

The Pastor Who Possessed An All-consuming Love:

A Brief Biographical and Evaluative Sketch of Johannes Muehlhaeuser, the First Pastor of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Milwaukee

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This paper presents an historical and evaluative analysis of the work and theological practice of Johannes Muehlhaeuser, the founder of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church often referred to as the "Gnadengemeinde" in this report. It places emphasis on his training as playing an important role in shaping his practice. Included is a brief evaluation of the influence he had on the congregation.

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The Early Years In Europe

A determined figure walked the streets of Basel, Switzerland 155 years ago. It was the young Johannes Muehlhaeuser, barely 26 years old, bent on taking up an important task. It was not a task that would gain world-wide recognition for him, nor was it a task that would bring him much wealth. It was a task, though, that would drastically change the direction of his life.

On a February day in 1829, Johannes Muehlhaeuser was returning home to Notzingen, Wuerttemberg in Germany. He had visited home many times before for short visits. What made his visit now rather important was not the fact that he was home, what made it important was the reason that brought him to this region once again. Young Johannes was about to start out on his life's work. That life was not to end until 40 years and thousands upon thousands of miles had intervened. It would not end in his hometown, but it would end in a small frontier city over 6000 miles away from his birth place, from his family home. It would end in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for that is where his mission work finally took him. But for now, death is hardly close at hand for the young Johannes.

Johannes Muehlhaeuser was born in 1803 at Notzingen, Wuerttemberg. As a young man, he had apparently dabbled in the shoemaker trade, since documents at one time designated him as a journeyman shoemaker. However, from his own accounts it appears that baking was more in his line of business.

It was while working as a baker in the shop of Frau Baeckermeisterin Bueng in Schmaeriken, Canton St. Gallen, Switzerland that Johannes felt the Lord had other plans for him. He had heard that a fellow baker of his from Wuerttemberg, Johann Jacob Weitbrecht, was being ordained for mission work in India after completing studies at a mission house in Basel. An exchange of letters followed between Johannes and Weitbrecht concerning the difficulties of mission work, the result being that Johannes was bent upon pursuing studies to prepare him for this work. A letter from Weitbrecht to Muehlhaeuser dated April 12, 1827 indicates that Johannes desired "also to devote himself to the service of the Lord, if the Lord so wills."¹

Most likely at the encouragement of Weitbrecht, Johannes came into the association of Christian Friedrich Spittler, the founder of the Baseler Missionsgesellschaft. Spittler had organized a new training school that sought to make use of young craftsmen as missionaries. In his contacts with Christian societies, it had crossed his mind that common craftsmen on their occupational journeys would have greater opportunities to talk religion with fellow workers than the trained theologian would. Thereupon, he organized the "Pilgermission," which trained young men for just such mission service. He would send them off with these instructions:

Endeavor, by faithful work in your trade, to penetrate into the dark spots of Christendom and do what you can to revive the lost faith in Jesus Christ among the people. Report off and on as to this work of yours in the Lord...² Zion's every pilgrim is a missionary, and vice versa.

It is into this man's hands and specific training that the young Muehlhaeuser placed himself.

It is extremely vital that the 20th Century Wisconsin Synod historian understand this period of Muehlhaeuser's life. The individual who perceives the type of training the young Johannes received will be able to understand, although probably not agree with the actions of the elder Muehlhaeuser in founding the Gnadengemeinde in Milwaukee a quarter of a century later. These years of training, 1827-1829, greatly influenced Muehlhaeuser's later theological practice. The specific method of training deserves a closer examination.

Two qualities of Christian Spittler dominated the spirit of the training the men in the Pilgermission received. Although his colleagues apparently leveled occasional criticism at his practice, they never ceased in crediting Spittler as the one with the driving force behind the Baseler Missionsgesellschaft. That driving force was born out of an all-consuming love for his Savior, a love that found outward expression in his care for all those who were in want of spiritual and physical needs. Spittler was a man who not only knew the Gospel's "Golden Rule," but he lived in it to his old age. Together with this all-consuming love for God went a complete trust in the Lord to provide for all financial concerns.

This spirit readily pervaded the philosophy of training outlined in the organization's charter. It was to be an institute

in which well reputed, religiously-minded young men of every creed and station might receive suitable

instruction in foreign languages and simple Bible doctrine in order, after several years, to go forth as useful missionaries to the unnumbered heathens in foreign places and preach to them the saving Gospel according to Christ's commission Mt. 28:19.²

The training in such mission societies was not to be an exhaustive instruction in every facet of theology, but it was intended to be an intensive, practical training in mission work. The students' work, therefore, centered on a workable knowledge of Scripture dealing in interpretation from the historical-grammatical sense of the text which brought out the doctrinal and moral teaching. Along with this were studies in German and English, homiletics and rhetoric, science with a stress on geography, church history which centered on mission endeavors, administrative practices, and an introductory course in medicine.

As can be seen from the course of studies and the purpose of the institute itself, no emphasis was placed upon the importance of the Lutheran confessions as being a clear exposition of Scripture. Whatever training in exegesis and dogmatics that was received was imparted in what seems to have been an isagogical study of Scripture. It is not difficult to see why there was a void of sound Lutheran exegetical-dogmatical training in the students' instruction. Although every effort was made to give these men a thorough education with a broad base of knowledge, the purpose of the mission society was very simply "to get the Word out as quickly as possible." Together with this, the fact must be added that the Lutherans in the southern parts of Germany and Switzerland,

a decidedly Calvinistic region, were more tolerant in their practice.

Again, these are important facts in Muehlhaeuser's training. Knowing them helps the individual to understand a little clearer the apparently lenient theological attitude which characterized the Gnadengemeinde's early years. Lina Mayer, a daughter of one of the first families to belong to the Gnadengemeinde alludes to this prevailing leniency when she writes concerning the makeup of those first founders:

"There was a contingency of Germans who came from Middle and South Germany who were used to the Ritual of the Reformed and United Church of Hanover, Baden, Wuerttemberg, Saxony, and the Rhinelands."⁴ The Gnadengemeinde's first Articles of Incorporation filed April 21, 1851 also allude to this leniency from traditional Lutheran practice:

Beschlossen: Das sich unsere Gemeinde, auf den Grund der Apostel und Propheten, wovon Jesus Christus der Eckstein ist, gegruendet, zur Augsburgischen Confession und Luthers kleinen Katechismus bekennt; dass aber nie ein Prediger derselben, weder bei Taufe noch Abendmahl, den Ritus der Alt-Lutherischen Kirche gebrauchen darf und soll.⁵

(Be it resolved that our congregation, founded on the ground of the Apostles and prophets, whereon Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, makes confession to the Augsburg Confession and Luther's Small Catechism. However, never may or shall a preacher of the said congregation use the Rite of the Old Lutheran Church, whether in Baptism or the Lord's Supper.)

This apparent leniency in the Gnadengemeinde's early years might best be evaluated if one goes back to those early years of Muehlhaeuser's training in Basel. The philosophy imparted

there stressed an all-consuming love towards the Savior, evidenced by a love towards man that sought in every way to alleviate spiritual and physical need among people as quickly as possible.

To finish the account of Muehlhaeuser's early years in Europe, the determined figure who walked the streets of Basel as a missionary student left those streets located near the Pilgermission in 1829 at the age of 26. During the ensuing years, he spent time in Munich, Austria, Hungary, and Bohemia. Much of his work was done in canvassing Christian literature among the "rationalistic infidels" of the day. He made his livelihood by working at his baker's trade, thus fulfilling Spittler's idea that his students should seek to spread Christianity by utilizing the opportunities which arose in their occupations to talk religion with fellow workers.

During these years Muehlhaeuser also spent several months in prison for, the rationalistic governments and police frequently stopped those engaged in evangelism efforts. Due to such opposition and the rise of cholera epidemics, mission work was not an easy task in the 1830s. However, Johannes Muehlhaeuser resolutely stuck to his task with an evangelical spirit that pointed many towards Christ with his simple testimony that reflected Spittler's personal training. Finally, in 1832 he returned to his parental home in Notzingen.

Commissioning By The Langenberger Verein To America

Muehlhaeuser did not remain long in Notzingen, but seemed to be continuously on the move for the Pilgermission. By 1835 his journeys carried him to the Rhemish mission house in Barmen, a city located along the Rheine. Barmen was a part of the Langenberger Verein which had mission houses in several other cities. Previously, this mission society had been named the "Evangelische Gesellschaft fuer Nordamerika." This name underscored its purpose. It was at the Barmen mission house that Muehlhaeuser devoted his study now towards "foreign" mission work.

Since Muehlhaeuser already had much practice working among the different Germanic people, the Langenberger Verein extended this call to him:

...it has been proposed to us that we designate from among our small number of seminarians a student who as a catechete and teacher will help the ordained theologian, likewise to be commissioned, to break the ground.

Gladly are we acceding to this wish and rejoice that our brother Joh. Muehlhaeuser from Notzingen is heartily willing to accept the proposal. This dear brother has spent about two years in our mission seminary.....⁶

Because Muehlhaeuser was to represent the Langenberger Verein, it would do well to note the philosophical influence this organization imparted to him as he was a student at Barmen. Again we will note a great influence concerning leniency in doctrinal confessions and practice upon the 32 year old Muehlhaeuser.

The members of the board of the Langenberger Verein

belonged to a variety of Evangelical church bodies, not necessarily Lutheran. In fact, this board stipulated that its representatives were

to remain unrestricted as to their Reformed or Lutheran or United-evangelical confession, and that every congregation founded by them was to be free to join the evangelical church of its choice. The aim of the evangelical society was solely to save the distant bretheren and sisters from falling away, to lead the erring in the way of truth and instruct them with the Word of Life, so as to gather them into congregations and assure them and their posterity the possession of the treasures of evangelical doctrine.⁷

Clearly, this was not an organization whose doctrinal practice was based on the Lutheran Confessions. In fact, they would probably have rejected any missionary who sought to promote the particular confessional stand of his previous schooling. Here again Muehlhaeuser was exposed to the basic motto, "Get the Gospel out as quickly as possible."

The influence of this evangelical leniency on the part of the Langenberger Verein becomes evident later in Muehlhaeuser's own historical account of the founding of the Gnadengemeinde in Milwaukee. Muehlhaeuser wrote on September 24, 1849 concerning his aim upon arrival in Milwaukee: "Meine Absicht war zuerst eine evangelische Gemeinde zu gruenden, hatte beim beginn 40 bis 50 Zuhoerer."⁸ (My aim at first was to establish an evangelical congregation, having at its beginning between 40 and 50 people in attendance.) It would seem that Muehlhaeuser viewed a strict adherence to his Lutheran Confessions as a barrier to serving the spiritual needs of all people.

On August 17, 1837 Muehlhaeuser boarded ship at Bremen

as one of the two first missionary representatives of the Langenberger Verein to America. On October 3 he landed in New York. The other missionary, whose name was Oertel, was to do the pastoral work. Muehlhaeuser was to teach and act as the practical spiritual advisor. However, Muehlhaeuser's teaching attempts did not make much headway in New York City mainly because parents wanted their children to learn English in the public school system. As a result, after a colloquy with the representatives of the New York Ministerium, Muehlhaeuser was licensed as the head of a Lutheran congregation in Rochester, New York. The church belonged to the General Synod and was composed of both Lutheran and Reformed members. One year later he was ordained.

Muehlhaeuser remained at this pastorate in Rochester for 10 years. At the end of this 10 year stay, he received word from Johann Weinmann that conditions in Wisconsin cried out for pastors to come immediately to that state. Weinmann also had been educated at Barmen under the auspices of the Langenberger Verein. He had been sent to New York in 1846 to work with Muehlhaeuser. A close relationship between the two grew up at that time. Weinmann had shortly thereafter been sent on to the town of Oakwood near Milwaukee. Due to this urgent plea from his friend, Muehlhaeuser gave up his 10 year pastorate in Rochester, temporarily returned to his earlier vocation as a Pilger missionary, and came to Milwaukee on June 27, 1848.

Founding Of The Gnadengemeinde In Milwaukee

Muehlhaeuser came to Milwaukee primarily to establish a congregation. At the same time he was to act as colporteur in the service of the A. Trakt Gesellschaft based in New York. However, according to his own brief history, a sickness in the family prevented him from undertaking the necessary travel into the backwoods of Wisconsin required of the colporteur. He resigned his post as colporteur and devoted his time to establishing a congregation in Milwaukee. It is interesting to hear how Muehlhaeuser described the spiritual condition of the people at his time:

Da das kirchliche Verhaeltniss in diese Zeit in Milwaukee ein sehr zerreißenes und trauriges war denn neben den 5 alt luth. Gemeinden, und der Vereinigten Kirche, die im Zerfall war, bestand noch eine Albrechtskirche und Methodisten Kirche, und die hier wohnende sogenannt gebildete Klasse, meist Rationalisten, und ein andere Theil keinen kirchlichen Sinn hatte.

(The religious condition at this time in Milwaukee was one very mangled and sad condition. Next to the 5 Old Lutheran congregations and the United Church, which was falling apart, there existed an Albrechts Church and a Methodist Church. The so-called cultured class living here was for the most part rationalistic, and another part had no religious sense whatsoever.)

Due to this very sad state of the spiritual life of the people, Muehlhaeuser notes that the Rev. L Shapin, pastor of the English Presbyterian Church, and the Rev. F. Miter, pastor of the Congregational Church, invited him to establish a new congregation in Milwaukee. These two English churches rented out a hall in the "Hustis Brickblock" on the corner of 3rd and Chestnut Streets. They passed on the use of this hall for services free of charge to Muehlhaeuser. On

May 13, 1849 the congregation organized itself under the name "Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Dreieinigkeits Kirche" (German Evangelical Lutheran Trinity Church).¹⁰

If the recently organized congregation was to survive and grow, Muehlhaeuser realized that it must have its own house of worship. However, instead of waiting until the congregation could fully support itself and raise enough money from among its own membership to build a church, Muehlhaeuser undertook a journey back to New York to raise the necessary funds. He left on June 3, 1850. This was to be a typical practice of Muehlhaeuser, to return to the East or to Germany when funds were needed either for his church or the young forerunner of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, of which he was the first president.

After a 6 month absence, he returned with \$2106.17. An additional \$1655 was contributed by the English churches in Milwaukee, the Presbyterian and the Congregational Churches in particular. On April 21, 1851 the Articles of Incorporation previously referred to were drawn up. Since there already existed a Dreieinigkeits Kirche in Milwaukee, the congregation decided to take the name "Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Gnaden-Kirche" instead (German Evangelical Grace Church).¹¹

Construction was soon underway. The building proceeded so rapidly, that by July 15, 1851 the cornerstone was ready to be laid. A very interesting dedication service followed. Present at the cornerstone laying were the English preachers Miter, R. Buchanan, W. H. Spencer, W. L. Parson, S. N. Steel, Th. Griffith, the German preacher Barth, and the Methodist

preacher S. Conrad. Into the cornerstone were placed some rather curious articles along with the standard ones: the church letter, 'The Lutheran Herold, The Jugendfreund, The Puritan Recorder, The English Temperance Journal, the different English and German daily newspapers, Luther's Small Catechism with the Augsburg Confession, a New Testament, and a 3 cent piece. According to Muehlhaeuser's account, "Theodore Blech, the contractor, gave an address, I followed him (Text: 1 Peter 2:6), Pastor Spencer and Pastor Miter gave addresses in English, and Jacob Conrad gave the closing prayer."¹² After the cornerstone dedication, Muehlhaeuser returned once more to the East to raise additional funds.

On Christmas Day 1851 the new building was dedicated as "Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church to the glory of the Triune God."¹³ This time fellow Lutheran pastors presided over the festivities, at least during the morning services. Pastor Weinmann from Racine preached the dedication sermon on Zecharia 6:12. Pastor Wrede from Granville presided over the act of dedication. Muehlhaeuser spoke the prayer and notes that "die Kirche war voll Menschen."¹⁴ In the afternoon an English service was held. Again the Congregational Pastor S. A. Miter preached on Ps. 84:1. Pastor Spencer spoke the prayer.

Finally, in the evening service Pastor Wrede of Granville preached on 1 Kgs. 8:29. Muehlhaeuser closes his account with these words:

Es war fuer mich und die Gemeinde ein Tag des Danks

und der Freude gegen Gott, der aus lauter und freier Gnade, um Jesu willen, uns dieses Haus geschenkt hatte.¹⁵

(It was for me and the congregation a day of thanks and joy towards God who, out of his pure and free grace for Jesus' sake, has bestowed this house upon us.)

Lina Mayer comments about the pride and activity of the young congregation:

The new organization was named Evangelical Lutheran Grace Church, but hardly a member knew the name of the church because it was called "Our Church" and popularly "Muehlhaeuser's Church." They were an enthusiastic people and shortly organized a singing society at the church.¹⁶

Not only was a singing group organized, but Grace Church, under the leadership of Muehlhaeuser, was active in establishing a parochial day school and a Sunday school which often had above 200 children in attendance. From the beginning it was very active in helping other churches in Wisconsin to establish themselves. From the church minute records available beginning in 1860, over 20 churches were directly aided by Grace. In the community the congregation was instrumental in starting such projects as the Protestant Orphan Asylum, the Sick Man's Aid Society, Passavant Hospital (Milwaukee Hospital), and other charity organizations. If this list of early accomplishments is any indication of the charitable, religious fervor of the Gnadengemeinde's members, Muehlhaeuser did well in passing along the Gospel spirit of his former teacher in the Pilgermission in Basel, Christian Spittler.

Before leaving this subject, proper credit is due to the man whose benevolent spirit did much to influence the activity of this young congregation in the 1850s. Perhaps the best

tribute which can be paid Johannes Muehlhaeuser was made in an article printed by the Milwaukee Journal on March 16, 1963.

A portion of that article follows:

A determined figure walked the streets of Milwaukee 110 years ago, a cane over his shoulder and a wooden washstand hanging from the crook end.

It was "Papa" Muehlhaeuser. He had begged the washstand from a furniture dealer and was delivering it to a needy family. "Papa" was the popular name that was given for years to the Rev. John Muehlhaeuser, a German missionary who founded Grace Lutheran Church in 1849. Among Milwaukee's early clergyman, there was perhaps none more colorful.

A stern face hid a warm and hospitable heart....¹⁷
(The entire article is included in the appendix.)

Lina Mayer recalls that during the cholera epidemic of 1852 Rev. Muehlhaeuser was a father to all the poor. He helped them in finding homes, work, and in care for their sick.

Miss Mayer supplies us with this anecdote from his life:

I remember that he went to a butcher, Mr. Nunemacher on Market Place and just said, "Give me a piece off that quarter and give me that piece of meat; it is good for soup." He would take the package, wrap it up, and take it to the poor, and the same way with groceries and the bakery. He provided for the unemployed and the care of the children was quite a task. One family arrived, the father and mother died, so Rev. Muehlhaeuser adopted the girl, who must have been six or seven years old.¹⁸

Finally, J. P. Koehler commemorates him with these words:

At the 1855 Synod meeting in Grace Church, Milwaukee, the assembly, first of all, offered thanks and praise to the Lord for His protection in the cholera epidemic that had swept Milwaukee and vicinity during the year. In this trying period Muehlhaeuser, Synod's founder, had nobly acquitted himself in not, like many, fleeing the city, but fearlessly and with untiring devotion taking care of the sick and dying and ministering to their bodily as well as spiritual needs. The whole city at that time tendered him its grateful recognition and long after kept his memory green.¹⁹

Truly, Johannes Muehlhaeuser learned his lessens well

from his Baseler teacher. He strove to pass that charitable, evangelical spirit on to the young Gnadengemeinde in Milwaukee. One can surely look to him as a model of a man whose all-consuming love for his Savior and all those in physical and spiritual want actuated him in all his doing.

An Evaluation Of Muehlhaeuser's Theological Practice

A question that is frequently raised when evaluating the work of Johannes Muehlhaeuser regards the soundness of his confessional stand. It is vital when considering such a question to remember that he was bound by the theological climate of the 18th Century, a century in which rationalism rose to the fore. However, he was not tied to rationalism. On the contrary, he fought it tooth and nail. Muehlhaeuser may not have had a firm, thoroughly Lutheran theological training, but he was sound in regard to justification. For example, after hearing a so-called "fellow Lutheran" pastor in New York preach a sermon, Muehlhaeuser remarked that the preacher appeared "unclear and inexperienced in the main matter of the Gospel, namely, the righteousness of God which is granted to men by grace through faith."²⁰

He obviously lacked a thorough scholastic foundation. It has previously been noted what his training in the Pilgermission entailed. It should be noted that this training in the Pilgermission was not directly influenced by the Prussian Union. His ease at mixing with Reformed-based churches arose from a brand of relaxed Swabian Lutheranism. His way was the

way of Spittler, also a Swabian, whose chief characteristic was a good hearted, untiring, unselfish concern for others. If a designation must be given to Muehlhaeuser describing his particular theological discipline, one would not be inclined to call him a dogmatician, nor an exegete, nor a church historian, but a practical theologian. This helps to explain his unionistic tendencies. However, that does not excuse his flirting with unionism. In his practice he always remained a Pilger missionary in heart, soul, and mind.

This evaluation in no way seeks to downgrade Muehlhaeuser's character nor does it seek to cast a shadow of doubt on him concerning his religious sincerity. Muehlhaeuser always meant to be a Lutheran, even though he was filled with strong antipathy towards the Old Lutherans. This feeling of antipathy was born from his South German heritage with its emphasis on practical mission work. To him doctrinal controversies were fostered by the conservative spirit of people like the Old Lutherans. Such controversies were nothing more than futile battles about words. They accomplished nothing but the hindering of the work at hand. Perhaps that is why he writes concerning his aim for the new congregation in Milwaukee to be this: "My aim was at first to found an evangelical congregation."² However, he in no way intended to do away with Lutheranism in favor of a liberal "anything goes" spirit. No, he writes a few lines down from the above quotation;

Bei reiferem Ueberlegen, dachte ich mit dem groessern Theil der Gemeinde, dass es zweckmaesiger sein wurde, eine ev. luth. Gemeinde zu gruenden.²²

(After mature consideration, I thought, along with the greater part of the congregation, that it would be more appropriate to establish an evangelical Lutheran congregation.)

Muehlhaeuser never intended to be anything but a Lutheran. Koehler speaks of his fervor: "He was a simple hearted Lutheran from his youth and the idea of surrendering anything of his Lutheran faith would have filled him with consternation."²³ On the other hand, the front against unbelief was the all compelling reason which convinced Muehlhaeuser that he must, if need be, unite with the Reformed, true to the unionistic practice of the time in Germany. It seems that to Muehlhaeuser a misunderstanding of Scripture's teachings was tolerable, since that could be corrected; acceptance of Rationalism was not. As a result, we see that on occasion he practiced fellowship with the English churches in Milwaukee up until the dedication of the Gnadengemeinde's new church building in 1851. After that there is no extant record in present day Grace Church's archives which has been found that indicates he continued such unionistic practices after 1851.

Unselfishly, Muehlhaeuser dedicated himself to the cause of spreading the Gospel to the unbelieving and of alleviating the wants of the needy. He provided wherever he could in the congregation, in the synod, or in the city. Yet, it might have been better all around if he had concentrated more on teaching each of these, the congregation in particular, to attend to their wants by themselves. As individual members of the Lord's Universal Priesthood, a congregation is

to preserve its active participation and absolute faithfulness to God and his Word, trusting that he will provide. Once the congregation goes outside of its confessional bounds, trouble can ensue as history points out time and time again. The danger is that help may soon be secured wherever it is available. A congregation needs to foster responsible stewardship practices within its own membership. Hence, instead of turning to churches in the East and to the English churches in Milwaukee for money and other assistance, the congregation would have been better advised to draw upon their own resources. Thereby such flirtation with unionistic practices might have been avoided in Grace Church's early history.

By and large, it is not difficult to see that the Gnadengemeinde's and Muehlhaeuser's practice did not follow the lines of strict confessional development as did the other midwest churches and pastors who belonged to such strongly confessional church bodies as the Missouri Synod. Koehler notes that Muehlhaeuser once referred to the Lutheran Confessions as "paper fences,"²⁴ He aimed towards gathering souls and not towards obstructing them with confessional stands. Yet, he never opposed those pastors who were more intent on keeping the precise lines of Lutheranism intact.

No one will ever find just reason to laud Muehlhaeuser as the founder of true Lutheran confessionalism within the Wisconsin Lutheran Synod. One could not even congratulate him for developing it. However, the first pastor of the Gnadengemeinde did much to shape a congregation that has for

over 133 years always taken an active role in living its scriptural, its Lutheran beliefs. Koehler sums up Muehlhaeuser's and the congregation's activity with this tribute:

So Muehlhaeuser was not the founder of the Wisconsin Synod's confessionalism, nor did he organize it as it developed. But what he represented was no less great, a personal living faith, child-like trust in his Savior, and a burning zeal to build His Kingdom and spend himself in the work. Like a father he provided in his congregation and beyond its bounds for all who were in need and infused the same spirit into his parishioners.²⁵

Muehlhaeuser's Influence On The Gnadengemeinde

Finally, a brief summary of Muehlhaeuser's influence on the congregation is in order. Much of his influence on the character growth of the congregation has already been discussed. As Muehlhaeuser lived and breathed his beliefs, so he imparted that same spirit to the congregation. The Gnadengemeinde was wholeheartedly dedicated to mission work. One need only refer to the partial listing of churches aided to see that (see Appendix). Furthermore, a parochial school was begun almost immediately so that not only would the members' children be educated in a Christian setting, but also the neighborhood immigrant children. Up until its dissolution in 1935, the school was always considered a strong mission arm of the church.

Since in those early times there were no organized charities, it fell upon the churches to perform much of the philanthropy work. Here again, Muehlhaeuser instilled his spirit into the congregation. The Gnadengemeinde always

took an active role in the organization of many a community project they were approached on, such as the establishment of orphanages, hospitals, war relief facilities, and so on.

It has been noted that Muehlhaeuser's confessional stand was weak at times. An example of that as it affected the congregation is evidenced by the wording of the constitution which downplayed the stand of the more conservative "Alt Lutheraner (cf. page 5)." Although the confessional stand may not have been as strong as we would desire that it should have been, no evidence up til this time has been found that indicates the congregation ever gave in to those who deliberately watered down scriptural dogma. In fact, Muehlhaeuser and the Gnadengemeinde in particular grew more confessional as the years passed. The following accounts provide interesting examples of this. In the minutes of the quarterly congregational meeting held April 8, 1867 the following is recorded:

The fact that some of our members belong to lodges was discussed. The disadvantages of this were brought up according to the Word of God. These members were urged to leave the lodges.²⁶

Later, on March 4, 1868 a resolution was past prohibiting any member from belonging to a "secret organization."

This matter came to a head in 1869 as several members were released from membership. Also released were those who were in favor of practicing unionism with other church bodies. In the March 1, 1869 council meeting minutes we read;

Several members were absent during the debate about fellowship with other church bodies and asked for

their release. They were Fried, Mayer, Poppert and son, Aug. Brush, Theo. Wettstein, Paul Binner, John Bush and son. These men were granted their release.²⁷

Interestingly enough the names Friedrich Mayer and Paul Binner appear on the roster of members who founded the Friedens Evangelical Church on February 28, 1869. According to that church's centennial booklet of 1969:

Friedens was the first congregation established in Milwaukee by the German Evangelical Synod of North America which denomination later merged with the Reformed Church of America and was called the Evangelical and Reformed Church and in 1962 joined with the Congregational Christian Churches to form the United Church of Christ.²⁸

We can see by these accounts that the Gnadengemeinde was not about to tolerate any member belonging to a lodge, nor would they tolerate any who sympathized with Reformed teaching. Although Muehlhaeuser and the Gnadengemeinde verbally denied the necessity of an orthodox Lutheran confessional stand, in practice they adhered to it, at least in these recorded cases they did.

In conclusion, may it be said that Johannes Muehlhaeuser was dearly loved by his congregation for his strong Christian leadership during its infant years. Lina Mayer, summarizing their loss at his death supplied a fitting closing tribute to "Papa Muehlhaeuser" as she described his last days in 1867:

The winter's work, then the Lenten services, and Easter, and Confirmation following, absorbed all his strength. He was an invalid after that, and took to his bed during the summer. My parents asked me to go to visit him because they knew he could not live much longer. He received me kindly and after a short visit I said, "Goodbye," when he pressed my hand and said; "Lina, live so that we will meet again at the throne of God in white robes with palms in our hands." That was the

last I heard of him, for shortly after, in September, he died. It was a great loss to our church, and he was mourned throughout the city....²⁹

So ended the life of Johannes Muehlhaeuser. He died in a new land thousands of miles away from his hometown at the age of 64. He may not be long remembered for his staunch confessional stand nor for his fiery oratory. However, to those who know of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church's history, he will be remembered as its founder whose all-consuming love for his Savior guided the congregation in living according to the Gospel's "Golden Rule." "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; ...they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them (Rev. 14:13)."

Appendix A
Im Namen Jesu

Geschichtliche Entstehung und Gruendung der deutschen evangelischlutherischen Dreieinigkeitskirche in Milwaukee.

Nach dem ich 10 Jahr Pfarrer der ev. luth. Gemeinde in Rochester N.Y. gewesen war, entschloss ich mich als Missionar nach Wisconsin zu gehn. Nahm von der Tractat Gesellschaft in New York eine Commission um zu gleicher Zeit als Colporteur zu wirken. Den 29. Juni 1848 kam ich mit meiner Familie in Milwaukee an. Wirkte einige Zeit im Dienst der A. Tractat Gesellschaft. Durch Krankheiten in meiner Familie wurde das Reisen in's Innere unmoeglich, und sah mich genoethigt meine Commission als Colporteur abzugeben. Von Revd. L. Shapin Prediger der engl. presb. Kirche und Revd. F. Miter Prediger der congrega. Kirche in Milwaukee wurde ich aufgefordert hier eine neue Gemeinde zu gruenden. Im Monat Oct. machte ich damit den Anfang. Die beiden engl. Kirchen hatten einen Saal in Hustis Brickblock fuer eine Sonntagsschule gemiethet, den sie mir zum Gebrauch darin zu predigen unentgeltlich ueberliefen. Meine Absicht war zuerst, eine evangelische Gemeinde zu gruenden, hatte beim Beginn 40 bis 50 Zuhorer. Es wurde ein provisorischer Kirchenrath erwahlet, die Glieder desselben waren: Joh. Balbach, Georg Schmid, Carl Reichmann, Nic. Port, Peter Teuss, G. Adam Prior. Bei reiferem Ueberlegen, dachte ich mit dem groessern Theil der Gemeinde, dass es zweckmaesiger sein wuere, eine ev. luth. Gemeinde zu gruenden, weil ausser den 5 verschiedenen alt-luth. Gemeinden, eigentlich noch keine ev. luth. Kirche in ihrer einfachen Richtung bestehe, und auch bereits eine vereinigte Gemeinde, die sogenannte Schmitz Kirche bestehe. Den 13. Mai 1849 wurde nach reifer Ueberlegung mit bedeutender ~~Stimmuebereinstimmung~~ ^{Stimmuebereinstimmung} in einer dazu bestimmten Gemeindeversammlung beschloessen: dass die Gemeinde unter dem Namen: Deutsche evangelische lutherische Dreieinigkeits Kirche bekannt sein, und kuenftig, so lange Gott will, bestehen soll. Da das kirchliche Verhaeltniss in diese Zeit in Milwaukee ein sehr zerrissenes und trauriges war, denn neben den 5 alt luth. Gemeinden, und der ~~vereinigten~~ vereinigten Kirche, die im Zerfall war, bestand noch eine Albrechts-Kirche und Methodisten Kirche, und die hier wohnende sogenannte gebildete Klasse, meist Rationalisten, und ein andere Theil keinen kirchlichen Sinn hatte, so ging das Wachsen unsere Gemeinde langsam aber wie es scheint sicher dem Ziele und dem Bestehen der Gemeinde entgegen. Ich stand im Dienst der amerikanisch indischen Missionsgesellschaft, die fuer meinen Unterhalt fuers erste Jahr sorgte. Am 26. August, 1849, wurde ein regelmaesiger Vorstand erwahlet; der am 23 Sept. ^{offentlich} eingesegnet wurde, die Glieder dess Vorstands waren: Joh. Balbach, Georg A. Prior, Nic. Port, Nic. Nighorn, Heinrich Rumpel, G. Adam Goehle. Alle wurden als Trustees erwahlet, aus der Zahl wurde Joh. Balbach u. G. Adam Prior zu Aeltesten, und die 4 andern zu Vorstehern erwahlet. Carl Reichmann wurde zum Schreiber erwahlet und wie der Vorstand auf ein Jahr anerkannt. ~~M~~

Die Richtigkeit der Entstehung und Gruendung der deutschen ev. luth. Dreieinigkeitsgemeinde in Milwaukee bezeuge ich mit meiner Namens Unterschrift.

(signed) Johannes Muhlhauser
Pastor der ev. luth. Dreieinigkeits
gemeinde in Milwaukee.

Milwaukee den
24 Sept. 1849.

Woege Jesus Christus, das Haupt seiner Kirche, diese Gemeinde segnen,
zur Ehre seines Namens und zum Heil vieler unsterblichen Seelen.

Dein Reich komme!

Ja komme bald selbst, Herr Jesu!

Amen.

Nachschrift

Die Nothwendigkeit erkennen, dass wenn die gegründete Gemeinde bestehen soll, eine eigene Kirche noethig sei, und da die Gemeinde zu arm war aus eigenen Mittel ein Haus zur Verehrung dess dreieinigen Gottes zu bauen, so entschloss ich mich zu einer Collecktenreise nach den Osten. Am 3. Juni, 1850, im Aufblick auf Jesum, reiste ich von Milwaukee ab; und collecktirte namentlich im Staat New York und New England Staaten. Nach 6 monatlicher Abwesenheit kam ich zurueck, und brachte an Collecktengeld zum Kirchenbau \$2108.17, daran war \$1655 von den englischen Kirchen, besonders der presb. und. cong. Gemeinden beigetragen. Da wir die Aussicht hatten eine Kirche zu erbauen, so wurde eine ~~passende~~ Lot gesucht als Bauplatz; Konnten aber keine geeignete auf der Westseite der Stadt finden, waren darum gehoehtigt auf der Ostseite der Stadt eine zu suchen, die sich auch fand, indem die Gemeinde am 20. Maerz, 1851 die Ecklott an Main und Division Street \$1200 ankaupte; auf dem westlichen Teil der Lot stand ein Haus, welches ich mit 47 Fuss Grund um \$1500 als mein privat Eigenthum kaufte, so dass die Gemeinde fuer 83 Fuss \$700 zu bezahlen hatte. Obschon die meisten Deutsche auf der Westseite der Stadt wohnten, so war es doch wuenschenswerth eine Gemeinde in dem oestlichen Theil der Stadt zu gruenden; im dem bereits 10 deutsche Gemeinden in Kilbourntown waren. Da eine alt lutherische Gemeinde den Namen Dreinigekeits Kirche hatte, so war es noethig dass wir unter einem andern Namen incorporiert werden mussten. Nach der neu verfolgten Kirchenordnung, die am 21 April, 1851 angenommen und ein geruehrt wurde, bekam die Corporation den Namen: Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Gnaden-Kirche.

Den 24. April, 1851, wurde mit Theodore Bleck ein contract zum Kirchenbau abgeschlossen. Die Kirche 65 bei 43 Fuss mit einem 10 Fuss hohen Schulraum, und das Innere der Kirche 24 Fuss hoch, mit Brick gebaut, naemlich Maeren, Fenster, Thueren, ~~Maerk~~ Dach um \$1900 in guter Arbeit zu vollenden. (Nicolous Port uebernahm die Maurer-Arbeit) Am 15. Juli wurde der Eckstein zur Kirche gelegt. Gegenwaertig waren engl. Prediger S. S. Miter, R. Buchanan, W. H. Spencer, W. L. Parson, S. H. Steel, Th. Griffith. Deutsche Prediger, Barth, Methooisten Prediger S. Conrad. Zu dem Eckstein wurde gethan: der Kirchen-Bote, Luth. Herold, Jugendfreund, der Puritan Recorder, Engl., Temperance Journal, die verschiedenen engl. und deutsche Tages-Blaetter, Luthers Catechismus mit den Augsburgischen Confession, ein neues Testament und ein 3 Cent-stueck. Th. Bleck hielt eine Ansprache, ich folgte ihm (Text: 1 Pet. 2,6), Past. Spencer u. Miter hielten Ansprachen in eng. Sprache.

Jacob Conrad haelt das Schluss-Gebet.

Zweite Colleckten Reise

Nach dem der Eckstein gelegt und das Noethigste zum Kirchenbau angeordnet war, musste ich mich um den Bau zu vollenden, nach einmal entschliessen collecktiren zu gehen. Im Aufblick auf Jesum das Haupt seiner Kirche reiste ich den 28. August, 1851 von Milwaukee nach New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Harrisburg, Lancaster Reading, Estan u. einige andere Staedte und brachte noch \$700 zusammen. Zu Milwaukee wurde in den verschiedenen Kirchen der Aeri kaener an \$450 collecktirt. Am 25. Dec. wurde die Kirche als ev. luth. Gnaden-

Kirche zur Ehre dess dreieinigen Gottes eingeweiht. Past. Weinmann von Racine hielt die Einweihungs-Predigt ueber Sacharia 6, 12. Pastor Wrede verrichtete den Act der Einweihung u. Ich sprach das Gebet. Die Kirche war voll Menschen. Dess Nachmittags war in eng. Sprache Gottesdienst. Pastor S. A. Ritter predigte ueber Ps. 84, 1. Pastor Spencer sprach das Gebet. Dess Abends predigte Past. Wrede von Granville ueber 1 Konige 8, 29. Es war fuer mich und die Gemeinde ein Tag dess Danks und der Freude gegen Gott, der aus lauter u. freier Gnade, um Jesu willen, uns dieses Haus geschenkt hatte.

Jahres-Rechnung
ueber den Kirchenbau Januar 1852

Durch Pastor J. Muhlhauser im Osten von Amerikanern und deutsche deutschen collectirt	\$2824, 47
An Interesse von einem Theil dess Geldes bezogen	57, 73
Von den engl. Gemeinden in Milwaukie coll.	442, 21
Nachtraeglich von der eng. luth. Gemeinde Doktor Meyers in Philadelphia erhalten	185, 00
Die Gemeinde unterschrieb dazu \$352 daran war eingegangen	298, 96
Einnahme--Summa	\$3808, 37

Ausgabe fuer die Lott wurde bezahlt	\$700, 00
Die Kirche kostete ueberhaupt	3277, 53
Der Ausbau der Schule	182, 59
Summa	4160, 12
Von der Kirchen Colleeckte bezahlt	77, 54
	4082, 58
Schulden auf dem Kirchen-Eigenthum	274, 21

Im Laufe des Jahres 1852 wurde fuer \$100 mehr Arbeit an Kirchen-
Stuehlen und Rails um den Altar gemacht. Beim Schluss der Jahres-
Rechnung, Januar 1853 hatte die Gemeinde noch \$200 Schulden.

Die Richtigkeit dieses bezeuge ich (signed) J. Muhlhauser, Pst.

Orgelweihe

Den 19. Oct. wurde die neue Orgel, gebaut von den Herrn Wulfram
& Hackel, eingeweiht. Past. Stark von Kenosha hielt die Weih-Predigt.
Die Orgel kostete \$900. Daran bezahlte die Gemeinde \$700, und blieb
\$200 schuldig, um es am naechsten Jahr zu bezahlen.

J. Muhlhauser

Appendix C

Partial Listing Of Churches Aided By Grace

This list of churches was compiled from the Council's minutes beginning in 1860.

- Jan. 23, 1860 - St. Peter's, Walker's Point
- Jan. 1863 - The council's minutes remark that
Muehlhaeuser was working in six churches
- Jan. 1872 - in Rolling Mill
- Feb. 1874 - in Appleton
- Feb. 12, 1877 - in Platteville and in Lawrenceburgh, Ind.
- Aug. 5, 1878 - in New London
- Oct. 11, 1880 - in Illinois
- July, 11, 1881 - in Rosendale
- Aug. 8, 1881 - in New Ulm
- July, 10, 1882 - St. John's, Milwaukee and in Lyons, Wis.
- Oct. 9, 1882 - in Oshkosh
- April 1889 - Jerusalem, Milwaukee
- March 1890 - Salem, Milwaukee
- Aug. 1891 - in Waukesha and in Duluth
- May 1892 - Bethesda
- Oct. 14, 1895 - Gethsemane, Milwaukee

Appendix D

Timetable of Important Dates

- 1803 Birth in Notzingen, Wuerttemberg Germany
1827 Enters the Basel Pilgermission
1829 Leaves the Basel Pilgermission on European travels
1835 Enters the Rhemish mission house in Barmen
1837 Sent by the Langenberger Verein to America
1837-1847 Served as pastor in Rochester, New York
1848 Arrival in Milwaukee, Wisconsin
1849 Organization of the congregation under the name
Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Dreieinigkeits Kirche
1850 Fund raising journey to New York; *Synod President, 1850-1860*
1851 Articles of Incorporation submitted with the congregation's
name changed to Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische
Gnaden-Kirche
July 15, 1851 Cornerstone laying
Dec. 25, 1851 Dedication of the new church building
1852 Cholera epidemic in Milwaukee
1868 Members prohibited from joining lodges
1867 Muehlhaeuser's death in Milwaukee
1869 Release of members with Reformed sympathies

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