup>27</sup>*Gemeindeblatt*, August 15, 1867, p 3.

Remember, however, that the great majority of these missionaries had Lutheran roots. At the mission schools they had received training that in some cases indeed was "United," but in other cases was Lutheran of the "mild and moderate kind." Most important, Inspector Wallmann in Barren had assured them that in America they would have the option to shape their ministry in the Lutheran, the "United" or the Reformed way, just as each saw fit. Because the first missionaries had been told in New York and Pennsylvania that the United kind of church life did not go over well here in America and that here among the German settlers in the Midwest Lutheranism had the best prospects, they, without any guile and quite openly founded a Lutheran synod with the full, though unexpressed, approval of the mother societies in Germany. It was understood, though, that they wanted to remain "moderate and mild" Lutherans and would not become harsh Old Lutherans—like the Missourians. In this way we sought to be Lutheran and [at the same time] in a sincerity cultivated the fellowship of faith and friendship with the United German societies and others of the United persuasion.

Such a situation was really an intolerable thing, an offense against the confessional command and promise of our Lord (Mt 10:32ff). This fact remained hidden to most of our people, to Hoenecke, too, for a while—until the Missourians loosed their relentless and often nasty criticisms. They indeed cut deep wounds in our people and embittered them in many cases. But at the same time this criticism awakened their consciences in regard to their confession responsibility. Beginning with this time, which was also marked by open clashes between members of the two synods, there surface among our people a strong drive to become "more and more Lutheran." But their relationship to the German societies and the "Lutheran" synods of the East kept their eyes glued shut to a great extent. But many a man among us felt sorely burdened in his conscience because the position of our synod to a greater or lesser degree was, in fact, unionistic. The only trouble was that none found the courage to launch a determined attack, on the basis of principle, against the unionism that flourished here and there and everywhere.

But one man had already found such courage—Hoenecke. Together with Thiele, he had pressed Bading to put the discussion of the Union question on the synodical agenda for that same year (1867). The president yielded and named a committee consisting of five pastors and three delegates, with Hoenecke at its head, to prepare recommendations on the matter. The committee did its work. They reported, unanimously at first, how they understood the question: How does the synod stand toward the Union? They took it to mean: What position in principle does it take toward the Union? The committee members, we hear next, could not remember that the synod had ever laid down a clear-cut confession about the Union for external consumption. But in the climate prevailing then among the churches it would not be sufficient to put only a positive declaration that we are Lutheran. Rather, we must add the negative declaration that we reject the Union.

Then came the factual basis for this position and a fuller delineation of the various kinds of union. This report was signed by Hoenecke, three pastors and two laymen, in other words, only by a majority. Pastor T. Meumann entered a dissenting report for the minority. And this report, tediously long and waffling in its statements, not Hoenecke's, was the one the synod adopted in a somewhat altered form! And the strange thing was that Hoenecke and his majority, after a long debate, reconciled themselves to the minority report when a correction had been made in its wording.

But this outward setback did not change the position against unionism which he had gained by a long, slow process and which had already become an unshakable one for him. The synod had preferred the Meumann report to his purely out of consideration for the German mother societies. It did not want to appear ungrateful toward them. As a result, it would have failed dismally in its confessional responsibility and would have remained stuck in its old confessional looseness and would have been able to go into the General Council under full sail, if God had not come at the runaway synodical wagon from the other side and jammed its wheels.

The German United Societies had been dissatisfied for some time with the new course toward independence and a decisive Lutheranism that the Wisconsin Synod had embarked upon, beginning with Bading's presidency. The Langenbergers had terminated their support. The Berlin people, in the periodical *Der Ansiedler des Westens* (The Settler in the West), had maintained a listening post in the country who had kept them accurately informed regarding the confessional current running in the Wisconsin Synod. Even before this they had asked for fuller information about our relationship to the General Synod. Always there came new inquiries regarding the new confessional turn we had allegedly taken, and the vague answers had only made them more suspicious. Shortly after our 1867 synodical convention a bombshell exploded in our midst: the Berlin society in a public notice had dissolved its erstwhile association with us, had accused us of base ingratitude and had announced the termination all further support for us.

Naturally, this news produced a severe shock. But now the only course open to us was to answer the public exposure of the rift as best we could, to declare our confessional course, to rescue our honor and at this juncture to proclaim publicly to the whole church our steadfast opposition to unionism of every kind. This most thankless of all assignments fell, naturally, to Hoenecke. How did he discharge it? Information regarding that question did not come until the June 15, 1868, issue of the *Gemeindeblatt*. For the time being it seem advisable to let the highly unpleasant impression which the Berlin Society's proclamation had made fade a bit and in the meantime observe what would result for a genuine Lutheran Church from the forthcoming assembly that was to organize the General Council.

It is striking that our 1867 synod convention chose as its delegates for the decisive transactions scheduled for November in Fort Wayne Bading, Muehlhaeuser and Professor Martin, and that Hoenecke, G. Vorberg and S. H. Sieker were designated as their alternates. In the election of delegates for the preparatory meeting the convention had simply passed Hoenecke by. On September 15, however, Muehlhaeuser died. Bading named Hoenecke as the substitute for the deceased Muehlhaeuser, and so he got to Fort Wayne as a delegate after all. In the time just before that he had expended a great deal of energy in refuting the Missourians in their rather unlovely polemicizing.

In Fort Wayne he did not make contact with the Missourians. They had not come because Walther and Sihler had declared the forming of a new church body under the prevailing circumstances to be premature and fraught with spiritual danger. They demanded that free conferences be held first, so that there could be a mutual testing of positions and peaceful discussions, so that they might be able to enter major federation of churches that was soundly Lutheran.

If anyone expects to see Hoenecke at the Fort Wayne assembly as a Lutheran Siegfried who slays dragons, he is sure to be thoroughly disappointed. Hoenecke played a very unpretentious role there. We have emphasized all along that he was not at all a man who waged aggressive, attention-getting battles, but was a man of peace, one who quietly engaged in the refuting error. In Fort Wayne another factor entered in. He was the rather stiff German scholar who could speak no English. True, he would have been allowed to speak in German. But when he observed the able theologians of the committee engage in public debate in the easy and glib style of the worldly-wise, he felt very diffident and unequal to the situation, because he still had not grasped fully the matter under debate. Here in Fort Wayne it was the Ohio men, in contrast to the theological professors from the Philadelphia seminary, who controlled the situation. This was the case because they had had many contacts with all elements of the General Synod, and because they were certain of their own sound Lutheran position. They conducted the battle and finally brought about the victory of the truth. They also knew the weaknesses of the positive element that now was about to build a new church body. Even among these people, they were aware, all was not as it should be.

It was the same Ohioans who saw to it that those Four Points that had become widely known were put on the docket for debate. It was on these points that the prospect of entering the General Council ran aground, for their own synod, for ours and for others—first tentatively and finally permanently. The four points were: the lodge question, pulpit fellowship with non-Lutheran preachers, altar fellowship with non-Lutherans, and chiliasm. In sum, it was a question as to whether it was to be a clear and pure Lutheranism or the unionistic business all over again.

At this point Hoenecke had an opportunity to make his presence felt. In Fort Wayne he had been appointed a member of the committee which was to consider the Ohioans' presentation and the Missourians' petition for free conferences and to make definite recommendations to the assembly. The recommendations brought in by the committee were designed for a postponement of the answer and, in part, for an indirect disposition of it.<sup>28</sup> They set off a stiff debate in the assembly. Some favored postponement. The Wisconsin and the Iowa delegates, together with "Pastors Heyer and Welden" pressed for "an immediate, decisive answer," but they did not prevail. The matter was given into the hands of a second committee of 12 men (one from each of the synods represented there), and its recommendation was thoroughly evasive.

The assembly resolved that it was not then prepared to give answer to this question and to the separate demand of the Iowans, but that it hoped for full unity on these questions, under God's blessing as a result of future discussions on the respective individual points. Upon the passage of this resolution the delegates of the Iowa Synod declared that, in view of such an indefinite declaration, they could not yet regard themselves as a member of the General Council but that they too would send delegates to the projected sessions. The Wisconsin men declared that for the time being they regarded themselves as a member of the assembly, but that they would report the decisions just taken to their synod and "would have to leave it to this body to make the decision of the Synod of Wisconsin regarding its position with reference to the general assembly of churches (the General Council)." Hoenecke, apparently satisfied, concludes his *Gemeindeblatt* report (December 15, 1867) with the words: "We have reason to thank God that he has permitted us actually to take a step forward toward unifying the Lutheran church, but we pray that this united body will be one that is held together not merely by the bond of human constitutions, but by a full unification for our dear church by virtue of spiritual oneness in doctrine and in a practice that is required by the same."

The 1868 synod convention in Racine was opened by President Bading with the declaration that the synod with this convention had entered a new stage in its development. Not only had the venerable and dearly beloved founder of the synod and its leader for many years been called out of this life, but "the United societies within the Prussian state church" had served notice that their friendship with us was ended. Because of this, our synod had had to experience a great deal of unjustified censure, but, sad to say, much of the censure was also justified. "Our position, it is true, was for long time a wavering one. A sense of gratitude had restrained our synod from letting the inner confessional decisiveness that for a long time past had been present be fully enunciated to those outside our synod and from refuting the accusations that we regard unionism favorably with a forthright testimony against all false union; arrived at through doctrinal statements and constitutions. Those vacillations, honored brethren in the ministry and in the faith, must come to an end."

Then, to fortify all the members of the synod present there, he cited a series of biblical examples and adduced dogmatic, historical, ecclesiastical and moral reasons for his call to put away every kind of unionism and become faultlessly resolute in confessing Lutheranism in all its glory in doctrine and practice. In regard to joining the General Council, he spoke as one who was still hopeful. But he also conditioned that with a warning and in conclusion cited Luther's well-known warning against establishing a fraternal relationship even with an

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<sup>28</sup>See the *Gemeindeblatt*, December 1, 1867, p 2.

errorist who goes astray in a minor point: "No, my dear sir, don't speak to me of a peace and unity through which one loses God's Word, etc...."

"Accordingly, we too are determined, by God's grace, to work and strive toward unity in doctrine, in faith, and in what we speak publicly and what we confess, and to do this in all patience, in humility, and in modesty—all this in order to build up the Lutheran Zion in this country...God grant that, and to that same end may he also bless our present convention."<sup>29</sup>

In his presidential report Bading not only directed attention to the necessity of preparing an answer to the official statements of the German mission societies. He also pointed to our brotherly relationship with the Minnesota Synod and to the prospect of peace with the Missouri Synod.

There followed a discussion on the Four Points regarding which our delegates to Fort Wayne had brought back a report. Here again Hoenecke came strongly to the fore. For the time being he declined to discuss several theses submitted by the Iowans. Without further ado the synod launched into the point that stemmed from the General Council meeting, namely, pulpit and altar fellowship. And it caused more of a problem than had been anticipated. First, the point was emphasized that we had already decided this question with our declaration of the year before against [false] unions, for a testimony against false unions was also a testimony against pulpit and altar fellowship. Now that point was vehemently contested. The leaders in this effort were especially Pastor G. Vorberg of St. Matthew's Church in Milwaukee and Professor Martin of the school in Watertown. They conducted their argumentation with great energy, and they did not refrain from heaping fresh shame on our synod because of its practice in the past.

After Hoenecke had set forth a position of unbending opposition to all advocates of permitting the exchange of pulpits and altar fellowship with the heterodox, this resolution was adopted: "that the synod, with the whole orthodox Lutheran church, rejects all and every altar and pulpit fellowship with false believers and the heterodox as one that contradicts the teaching and practice of the Lutheran church." All who voted for the resolution stood up. Pastors Vorberg, Hermann Kittel, Paul Lucas and Professor Martin voted against it, while the delegates of Grace Church, Milwaukee, and those from Helenville abstained from voting. Pastor Vorberg was very agitated toward the end of this action. Bading, too, became deeply affected. For what had been done spelled a parting of the ways for these friends. Pastor Vorberg, who otherwise was a man of high character, and Pastor Kittel of Lacrosse at once stepped out of the synod, but made no effort to tear their congregations away from the synod.

As to the lodge question, the synod had already disposed of it the previous year on the basis of excellent presentations by Pastors Meumann and Koehler. How thorough that action was, these resolutions will indicate: No member of an anti-Christian association was to be admitted to the Lord's Supper. A lodge member who had become a member of a congregation was to be dealt with first in a pastoral manner. But if that [brotherly admonition] proved fruitless, he would have to be excluded. A congregation that did not follow this course would have to be excluded from the synod. The president was authorized to publish these resolutions, together with some "elaborations," in such a way as to give them prominence.<sup>30</sup> These resolutions would have been enough to keep us out of the General Council.

Now, in 1868, the synod took care of another point, one that always came up in connection with the Four Points. It was called the question of authority. The resolution disposing of it had this import: No synod in the Council about to be established has any authority over another member synod except an advisory one, and that applied as well to the General Council in its relation to the individual synods. This question could well have

<sup>29</sup>*Proceedings*, 1868, p 6.

<sup>30</sup>*Proceedings*, 1867, p 19.



been settled satisfactorily at the meeting of the Council which was soon to convene in Pittsburgh. But the matter of our joining the Council foundered on the other four points. Our synod instructed its delegates to the coming assembly to inform the Council regarding our resolutions on the Four (five) Points. At the same time it expressed the hope that the Council very soon would be able to take a clear and firm position on those questions. It added the declaration, however, that we could no longer regard ourselves as members of the projected church federation if the Council at its coming assembly did not give us a satisfying answer, and that meant also an answer in harmony with our resolution regarding altar and pulpit fellowship.<sup>31</sup>

But that was not the end of the matter. The above resolution was passed on Saturday evening, June 13. On the next Tuesday (June 16) Professor Martin stood up and in a very bitter tone protested against the resolution. He declared publicly "that he would step out of the Wisconsin Synod on the same day it would separate from the general assembly of churches (the Council)." At that the synod resolved to declare the above resolution open for consideration. But for the time being nothing came of that, because discussion of agreement with Missouri, a bright prospect, was already on the docket, and Hoenecke did not wish to have that matter interrupted. Then quite a number of other things came under discussion. Finally, on the next day, the convention took up the reconsideration, as resolved. A long and heated discussion followed. Professor Martin renewed his protest, but the synod overrode it by resolving "that the resolution on this matter passed in the sixth session was to stand," and it chose Hoenecke and the president as delegates to the forthcoming meeting of the Council.<sup>32</sup>

After the synod had thus gained a clear and firm position, all the other difficulties which, from the very beginning, our people had gotten themselves into because of an indecisive confessional positional—all these solved themselves, partly very painfully, to be sure, but irresistibly.

Hoenecke and Bading went to Pittsburgh. There they witnessed how the Council agonized over the well-known Four Points—to no avail, and how, as a result, it stayed with its unionistic practice. Pastors Vorberg, Kittel and Professor Martin separated from the synod. Now also Hoenecke, not Bading, gave a very vigorous answer, in the *Gemeindeblatt*, to the German mission societies' renunciation of ties to our synod. He also handled the direct communication of the Berlin High Consistory announcing its retention of the funds gathered by Bading. In its answer the synod formally refused to claim even one penny. At the synod convention at Helenville in 1869, at which Professor S. Fritschel again was present as the representative of the Iowa Synod, acting on a proposal by Hoenecke, Goldammer and Gausewitz, the withdrawal from the General Council was formally ratified and further discussions with the Iowa Synod were declined.<sup>33</sup> The air had been cleared.

Meanwhile, in the year before (1868), discussions with Missouri had been set in motion. Previously, Hoenecke had taken the opportunity to conduct a sharp polemic in the *Gemeindeblatt* in the issue of November 15, 1867, and those of March 1 and May 1, 1869. It was directed against the abortive attacks which had been made on us, by Walther too, but even in doing this Hoenecke carefully refrained from speaking in a vein that was personally offensive. At this juncture, it was, first of all, several Missouri pastors who had privately made the proposal of mutual, fraternal recognition because, after all, no difference in doctrine existed any longer between the two synods, and in the matter of practice both had shown failings. The idea required no high-pressure promotion. Both sides were longing for peace, and the General Council and Iowa no longer stood in the way. In the *Gemeindeblatt* of November 15, 1868, there appeared the *Document Concerning Peace and Concord between the Honorable Synod of Missouri an the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin*.

It was signed on October 22, 1868, by:

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<sup>31</sup>*Proceedings*, 1867, p 19.

<sup>32</sup>*Proceedings*, 1868, p 27

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid*, p 31.

C. F. W. Walther, President  
 C. A. Brauer, Professor  
 F. Lochner  
 F. Sievers  
 C. Strasen

Joh. Bading, President  
 A. Hoenecke, Professor  
 Ph. Koehler  
 W. Dammann  
 C. Gausewitz

Present as guests were the Missouri Synod pastors Engelbert, Link and Steinbach and from the Wisconsin Synod Pastor Theodor Jaekel. The topics of the doctrinal discussions had been: the position toward unionism and the "Open Questions," the doctrines of church and ministry, ordination, inspiration, the binding force of the Symbols, the Thousand-Year Kingdom and the Antichrist. Both sides were so fully in agreement that, on the basis of it, they sought to give expression to principles that would govern their future mutual conduct in the field of practical church work, and they drew up a series of concrete guidelines which have preserved the oneness of the two synods to this day. On our side this was the achievement of Hoenecke, his much more than that of others, *quod erat demonstrandum*.

Hoenecke never laid claim to first-class theological greatness. But he was a very thorough theologian of a relatively old-fashion cut. His training was on the high level of German scholarship. His most outstanding intellectual characteristic was an uncommon acumen and clarity. For that reason gifted students found him interesting, yes, gripping, and to the less gifted ones he proved to be persuasive and fruitful. Thoroughly at home in Scripture, in Luther, and Lutheran dogmatics, he showed himself combat-ready in any debate that became necessary for him. He was also sure of his ground and careful in his argumentation. Therefore, as a rule, he came out victorious. Hoenecke was no fire-breathing warrior who pressed recklessly forward and broke through the enemy lines so that others might follow. Rather, he was a quiet, peace-loving man in the synod, and after the spirit of genuine Lutheranism had overwhelmed his soul and had taken it captive, he was the trustworthy leader of our synod in the cause of the true, pure gospel. In his few Watertown years he faithfully passed on the gospel heritage to his somewhat poorly prepared students and then to his better prepared students in Milwaukee and Wauwatosa.

But in the late 70s and in the 80s there came to him once again the call to give proof of his leadership in the synod. I mean the election controversy—a controversy that was terrible indeed, and yet proved in the long run to be rich in blessing. It shook also our synod to its foundations. Quite a number of the most respected pastors and professors were on the verge of jumping to the Ohio Synod. The deciding battle came in 1882 at Lacrosse. Hoenecke stood with Walther—and he would not be budged from that stance. In this case, too, Hoenecke had not plunged forward like a man breaking new ground. Rather, with great care he had worked his way through this article of Christian doctrine, thoroughly and over a long period. He did not, like his opponents, agitate in the synod. In all quietness he pursued the duties of his office at the seminary. In the *Gemeindeblatt* he wrote but little, but what he did write was calm, clear and sound.

Privately he declared: Walther's teaching is not Walther's, but the teaching of the Scriptures, of Paul, of Luther and of the Formula of Concord. The second way (*tropus*) of presenting this doctrine, however, is a dogmatic derailment.<sup>34</sup> Walther, in his zeal, let slip several sentences that said too much, and they will have to

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<sup>34</sup>In the election controversy, which broke out in the Synodical Conference in 1878, some people spoke about two forms of the doctrine of election. One form (*tropus*) was the doctrine of Scripture and the Formula of Concord. Scripture teaches that the sole cause of our election is God's grace in Christ Jesus. Election *is ad fidem*. Faith is the result, not the cause, of our election. Ephesians 1:4-6, for example, reads, "He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has given us freely in the One he loves." Acts 14:48 says, "All who were appointed for eternal life believed." The Formula of Concord states: "The eternal election of God...is also from the gracious will and pleasure of God in Christ Jesus, a cause which procures, works, helps, and promotes our salvation and what pertains thereto" (XI, 8; *Concordia Triglotta*, 1065).

be set straight. But Walther stands directly on Scripture, and his opponents are mired in reason. With him we stand on Scripture. Several Missouriians are hard to bear, but on the score of theology we are of one flesh and blood with Walther. Therefore there can be no talk of separating from Missouri. He persuaded Walther to make a public correction of his dubious sentences,<sup>35</sup> and he kept our synod on the right track, although a small number of men—they never were really one with us deserted us. Humanly speaking, our synod might well have been torn apart if Hoenecke's theology—not outwardly dazzling, but strong because it was Lutheran to the core—had not held us together.

His theology, as you know, is stored up for our use in his many synodical essays, but principally in the great product of his pen, *Ev.-Luth. Dogmatik*. From this fount the pure gospel flows out to the future pastors of our synod even today and, we hope, for many years to come. Though now it flows in the medium of English, yet it does so in rich abundance. God grant that we abide steadfast in the possession of this old gospel and do not follow the will-'o-the-wisp of modern theological and ecclesiastical trends and so lose the gospel. The strength of the church lies not in an organization imposing in its numbers, but in faithful adherence to the gospel entrusted to us.

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The second form (*tropus*) asserted that "God has appointed all those to eternal life who He from eternity has foreseen would accept the offered grace, believe in Chris and remain constant in this faith unto the end" (Richard C. Wolf, *Documents of Lutheran Unity in America* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966], p 233). The second form speaks of election *intuitu fidei*, in view of faith. The second form is found neither in Scripture nor the Lutheran Confessions. While some Lutheran theologians who taught election *intuitu fidei* attempted to keep the doctrines of sin and grace pure and exclude synergism, others unhesitatingly made faith a cause of election. Prof. F. A. Schmidt of the Norwegian Synod, for example, plainly stated that "in a certain sense salvation does not depend on God alone" (Theodore A. Aaberg, *A City Set on a Hill* [Mankato, Minnesota: Board of Publications, Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 1968], p 30). The acceptance of the second form "without reservation" in the Madison Settlement (*Opgjor*) of 1912 led to the formation of the present Evangelical Lutheran Synod by a remnant of the former Norwegian Synod (ed.).

<sup>35</sup>*Lehre und Wehre*, 1881, pp 43 ff.