

A SYNOD AND ITS SEMINARY

The Confessional Development of the Michigan Synod
(1840-1910)

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INTRODUCTION

The trend in American Lutheranism in the last fifty years has not been encouraging for anyone who considers himself a confessional Lutheran. Doctrinal soundness has, for the most part, been jettisoned by many Lutheran churches in favor of a more "contemporary" and "compassionate" theology. With the possible exception of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, liberalizing ecumenical forces have reduced whatever confessional awareness that once existed in the major Lutheran churches to little more than a desire to retain the Lutheran label.

Quite the opposite was true in the previous century. Many Lutheran bodies—Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan among them—that had sprouted from pietistic and unionistic roots made steady progress in their development as confessional churches.

This paper will examine the confessional development of the Michigan Synod. Much of our attention will center on the history of the seminary of the Michigan Synod, and properly so. While it is true that a church is always shaped and molded to some extent by its educational institutions, perhaps in no other Lutheran body have the seminary's fortunes been so intimately intertwined with the history of the church it served.

I. The Roots: Schmid and the "Mission Synod"

The year was 1833. Friedrich Schmid was twenty-six years old and had just completed his theological training in Basel. At the busy harbor in Le Havre, France, the young missionary was waiting to board his ship bound for New York City. From New York Schmid would sail up the Hudson River to Albany, cross New York State on the Erie Canal, and, finally, after a steamer trip across Lake Erie, would make his way to Scio Township, near Ann Arbor, Michigan. Schmid had been sent on this journey by the *Baseler Missionsgesellschaft* (the Basel Mission Society). This group had been concerned primarily with mission efforts in totally non-Christian lands. But German emigration to America was increasing, and soon requests began to come to the German mission societies like Basel to provide trained pastors for the German settlers on the American frontier. The Mission Society soon recognized

that such parts of the world which have no relation with any established church are within the province of evangelical mission endeavors, which the Lord has entrusted to his faithful. According to this principle, we could not help but welcome being directed to the western sections of the North American States, especially since in its great wilderness ...the church of Christ is finding a home.¹

As the young missionary waited for his ship, scarcely could he have imagined the instrumental role he would play in the development of confessional Lutheranism in the state of Michigan.

Schmid began his work in Scio Township. From there he expanded his sphere of activity and eventually organized some twenty congregations throughout southern Michigan. In addition to his work among the German settlers, Schmid energetically labored to bring the Gospel to the native Indians in southern Michigan. Before long, Schmid was joined by other

men from Basel. By 1837 these men were already discussing the possibility of forming a synodical association with one another; in 1844 the plans became a reality in what became known as the "Mission Synod."

The need for an organization of this kind was clearly recognized. As its name implies, it was formed for the purpose of consolidating efforts and coordinating strategy in the work among the Indians. But there were other needs, even more pressing, which moved Schmid and his colleagues to form this early synod. First, Schmid recognized the need for the Lutherans to take a clear stand against the influence of sectarian groups like the German Methodists (the *Albrechtsbrüder*) and other Protestant groups that had no use for confessionalism of any sort. It is this concern that moved the members of the new synod to demand confessional subscription as a prerequisite for synodical membership.* Secondly, there was a need for qualified pastors, who, surrounded by the loose theological morals of the day, would back up their confessional beliefs with confessional practice.

Subsequent events, however, soon betrayed serious inadequacies in Schmid's own conception of what confessional Lutheranism should be. Soon after the Mission Synod was formed, four of Loehe's missionaries joined it in order to help with the work among the Indians. Schmid welcomed these men at the time, and he commented with approval that Loehe's men had at once insisted on

true, pure doctrine and adherence to the Word and Holy Sacraments according to the confession of the Lutheran church as the basis of the agreement wherewith we, who for years have formed a Lutheran synod, are in accord, being convinced that our Evangelical Lutheran

*Schmid's view of confessional subscription left much to be desired, as will be shown below. The point here is that he recognized the need to take a stand *doctrinally* when American Lutheranism's very existence was being challenged, and that he formed a synod in order to meet that need.

Church hitherto, in true and pure doctrine and administration of the Sacraments, has adhered to the Word; that is the only way in this seething and sectarian country.²

In spite of what appeared to be a solid insistence on true confessionalism, under Schmid's leadership the young synod showed little understanding of what confessionalism involves. Subscription to the confessions became little more than a mere formality. Pastors were permitted to serve combined Lutheran and Reformed congregations; the Lord's Supper was often celebrated according to the Reformed understanding. Loehe's men protested against such practices, and, when no changes were made, they left the Mission Synod and joined the Missouri Synod. The dissolution of the Mission Synod occurred shortly afterward. Several years later, in 1851, Schmid gives evidence of his shallow confessionalism in a letter to his Basel supporters regarding the demise of the Mission Synod:

I, for my part, aim to adhere faithfully and firmly to the sound doctrine of our fathers, and the sound confession of our Evangelical Lutheran church, wherein I find rest and the blessing of the Lord. Going on 18 years I am supplying here with the Holy Word and Sacraments several congregations, which number such who by upbringing are Lutherans and Reformed, but never yet have I been attacked in the least on account of doctrine and confession....If but the divine truth is proclaimed with divine power, the lovers and seekers of truth of both confessions can congregate by the power of the Word, and this takes place without any urging of union. Thus it happens that many in the congregations are of Reformed parentage. I don't know, and I don't ask about it, since they are of one mind, and happy with and by the message of the cross and the holy sacraments. Steadfastness in doctrine and confession is requisite here; if that obtains the Spirit of the Lord will be with his Word, is indeed with it, so that the Sectarians, of whom there are many about, can do no harm. The Word has put them to rout. As for the stiff Old-Lutherans, with whom I have been thrown together here without having known them, I honor their sound doctrine, but these people are mostly wanting in a lively faith, hence so little love and so much harshness against others. They are the vegetation that doesn't display choice fruit; even though the church has been and is much made of, the church lacks life and deeds...We, too, here had a synod among us, but that also had no firm foundation, so it collapsed. One demanded a constitution truly Lutheran; another, one less strict; so years were spent in devising

a paper path which, when they wanted to walk along it, the wind carried away.³

The failure of the Mission Synod underscored the need both for a strong confessional stand and for men who were equipped and ready to put such a stand into consistent practice. While Schmid himself was never fully won over to a staunch confessional position, he never abandoned his efforts to enlarge the foothold of Lutheranism in Michigan. It was his continuing devotion to the Gospel that later brought him together with two men who would mold the Michigan Synod into a thoroughly confessional church.

II. The Michigan Synod from 1860-1885: A Time of Pressing Needs and Confessional Growth

Friedrich Schmid had never abandoned his dream to establish a Lutheran synod in Michigan. Upon the arrival of Stephan Klingmann and Christopher Eberhardt from Basel in 1860, the dream became a reality. Along with six other pastors, these three men formed the Michigan Synod in December of 1860. It was Schmid's intention to "construct a Lutheran synod of Michigan in the Württemberg spirit."⁴ This objective, of course, was in keeping with Schmid's rather loose confessionalism. At the insistence of men like Eberhardt and Klingmann, however, the constitution of the new body reflected a definite Lutheran position:

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Michigan and Other States confesses and binds itself to all of the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as the sole rule and norm of its faith and life, and to all of the confessional books of our Evangelical Lutheran Church as the correct interpretation of Holy Scripture.⁵

No one can deny that Schmid was a strong organizational leader, but the young synod suffered during his presidency (1860-1866) because

of his confessional leniency. He often complained of needless confessional strife (strife which would be considered essential by someone taking a firm confessional position), and even after Basel had abandoned its genuine Lutheran principles Schmid continued to send his offerings to his spiritual alma mater. During his presidency he allowed questionable fellowship practices to continue unchecked. And, perhaps most disturbing, he tolerated pastoral vacancies to be filled by men who were neither qualified for, nor were interested in, confessional Lutheranism.

Throughout the early years of the synod, the crying need for faithful pastors was continually evident. One case illustrates this point well. Christopher Eberhardt had been chosen as the itinerant missionary of the synod. In that capacity he travelled throughout the state, organizing congregations wherever he went. His mission travels took him throughout the state of Michigan and as far west as Superior, Wisconsin, and the Upper Peninsula. Unfortunately, however,

the results of this man's tireless work were very meager, the reason being the lack of manpower. The synod neglected the most essential need of that period, the establishment of an educational institution where pastors could be educated and trained. It had to content itself with pastors who offered their services or were sent out from Basel; but it had no guarantee as to the fitness, faithfulness, and confessional soundness of the men. This was a real sore spot. Among those who offered their services to the young synod were many who were a disgrace and a deterrent to its growth. In the first ten or twelve years about one third of its pastors defected to the United Evangelicals,⁶

taking their congregations with them. Because of the fuzziness of Schmid's confessional orientation, it would often happen that

questionable characters were received into the synod who had, for instance, made themselves impossible in Wisconsin and had left without honorable discharge, at a time when Wisconsin was not yet very squeamish about its personnel. So Michigan did not advance much in inward growth during this time, and outwardly it lost many congregations to the *Kirchverein* (United Evangelical

Church), which had a definite stand and knew what it wanted.⁷
In fact, of all the congregations which Eberhardt had founded, only two remained with the Michigan Synod until the time of its merger with Wisconsin and Minnesota in 1892.⁸ In spite of all the mission zeal of the early Michigan Synod, by the end of Schmid's presidency it numbered only 14 pastors and 14 congregations.⁹

These losses were not without their positive effect on the synod, however. Pastor Klingmann, who succeeded Schmid in the presidency, optimistically noted in 1872:

The struggle of the small body for its existence has been a hard and severe one. The differences in our own household of faith have had an enervating, yes, paralyzing effect on the tender plant. It could not enjoy a healthy growth until the unhealthy, sickly shoots were removed. After about one third of the present membership severed its connection with us because of unionistic principles, the small plant is developing a healthy growth.¹⁰

In spite of Klingmann's optimism, the need for pastors did not slacken. From 1874 on Pastor Klingmann seldom fails to register the complaint that Basel had been supplying pastors only for the United Evangelical churches in Michigan. Appeals were repeatedly made to German training schools like Chrischona, Hermannsburg, and Kropp to send pastors. The number of men sent by these schools did not sufficiently meet the needs of the synod, and many of those who did come represented a wide variety of theological backgrounds. It is a tribute to men like Klingmann and Eberhardt (and to God's grace) that confessionalism remained alive and well in the Michigan Synod during this trying period of its history. Klingmann's complaints continued in his report of 1880:

Neither a considerable growth of our mission congregations, nor the organization of new congregations can be reported. It is to be deeply deplored that in this mission work our synod does not or cannot stretch out its arms farther into the region of new

settlements in our state. While other church bodies are gathering congregation after congregation—even right next to our mission stations—our mission hardly manages to remain alive, and it remains confined to a small sphere of activity. It's the same old complaint repeating itself year after year: the lack of pastors—faithful, consecrated men, soundly Lutheran.¹¹

Even the membership in the General Council, effected in 1867 with the hope of securing pastors from that source, did not alleviate the pastoral shortage. Klingmann reported in 1884:

Unfortunately the German mission committee (of the General Council) has for a year been unable to secure a candidate for us, one in whom we could have confidence and trust that he possessed the necessary ability for work in our state. To the present day I do not know whether or when the requested help of three candidates will be given. May the Lord of the harvest who wishes to be asked for laborers in his harvest soon grant us our many prayers so that under existing conditions we suffer no further loss of harvest fields.¹²

In spite of the difficulties encountered in these early years, the leadership of Klingmann (1867-1880) and Eberhardt (1881-1889) fostered a growing sense of confessionalism in the Michigan Synod. This development is best illustrated in its dealings with the General Council.

In 1866 the Pennsylvania Synod had issued an appeal to all Lutheran synods which adhered to the unaltered Augsburg Confession "to meet for the purpose of organizing a general Lutheran body on a truly Lutheran basis."¹³ In December of that year representatives of thirteen Lutheran bodies gathered to hear Dr. Krauth present a series of doctrinal theses. As a result of that meeting, ten synods (excluding Missouri, Ohio, and Iowa) agreed to a constitution, and in 1867 met for the first time as the General Council of the Lutheran Church in America.

From the very beginning of its membership in the General Council the Michigan Synod was concerned about correct Lutheran practice. Especially

occupying its attention was the stand of the General Council on the so-called Four Points (Chiliasm, Lodgery, Pulpit and Altar Fellowship). Eberhardt and Klingmann were instrumental in guiding the synod to a proper understanding of these matters. In a paper delivered to the Michigan Synod convention in 1868, Eberhardt made his views absolutely clear. On chiliasm he wrote,

While I would like to see the Lord come and visibly rule over this world, yet his Word counts more, in which he tells us that the kingdom of God comes not with observation and that we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of heaven.¹⁴

He also cited Article 17 of the Augsburg Confession which rejects any notion of a temporal kingdom of Christ here on earth. On the matter of altar fellowship he stated:

This practice is a direct contradiction of our Lutheran doctrine, no matter how much one wants to emphasize love and tolerance as the governing principle of a church. It is an offspring of the unionistic spirit!¹⁵

In the paper he also maintained that pulpit fellowship where no doctrinal unity exists "can rightly be called lack of principle and unfaithfulness,"¹⁶ and he refers to lodgery as dangerous to the soul, even immoral. After hearing this paper the Michigan Synod resolved

1) that we reject chiliasm with the 17th Article of the Augsburg Confession; 2) that we reject altar fellowship with those not in agreement with us; 3) that we reject pulpit fellowship with the sectarians; 4) that we reject lodgery as being opposed to Christianity.¹⁷

In response to such concerns raised by some of its member bodies, the General Council declared its stand on pulpit and altar fellowship in the Akron-Galesburg Resolutions of 1872-75. This established the rule, "Only Lutheran pastors in Lutheran pulpits; only Lutheran Christians at Lutheran altars."¹⁸ A gaping loophole was left open, however, with the added stipulation that "possible exceptions to this rule must be regarded as a special concession."¹⁹

Even though Krauth would later assert that the Akron-Galesburg Rules should be observed without exception—and Klingmann expressed his joy and hope at the prospect—it came as no surprise that abuses by member bodies of the General Council continued unabated. The Michigan Synod witnessed this first-hand. At the 1884 convention of the General Council, held in Monroe, Michigan, several English pastors of the General Council preached in a local Presbyterian congregation. The offended Michigan delegation protested this action, but its protest was ignored by the convention. Further protests also brought no action, and in 1887 the synod issued the following statement:

- 1) We declare that we no longer can feel at home in the General Council and bound to it in the unity of the Spirit, since we cannot discover a serious endeavor on its part to promote Lutheran doctrine and practice, and see that our earnest testimony against un-Lutheran practice, especially against pulpit fellowship with non-Lutherans in the experience of recent years has proved in vain.
- 2) The attitudes of the General Council toward our pastors constrains our conscience to declare our withdrawal from this church body.
- 3) May God give the venerable General Council the grace to see that we as a Lutheran synod cannot act otherwise on the basis of our confession.
- 4) May the time soon come for the General Council itself seriously to put into execution the principle originally adopted without reservation.

When no changes were made in the practice of the General Council, the Michigan Synod took action:

We must publicly declare our position overagainst the General Council by severing connections with that body. Until we take that step, we shall rightly be regarded as un-Lutheran by positive Lutherans.²¹

Michigan's experience with the General Council played a vital role in bringing it to a more conscious Lutheran position. Klingmann and Eberhardt both tackled the problem with their sincere piety and genuine devotion to the Word of God. It's true that they displayed a degree of naivete in their relationship with the General Council. But as the con-

troversty increased their knowledge and experience, they became increasingly convinced that true confessionalism was the only faithful course for them to follow.

The problems with the General Council, together with the deepening sense of confessionalism, once again underscored the need for trained and faithful pastors. This need had not been easy to fill. The lessons of the past had been painful, but they were lessons well-learned.

Despite the fact that they were the earliest Lutheran settlers in the middle west, the Michigan folk remained dependent on the homeland the longest. Then, when they had become isolated, surrounded by the United element, and by Missourians and Ohioans who did not recognize them, they lacked trained theologians who could have steered them through the troubled waters to the port of peace.²²

The need to fill empty pulpits—and the desire to fill them with men who were confessionally sound—provided the motivation for the Michigan Synod to establish its own theological seminary.

III. The Establishment and Growth of the Seminary (1885-1892)

It was Christopher Eberhardt who first recognized that the Michigan Synod could best solve its pastoral problems by establishing its own seminary. Already in 1884 he publicly urged the synod to take this bold step. In response to his plea, the synod resolved in that same year

That the importance of training pastors be considered, because we must rely on ourselves for such training instead of on others; and that the time is at hand for the realization of this desire.²³

In August of 1885 the seminary was established when six students began their studies under Pastor Alex Lange of Manchester, Michigan. As an educator, Lange was well qualified for his new duties. He had served as a professor at the seminary in Buffalo after serving as a pastor in the Wisconsin Synod. Classes at the Manchester seminary were held in a roomy

two-story brick residence, which had been temporarily been made available by one of Lange's members.²⁴ This beginning may have seemed inauspicious, to say the least. But within a very short time it began to serve its intended purpose. Of the ten students who began their training during the first two years, five later entered the ministry of the Michigan Synod. Among these graduates were men like F. Krauss, J. Westendorf, and G. Wacker, all of whom later assumed leadership roles in one of the most crucial periods in the synod's history.

Since the Manchester facility was available to the synod for only two years, a new location had to be found if the work was to continue. The synod overwhelmingly decided to build a permanent facility of its own. Many congregations made special offers to the synod in order to induce it to locate the new seminary in their particular cities. Of all the locations considered, Adrian and Saginaw appeared to be the most favorable possibilities. In 1886, twenty-four congregations in the synod favored Adrian, while eighteen preferred Saginaw. In view of this feeling of the majority, the synod decided to build its school in Adrian.²⁵ However, for reasons that are not entirely clear, a special convention was held in Lansing in January of 1887 to reconsider the matter. At this meeting discussion centered on whether the school should be built or not, what type of seminary it was to be, and how much the synod was prepared to spend on the project. In answer to these three questions, the synod resolved that

it (the synod) deems it necessary to have a seminary of its own; for the time being its mission should be to offer young people a practical training for the ministry and, as much as possible, for the teaching profession, and, finally, the synod is not to go into debt for more than \$2,000.²⁶

The decision was then made to build the new seminary in Saginaw instead of

in Adrian. There were two main reasons for this. First, Eberhardt had demonstrated that the synod would save \$3,500 by building the school in Saginaw (thanks in part to his personal donation of 2½ acres of land). Second, with Eberhardt serving as the pastor of St. Paul's congregation in Saginaw, the synod realized that he would be available both for teaching and to furnish the school and its faculty with his sound advice and doctrinal guidance.

The Board of Trustees of the young seminary decided to locate the seminary on the land that Eberhardt had offered. Groundbreaking took place on that site on April 30, 1887, and construction of the main building ("Old Main") began shortly thereafter. The building was dedicated on August 28, 1887, and served as a recitation hall, refectory, dormitory, and director's residence. Classes began in the fall with a total of fourteen students enrolled.

It was not long before the new seminary was producing dividends for the Michigan Synod. In the spring of 1888, H. Lütjen and J. F. Henning were the first men to graduate and enter the ministry. In fact, within five years after the school had been moved to its Saginaw location, the synod had obtained twelve pastors from its theological seminary.

Director Lange did not have an opportunity to witness the early success of the seminary. During his first year in Saginaw, it became apparent that Lange was not in agreement with the synod on the doctrine of the ministerial call. This really could not have come as much of a surprise, since this was the same problem which brought about his departure from Wisconsin to the Buffalo seminary. One may wonder, of course, why someone with Lange's views was entrusted with such a responsible position.

Nevertheless, it is to Michigan's credit that the problem was quickly and decisively resolved. Lange was removed from office and was succeeded as director by F. Huber. Aiding Huber in the teaching at this time were Eberhardt, B. Merz, and E. Sperling.

The first five years after the seminary's founding were marked by peaceful development at the school and throughout the synod. Efforts were made to promote sound doctrine and to eliminate the existing problems in practice. This steady progress toward stronger confessionalism did much to make the upcoming merger with Wisconsin and Minnesota possible; at the same time, the blessings brought by the seminary would one day move the Michigan synod to break that union rather than relinquishing its long-sought school.

IV. Michigan and the Joint Synod from 1892-1896: Unity Achieved and Shattered

The presidency of Christopher Eberhardt (1881-1890) had been characterized by continued confessional growth. This was evidenced especially in Michigan's withdrawal from the General Council. By the late '80's the seminary at Saginaw was already bolstering the synod's pastoral ranks with men who were both qualified for and committed to keeping the synod on a confessional course. It was only to be expected that Michigan began to explore connections with other like-minded bodies. Although the Missouri synod was committed to the same Lutheran stand, past frictions between the two bodies and a somewhat paternalistic attitude on Missouri's part hindered a close affiliation with the Michigan synod. It was natural, then, for Michigan to turn toward Wisconsin and

Minnesota, confessional churches whose background and development were very similar to that of Michigan.

In 1890 C. Lederer succeeded Eberhardt to the presidency of the Michigan Synod. In the following year he met with President Albrecht of the Minnesota Synod to discuss the possibility of Michigan's entrance into the Synodical Conference by joining Wisconsin and Minnesota in a new general body. Discussions went well; in August of 1891 Lederer and three other Michigan representatives met with Albrecht and Prof. Ernst of Northwestern College. This group produced a proposal which was agreeable to the representatives of the three synods. In April of 1892, eight articles for merger were drawn up, to be submitted to each synod for approval at their next conventions. Perhaps the most significant—and potentially troublesome—for the Michigan Synod were the articles which stipulated that

The general body is to manage the existing and future institutions: a theological seminary in Wisconsin; a general gymnasium and a teacher seminary; and a gymnasium and proseminary in both Minnesota and Michigan. The existing institutions are to remain the property of the districts owning them until they are voluntarily deeded over to the general body.²⁸

If enacted, this plan would require the discontinuation of the theological department of the seminary in Saginaw, reducing the school to a preparatory school for the seminary in Milwaukee.

The Michigan Synod convention in 1892 occupied itself primarily with two questions: the affiliation with the Synodical Conference and the proposed merger with Wisconsin and Minnesota. With regard to the first question, the synod resolved that

Inasmuch as we are one in doctrine with the honorable Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference, and are earnestly engaged in eradicating all unsound practice among us, we herewith address an application for membership to the Synodical Conference which meets

in New York later this summer.²⁹

On the second point it resolved "that the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Michigan realizes the practical advantages and concurs in a merger with the synods of Wisconsin and Minnesota."³⁰

Eberhardt did much to bring about this decision. It goes without saying that this was no easy thing for him to do. After all, he had been instrumental in the establishment and development of the seminary in Saginaw; he had personally guided and aided the instruction of the theological students enrolled there; and he had seen the seminary producing badly needed pastors for its synod. But the "Father of the Seminary" was a realist. He recognized that the long-term future of the Michigan Synod, humanly speaking, could best be insured through this merger. With the growth and welfare of the Lord's kingdom at stake, Eberhardt was ready to urge his synod to give up its cherished seminary. With Eberhardt's reluctant support, the Michigan Synod became a member body of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan. In doing so, it agreed to discontinue the theological department of the Saginaw Seminary in accordance with the constitutional requirements of the new general body (Article V, Par. 1).³¹

In 1892 the theological department of the Michigan Lutheran Seminary was discontinued in accordance with the merger agreement. But several events soon converged to bring about serious troubles in the Michigan Synod. First, Eberhardt's death in 1893 was a severe loss to the synod. His sound conservative Lutheranism, his wise and prudent counsel, his zeal and guiding presence were sorely missed in the dark days that followed.³² Secondly, in 1894 Carl Boehner replaced Lederer as president of the synod. These two

events had severe repercussions in the years that followed.

Dissatisfaction with the discontinuation of the seminary at Saginaw appeared almost immediately. Perhaps most unhappy were the young pastors who had recently graduated from the institution. Naturally, the sight of their alma mater being reduced to preparatory school status was upsetting to them. On the other end of the spectrum were the more experienced pastors, many of whom had been trained at Kropp in Germany. They saw the value of having a single seminary for the Joint Synod and realized that a quality education would be difficult for the Michigan Synod to provide on its own. These differences of opinion were exploited and aggravated by Boehner and several members of the Saginaw faculty (Linsenmann, Merz, and Huber), all of whom began to agitate sentiments in the synod for re-instating the theological department at the seminary. Koehler unsympathetically characterizes these four men as follows:

The first named (Boehner) was an unstable character which the Wisconsin Synod and even earlier the Basel Mission Society had found out; in addition, this man was unscrupulous. His three partners were men who had attained to positions to which they were in no wise equal. They themselves did not realize their shortcomings but were rather filled with self-importance. None of them was competent to teach Sexta; still they were supposed and undertook to teach theology. Such a thing is a man's ruination...The interest of these men was to maintain and continue the seminary, contrary to the general body's stipulations.³³

Boehner and his colleagues did their best to foster resentment against the merger agreement, even though these terms had been unanimously accepted by the Michigan Synod. Already in 1893, a request was brought to the Joint Synod to continue the former arrangement at Saginaw for an indefinite period of time. The Joint Synod responded:

It will be extremely difficult to achieve a desirable theological training in the institution at Saginaw. However, due to the

existing circumstances, we must leave the adjustment of the matter to the honorable Synod of Michigan.³⁴

This concession may have appeared to be a way of calming the waters of discontent in the Michigan Synod, but in reality it only kept alive the idea of retaining the seminary on a permanent basis. As a result, the seminary continued to operate in spite of the merger stipulations.

Opinions were further divided when Boehner began to use heavy-handed tactics against those who were in disagreement with him. Included in that group were men like Klingmann, Lederer, Soll, Motzkus, and Moussa. Boehner pressed his attacks, and the split grew wider. In the spring of 1895 it appeared for a moment as if the whole problem would be resolved. At that time, Professor Ernst, the president of the Joint Synod, held a peace conference with representatives of the Michigan Synod. There it was agreed that a petition would be brought to the Joint Synod to allow the theological department at Saginaw to continue for three years, after which it would be converted to a preparatory school.³⁴

Events at the decisive 1895 convention of the Michigan Synod doomed this plan to failure. The minority group, still smarting from Boehner's attacks, memorialized the synod that they had no confidence in the synodical officers and were prepared to prove their case. They were rebuffed by the convention, however, and insult was added to injury when Boehner was re-elected by a large majority. The synod reversed itself on the agreement that had been reached with President Ernst and decided to demand that the Joint Synod allow the Saginaw seminary to remain open for an indefinite period (For the full text of this petition, see Appendix 1). When the convention decided to make this demand of the Joint Synod, the minority group left the convention in protest.³⁵

The minority brought their protest to the 1895 convention of the Joint Synod in St. Paul. Boehner and Linsenmann were also present at the convention, and their words and actions did little to disprove the accusations of the minority against them. The Joint Synod acknowledged the protest of the Michigan minority and handled the demand of the Michigan Synod by resolving:

- 1) Whereas, a number of members of the Michigan Synod have voiced their protest against the continuation of the ~~theological seminary~~ in Saginaw, and therefore the Michigan request is not representative of the entire Michigan Synod; and
- 2) Whereas, there is a lack of confidence both in the leadership of the Michigan Synod and in the administration of the school. The basis of this distrust is the thoroughly un-Lutheran practice of the president of the Michigan Synod. These un-Lutheran practices have sprung from doctrinal unclarity, to say the least. Moreover, since this accusation has already been made in the proper forum in the Michigan Synod and has been denied there, it is clear that there must be a thorough investigation of this entire matter. Therefore be it
- 3) Resolved, that this entire matter of the Michigan Synod be assigned to a committee, which is to sort and evaluate all of the evidence, pro and con.³⁶

The following is the report submitted by the committee and accepted by the Joint Synod:

After careful and thorough investigation, we have come to the conclusion that the lack of confidence in the leadership of the seminary is well-founded, since it has not carried out its responsibility according to the Word of God. Therefore, we feel bound for conscience' sake not to accept the request of the Michigan Synod that the theological seminary in Saginaw be continued. And, since the lack of confidence in the synodical leadership is also well-founded it is imperative that an immediate change in that leadership be made. The same should be done in the case of the administration of the school in Saginaw.³⁷

This action only moved Boehner to continue his attacks on the minority. Before long he publicly attacked them in the *Synodal-Freund*, the official publication of the Michigan Synod. From this point events moved very rapidly. The minority group attempted to discuss the whole

matter at a pastoral conference in Zilwaukee, but they were again rebuffed by Boehner's young supporters. The majority then called a pastoral conference to which the minority was not invited. When the minority protested this "exclusive" conference to Boehner and refused to remit funds to the synodical treasury, Boehner promptly declared their suspension from the synod. In addition, he announced the postponement of the 1895 convention, declaring that "the minority would disturb the peace of the meeting."³⁸ As a result of this, the minority declared their separation from Boehner and his supporters. At a meeting in Sebewing they decided to appeal to the general body and to file charges against Boehner at the 1896 meeting of the Synodical Conference.

As a result of these developments, the *Gemeindeblatt* carried the following announcement in August of 1896:

Since the current synod of Michigan, under the leadership of President Boehner, has become guilty of serious injustices to a number of pastors and congregations and all efforts to bring it to repentance have failed, and since they have cut off every avenue to restore peace, leaving the injured party no other choice than to withdraw from the Michigan Synod for conscience' sake, therefore we herewith declare that, as far as we are concerned, we must consider synodical fellowship with Pastor Boehner and those with him as dissolved, and we hereby heartily endorse the following men as brothers: Klingmann, Kionka, Soll, Stern, Fischer, Moussa, Motzkus, Bast, Lederer, Abelmann, Asal, and any others who may still join them.

Signed, A.F. Ernst, Ph. Von Rohr, A. Hoenicke, Joh. Bading, C. Gausewitz, H.F. Knuth.³⁹

At the same time, Ernst and Von Rohr, as executives of the Joint Synod and Wisconsin Synod, filed a complaint with Bading, the president of the Synodical Conference. When no Michigan delegation appeared at the next meeting of the Synodical Conference, a committee was appointed to take up the matter with Michigan at its 1896 convention in Sturgis.

Although they were informed by Boehner that the Michigan Synod would not deal directly with the Synodical Conference representative, the committee came to Sturgis in order to investigate the charges raised against the synod.

They listened as President Boehner opened the meeting with anything but a conciliatory report:

It has been a year of uncertainty and fear—one in which the course of events hung over our souls like a storm. During the past year that storm erupted like pounding thunder from heaven. Flashes of lightening crashed over our heads. A flood of slander, lies, and accusations has been hurled against us and has ravaged the garden of God. Within a very brief time, the atrocious results of our hasty and thoughtless merger have been shown to be a punishment for our own foolishness. Our ranks have been decimated. Through deceit and coercion, and all sorts of dishonest means, many old congregations of our synod have been thrown into a state of confusion. From within and without our synod, people have appeared whose efforts for a long time have been aimed at the destruction of our synod. They have attempted to assert their independence with pious sounding rhetoric and alluring appearances. They have sought to give authority to people who have no heartfelt concern for us and from whom we can expect no fair treatment or justice, as their actions in the past have demonstrated all too clearly. (For a complete text of Boehner's presidential report, see Appendix 3).⁴⁰

In this report Boehner also made an emotional plea to the delegates not to forget how much their seminary had meant to their synod:

For many years we...obtained people from other schools and from other synods. Undoubtedly we have received many fine men from these sources. But what sad experiences we have had with some unchristian and incompetent men! On the other hand, if we have our own seminary, we can train young people from our own congregations...who love our synod and are concerned about its well-being... The present confusion in our synod and in our congregations shows what happens when strangers are brought in from the outside. All that we have accomplished and built in the last ten years of hard work and effort is about to be torn down and destroyed with one fatal blow! Imagine the fields of a farmer, stretching out with bountiful fullness and promising a rich harvest; then a single thunderstorm devastates everything in the space of one hour. It is a sad and comfortless day for a farmer, indeed, to see all of his

work and effort destroyed in one catastrophe. Yet we cannot forget... (that) after the storm, God always lets the sun shine.⁴¹

The report of the seminary Board of Control echoed Boehner's sentiments:

Certainly this was the most eventful, the most difficult, and the most dangerous year since the founding of our seminary. One assault after another met the synod and our school, and it often appeared as if the work would be undermined and destroyed...And the worst of this was that the attacks and slanders came from within and without, not from from avowed enemies, but from those who called themselves brothers.⁴²

The convention followed Boehner's lead. Citing the harm and trouble caused by the merger, the craftiness and coercion on the part of the officials of the Joint Synod, and the slander and hatred directed against the leaders of the Michigan Synod, the convention resolved

that we, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Michigan, fully and completely dissolve the union with Wisconsin and Minnesota. We do this in order to carry out our God-ordained work as an independent synod, unhindered by those who, in spite of all their boasting about their orthodoxy, have never shown their Christianity.⁴³

(For a complete text of this resolution, see Appendix 2.) It was also resolved to withdraw from the Synodical Conference and to change the suspension of the minority to an exclusion.

Boehner's control of the convention is exemplified not only in the acceptance of these reports and resolutions without discussion, but also in the manner in which the Synodical Conference representatives were treated. When they arrived at the convention, they could find no one who would deal with them. They watched silently as the Michigan Synod broke fellowship with the Joint Synod and withdrew from the Synodical Conference. They did manage to obtain the floor to ask for the appointment of a committee, but their request was tabled, thus making further discussions impossible.

How could this have happened in a synod that had been making such progress toward soundness in its doctrine and practice? Part of the answer

lies in the misguided leadership of the synod. Koehler makes this comment:

The rawness of this whole procedure, coupled with the clumsiness that didn't even know enough to plan some clever parliamentary maneuver that might have clothed it with outward respectability, is a sign of the low intelligence quotient that one would not expect in grown-up men, least of all in wearers of the cloth, and a token of who and what the spiritual fathers of the generation were.⁴⁴

Eberhardt's leadership and steady influence had indeed died with him. Strong confessional leaders like Klingmann and Lederer were discredited when they were portrayed as traitors to the cause of the synod and the cherished seminary.

Secondly, a tendency to support Boehner is not difficult to understand when it came to the younger pastors of the synod. In that number were some fine men like J. Westendorf, F. Krauss, and W. Bodamer. These men would later provide sound leadership for the Michigan Synod. But at this time they were still young and unseasoned. They were still closely attached to the institution from which they had received their education. They were young idealists who had great hopes for their synod and their school. It is hardly surprising that they were taken in to a certain extent by someone as forceful and convincing as Boehner.

The results of this convention moved the minority group to enter the Joint Synod as the District Synod of Michigan. President Ernst delivered a somber but optimistic report to the Joint Synod convention in 1897:

As expected, a split has occurred in the Michigan Synod. Since godless practice was openly being carried on and defended, the faithful brethren in Michigan had no choice but to separate from the majority and form their own synod. The name of the new body is the Evangelical Lutheran District Synod of Michigan. This synod is in complete agreement with us in doctrine and practice. Presently it is made up of twelve pastors and eleven member congregations... and three teachers.

Only someone who has been personally involved in this controversy can know what our Michigan brothers have been through—how unjustly they have been accused and what terrible lies have been hurled at them. I am convinced that this split was unavoidable, and that the action they took was God-pleasing. For this reason it can only be a blessing for those Michigan congregations which have remained faithful to the Joint Synod. To our brothers in Michigan, who have suffered and will continue to suffer, I offer this comfort: "When one member suffers, all the members suffer with it." To you we offer our deepest love, our prayers, and our zealous assistance. Certainly, these are never needed more than when the Word of God needs to be preserved from falsification and distortion.

Now that this controversy has been settled, peace and growth can return to the Joint Synod. 45

The Michigan Synod and the Joint Synod would travel the synodical road separately for nearly fourteen years.

V. The Last Years of the Seminary (1896-1907)

Michigan's withdrawal from the Joint Synod brought few immediate changes to the seminary. One year before the split, Director Hoyer accepted a call to Watertown and was replaced by W. Linsenmann. Serving on the faculty on a part-time basis were Huber (the former director), Merz, and Wenk. During Hoyer's directorship enrollment at the school had reached its highest levels; at one point there were 24 students at the institution. A slow decline began after Linsenmann assumed his duties—a process that would accelerate until the closing of the school in 1907.

By 1898, at the urging of men like Krauss, Westendorf, and Bodamer, the entire leadership of the synod had been replaced. Bodamer succeeded Boehner as president of the synod in 1898. M. Bode replaced Wenk as pastor of St. John's in Saginaw and as instructor at the seminary. Likewise, Westendorf took over for Huber at St. Paul's and also assumed duties as an assistant professor. In fact, by the year 1902 (when Linsenmann was relieved of his director's duties) the synod had effectively removed

and disavowed all of its leaders in the split.⁴⁶

One of the most evident results of this change in leadership can be seen in Michigan's break with the Augsburg Synod. The Augsburg Synod was a loose federation of scattered pastors throughout the upper Midwest. It was hardly a strong confessional body; included in its roster were pastors of several "free" Lutheran congregations and others who practiced marginal Lutheranism, to say the least. Augsburg had advertised in its church paper that it was interested in an association with a synod that had its own seminary. Already in 1896 Michigan began negotiations with Augsburg in the hope of forming its own Joint Synod. At a meeting between the two synods at Saginaw in 1897 a vague doctrinal basis was adopted. This new union was approved by both synods, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Michigan and Other States became a reality. But by 1900 the new leaders of the Michigan Synod recognized that the union with Augsburg was both unnatural and unscriptural. They were aware that the Augsburg Synod tolerated false doctrine and refused to exercise discipline on its pastors. At the same time, Augsburg itself realized that Michigan was too confessional to suit its own taste, and it asked the Michigan Synod to consider an end to the union. This came about when Michigan resolved in 1900:

Since the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Michigan has come to the conclusion that individual members of the Venerable Augsburg District are departing from our Evangelical Lutheran doctrine and practice, and the Augsburg District majority refuses to proceed in the matter, hence we hereby are made to realize that we are not of one spirit, so then we can find no reason why⁴⁷ this request should not be heeded, and that without further debate.

As beneficial as this change in leadership was for the synod, it was still not enough to solve the mounting problems at the seminary.

In 1902 Pastor F. Beer succeeded Linsenmann as director of the school.

Beer's background should have been an indication of future problems for the synod. He had been discharged by the Lutheran State church in Hannover because he had refused to turn over his congregation's vital statistics to the military authorities. After serving as a professor at the Kropp Seminary, he came to America and applied for membership in the Wisconsin Synod. At a colloquy with Prof. Ernst and Von Rohr, several doctrinal differences came to the surface, one of them being a false view of the infallibility of Scripture.⁴⁸ In spite of these problems, Beer was recommended by the leaders of Michigan as a qualified teacher who held to the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod.⁴⁹ When Beer assumed his duties as director of the seminary, there was much optimism for the school's future. Instead of improving, however, the situation there rapidly worsened. Until 1902 there had always been at least twenty students at the school, but from that time on there were never more than twelve. By 1907 only seven students remained, and by the end of that year, four of those had graduated, two had left the school, and only one student remained.

What brought about this collapse?

There is..., in the report of 1903, an indication of a growing dissatisfaction (with Prof. Beer), and this becomes more and more evident in subsequent reports. There was on the part of Director Beer an unevangelical attitude toward the students, a tendency to enforce a very strict, nearly Prussian military discipline, and a lack of understanding of our American youth. His relation to his colleagues became more and more strained. This manifested itself, among other things, in his refusal to participate in the final examination of a student in 1905. He refused to deal in person with the Board of Control, which had been authorized by the synod to adjust matters. In consequence of all this the Board finally, on August 10, 1907, declared that the seminary was closed, and that the office of director ceased to exist. Thus the first era of the seminary came to an end.⁵⁰

During its existence, forty young men had entered the ministry of the Michigan Synod. But for the next three years, the building at the seminary remained empty.

VI. The Path to Reconciliation

The closing of the seminary accelerated a process that had begun already with the change in synodical leadership in 1898. The bad experience with the Augsburg Synod and the healing effect of time brought the realization that the split with the Joint Synod had been a mistake. Beginning in the year 1900, tentative efforts were made to begin the process of reunification.

The first major step toward reconciliation was taken at the 1904 convention of the Michigan Synod at Riga. There the synod posed this question for discussion: "How are we to view our withdrawal from the Synodical Conference?" It gave the following answer:

We must now declare that step to have been unjustified and hasty, because we must now say to ourselves that neither conscience nor need compelled us to take such a step, and therefore we had no real reason for our action. We can only express our deepest regret that we denied the commission of the Synodical Conference a hearing and spurned their efforts to serve us; we must deeply deplore the peremptory manner in which we dismissed the commission.⁵¹

A similar statement was issued concerning Michigan's break with the Joint Synod.

This action made possible a number of free conferences, which were held from 1904 to 1906. Participating in these conferences were members of the Michigan Synod, the District Synod of Michigan, and the Michigan District of the Missouri Synod. Some opposition to the reunion did remain. At a conference in Zilwaukee, Prof. Beer vehemently objected to any plans for another merger, maintaining that the proposed union was nothing more than an attempt on the part of Michigan to get rid of him. This opposition gradually dissipated. At a joint conference in Bay City in April of 1906, a series of questions and answers were adopted, in which both the Michigan Synod and the District Synod of Michigan mutually acknow-

ledged their improper actions during the controversy (For a complete text of the questions and answers, see Appendix 4). As a result of this agreement, the president of the District Synod of Michigan reported to its convention in Owosso in October of 1906:

The Michigan Synod has granted that the way and manner in which the Michigan Synod withdrew from its obligation to the Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan had been irregular and unbrotherly; that it was wrong for the synod not to have considered the protest of the minority; that it condemned the letters of Boehner, published in the 1896 report, and the practice set forth in them; that it agreed that the above practice was un-Lutheran; and that the synod at the time in this respect had lost sight of the guidance and leading of the Word of God. The Michigan District, on the other hand, granted that the remark in the report (to the effect that the Michigan Synod was teaching falsely and had entirely lost its Lutheran character), and likewise all passages that contained a direct accusation of false doctrine, should be stricken, and that the synodicals (members of the protesting minority) regretted having used such harsh expressions in the heat of battle.⁵²

Both the Michigan Synod and the Michigan District Synod agreed to this resolution at their conventions in 1906.

Finally, at the 1909 convention in Saginaw, the Michigan Synod passed a resolution to re-establish the former relationship with the Joint Synod in accordance with the merger stipulations of 1892. Michigan sent representatives to the 1909 convention of the Joint Synod in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, and met with a commission to finalize merger plans. After four sessions with the Michigan representatives, the committee issued the following report:

- 1) We recommend that the Joint Synod recognize our fellowship with the Michigan Synod.
- 2) We have found that no valid reason exists that would hinder a union of the Michigan Synod with our synodical federation.
- 3) We recommend to the Joint Synod that it view the manner in which the Michigan Synod has sought this union as correct and acceptable.
- 4) We recommend to the Joint Synod that it cordially urge the Michigan District Synod to finalize its union with the Michigan Synod as soon as

possible, and to do this in such a way as to preserve the legal status of the Michigan Synod.

- 5) We recommend that the editors of our directory be authorized to incorporate the roster of the Michigan Synod into our directory.
- 6) The Joint Synod ought to resolve that the Michigan Synod is to be recognized as part of the Joint Synod as soon as the union in Michigan has taken place.
- 7) We recommend to the Joint Synod that it follow the union agreement of 1892, which will establish a pro-seminary at Saginaw, as soon as the union is completed.
- 8) We recommend that for the administration of the preparatory school in Saginaw a board of three men be chosen from the present membership of the Joint Synod and that the Michigan Synod choose an additional two men for this board as soon as the merger is completed.
- 9) We recommend as members of this board Prof. A. Ernst, President Soll, and Pastor Machmiller (to serve until 1911).
- 10) To represent the Joint Synod, we recommend that three men present this resolution to the next convention of the Michigan Synod, namely, President Soll, President Bergemann, and Prof. Schaller.
- 11) We recommend that the above resolution be published in the next issue of the *Gemeindeblatt*.⁵³

These recommendations were overwhelmingly approved by the Joint Synod.

In the following year, final details of the merger were worked out at pastoral conferences in the two Michigan bodies. Finally the two met jointly in March of 1910 and once again became the united Michigan Synod of the Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan. This news was joyfully announced in the *Gemeindeblatt*:

On the basis of the Word of God it has been possible to heal the split in the Michigan Synod. No longer are the names "Old Michigan Synod" or the "District Synod of Michigan" to be used. From May 19 to May 24 both synods met in Adrian, Michigan, and united themselves by means of a resolution agreeable to both sides. Once again, this body is a member of the Joint Synod...It was decided that the synod would enter into the same ecclesiastical and legal relationship with the Joint Synod that existed before 1896...

The joy of this event can be attested by those who participated in the last synod convention. "Now Thank We All Our God" accurately expresses this feeling. Those who had been involved in the controversy were especially thankful that the quarrels and dissension would cease and that henceforth our efforts can be devoted to the joint

work of the church in a more positive way.

The Joint Synod did not act irresponsibly in this decision. The Michigan Synod recognizes that the union with the District Synod of Michigan is in keeping with its confessional stand and its previous history. This realization has been translated into action. With this in mind, the Michigan Synod began discussions with the District Synod of Michigan. Great cooperation was also given by our brothers in the Michigan District of the Missouri Synod. Several joint conferences were held at which complete agreement in doctrine and practice--to the praise and glory of God--was established and documented...Without any rashness every step was thoroughly pondered in order to determine what was most beneficial and advisable for both sides. Once the Joint Synod had given its consent and promised its full cooperation, no obstacles in Michigan remained, and now the work has begun. This attempt at union, we are sure, is in compliance with God's Word, which says, "Be diligent to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Eph 4:3)"

God bless our beloved Michigan Synod so that it may always remain of one mind with the mind of Christ!

Signed, President Friedrich Soll⁵⁴

* * * * *

In retrospect, the colorful history of the Michigan Synod leaves some vivid impressions: Its establishment at the hands of a dedicated young missionary; the growing confessional awareness which made a seminary so necessary; the lapse into provincialism at the hands of misguided leaders; and the remarkable rediscovery of the need for confessional unity. We can point to able leaders who guided the synod and to a seminary which played such an influential role in its history. But in the final analysis, Luther's observation is one that well applies to this period of the history of the Michigan Synod:

The care as to where and how the church will continue and be maintained against the devil and the world is to be referred entirely to the Lord. He has assumed the entire responsibility for this task

and has thereby divested us from all care, so that we may be certain that the church will stand and endure. For if the cause of the church were to depend on the counsel, power, and will of man, the devil would soon subvert and overthrow it.⁵⁶

NOTES

- ¹J.P. Koehler, *A History of the Wisconsin Synod* (St. Cloud, Minnesota: Sentinel Publishing Co., 1970), p. 26.
- ²*Ibid.*, p. 26.
- ³*Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.
- ⁴*Ibid.*, p. 175.
- ⁵Oscar Frey, "The Outward Growth and Inner Development of the Michigan District in the Century Past," p. 2.
- ⁶Karl Krauss, "The History of the Michigan District," p. 1.
- ⁷Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 176.
- ⁸Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
- ⁹Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
- ¹⁰Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
- ¹¹Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
- ¹²Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
- ¹³Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
- ¹⁴Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
- ¹⁵Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
- ¹⁶Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
- ¹⁷Krauss, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
- ¹⁸Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
- ¹⁹Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 5.
- ²⁰Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 177.
- ²¹*Continuing in His Word* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1951), p. 87.
- ²²Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 177.
- ²³Karl Krauss, "Michigan Lutheran Seminary: 50th Anniversary," (*Northwestern Lutheran*, Vol. 47, 1960), p. 264.

- ²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 264.
- ²⁵Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
- ²⁶Frey, *op. cit.*, p. 9.
- ²⁷Krauss, "History," p. 3.
- ²⁸Koehler, *op. cit.*, p.180.
- ²⁹Krauss, "History," p. 4.
- ³⁰Krauss, "History," p. 4
- ³¹*Proceedings of the Joint Synod*, 1892, p. 8.
- ³²Krauss, "50th Anniversary," p. 264.
- ³³Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 192.
- ³⁴*Proceedings of the Joint Synod*, (1893), p. 126.
- ³⁵Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 182.
- ³⁶*Proceedings of the Joint Synod*, pp. 4-5.
- ³⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.
- ³⁸Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 182.
- ³⁹*Gemeindeblatt* (August, 1896),p. 118.
- ⁴⁰*Proceedings of the Michigan Synod*, (1896), pp. 7-9.
- ⁴¹*Ibid.*, pp. 7-9.
- ⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 50.
- ⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 42.
- ⁴⁴Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
- ⁴⁵*Proceedings of the Joint Synod*, p. 5.
- ⁴⁶Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 222.
- ⁴⁷Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 222.
- ⁴⁸Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 222.
- ⁴⁹Krauss, "History," p. 6.

- ⁵⁰Krauss, "History," p. 6.
- ⁵¹*Proceedings of the Michigan Synod*, p. 42.
- ⁵²Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. 222.
- ⁵³*Proceedings of the Joint Synod*, pp. 38-39.
- ⁵⁴*Gemeindeblatt* (Vol. 45, 1910), p. 182.
- ⁵⁵Otto Hoenicke, "Michigan Lutheran Seminary: Twentififth Anniversary,"
(*Northwestern Lutheran*, 1935), p. 157.
- ⁵⁶Plass, *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), p. 283.

APPENDIX 1

Proceedings of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin and Other States—1895, p. 4-5

To the honorable Joint Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan:

Grace and peace to you!

The Michigan Synod takes this opportunity to present the following cordial request to the Joint Synod. The following three points have been submitted for consideration and approval by resolution of the Michigan Synod, with the hope that it will benefit the entire Synod.

- 1) Regarding the current theological students of the Michigan Synod in Saginaw, there is no doubt that their education should be continued with no interruption.
- 2) Because of the information that has been furnished to these students and their parents, we feel obligated to provide those students presently enrolled at our seminary with an opportunity to complete their education there.
- 3) Regarding any new students, we intend for them to receive their theological education in Milwaukee following their preparatory education in Saginaw. However, we feel that we cannot in any way contribute support toward the further study of our students at another institution.

A long discussion followed and the request was handled in this manner:

- 1) Whereas, a number of members of the Michigan Synod have voiced their protest against the continuation of the theological seminary in Saginaw, and therefore the above request is not representative of the wishes of the entire Michigan Synod; and
- 2) Whereas, there is a lack of confidence both in the leaders of the Michigan Synod and in the administrators of the school. The basis for this distrust is the thoroughly un-Lutheran practice of the president of the Michigan Synod. These un-Lutheran practices have sprung from doctrinal unclarity, to say the least. Moreover, since this accusation has already been made in the proper forum in Michigan and has been denied there, it is clear that there must be a thorough investigation of this entire matter. Therefore, be it
- 3) Resolved, that this entire matter of the Michigan Synod be assigned to a committee, which is to sort and evaluate all of the evidence, pro and con.

The following is the report submitted by the committee and accepted by the Joint Synod:

The committee which was to determine whether or not to grant the request of the honorable Michigan Synod recommends to the Joint Synod the adoption of the following report:

After careful and thorough investigation, we have come to the conclusion that the lack of confidence in the leadership of the seminary is well-founded,

APPENDIX 1 — (Continued)

since it has not carried out its responsibility according to the Word of God. Therefore we feel bound, for conscience' sake, not to accept the request of the Michigan Synod that the theological seminary in Saginaw be continued. And, since the lack of confidence in the synodical leadership of the Michigan Synod is also well-founded, it is imperative that an immediate change in that leadership be made. The same should be done in the case of the administration of the school in Saginaw.

APPENDIX 2

Proceedings of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Michigan—1896, pp. 42-43

- 1) Whereas, our merger with the Wisconsin and Minnesota Synods have brought us no benefits or advantages, but rather, as it now stands, only harm and trouble; and
- 2) Whereas, we have experienced no fellowship, no love, and no truthfulness in this union; and
- 3) Whereas, the history of the union and its consequences have convinced us that this arrangement was merely a human scheme; and
- 4) Whereas, after careful consideration we have come to the conclusion that this merger was brought about and cemented only by craftiness and coercion, and for this reason it could not have been pleasing in the sight of God; and
- 5) Whereas, Prof. Ernst, the Preesident of the Joint Synod has become an advocate, instigator, and protector of a factious opposition party in our synod, and has not been admonished by the Joint Synod for this; and
- 6) Whereas, Prof. Ernst shamefully slandered us in the official publication of the Joint Synod by accusing us of false doctrine, in spite of the fact that no one had ever warned us of teaching falsely; nevertheless, Prof. Ernst attempted to label us as false teachers, even though, in the previous year, he had indicated exactly the opposite; and, when the synod was no longer in session, he publicly accused us of false practices; and
- 7) Whereas, the official publication of the Joint Synod has volunteered to be a mouthpiece of rebellion and opposition, with which people were able to spew on us shameful and slanderous accusations, their hate-filled venom, and their venomous hatred; and
- 8) Whereas, the faculty of the seminary in Milwaukee, in their capacity as the editors of the Gemeinde-Blatt, have become party to the same sins; and since we could expect nothing else than a shameful, corrupt, and character-detsroying influence from those people to whom we are entrusting our theological students, it would be sinful on our part to send our students to them; and
- 9) Whereas, the Joint Synod in St. Paul treated us, our president, and our Seminary professors in a wrong and unchristian manner; and
- 10) Whereas, the Joint Synod, through its officers, has announced the suspension of fellowship with the Michigan Synod; and
- 11) Whereas, finally, we want to assemble and grow as a church in peace and are tired of the endless strife and quarreling; therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that we, the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Michigan, fully and completely dissolve the union with Wisconsin and Minnesota. We do this in order to carry out our God-ordained work as an independent synod, unhindered by those who, in spite of all their boasting about their orthodoxy, have never shown their Christianity.

APPENDIX 3

Proceedings of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Michigan—1896, pp. 7-9

Report of President Boehner

...This cheerful promise of the Lord ("Fear not, little flock!") is one that we as a synod can certainly take to heart. As we look back on the last year in our synod, we realize that it was as troubled and critical as no other year has ever been. It has been a year of uncertainty and fear—one in which the course of events hung over our souls like a storm. During the past year that storm erupted like pounding thunder from heaven. Flashes of lightening crashed over our heads. A flood of slander, lies, and accusations have been hurled against us and has ravaged the garden of God. With a very brief time, the atrocious results of our hasty and thoughtless merger have been shown to be a punishment for our own foolishness. Our ranks have been decimated. Through deceit and coercion, and all sorts of dishonest means, many old congregations of our synod have departed and others have been thrown into a state of confusion. From within and without our synod, people have appeared whose efforts for a long time have been aimed at the destruction of our synod. They have attempted to assert their independence with pious sounding rhetoric and alluring appearances. They have sought to give authority to people who have no heartfelt concern for us and from whom we can expect no fair treatment or justice, as their actions in the past have demonstrated all too clearly.

In order ^{to} achieve our God-ordained goals, we should, before we do anything else, officially re-establish our seminary. This, of course, is a thorn in the eyes of Wisconsin and of other synods, but it is a vital concern for us. Our existence as a synod depends on it. Once this is done, then the status of the Michigan Synod as a separate and independent body is guaranteed.

Here, of course, one could argue that the Michigan Synod had existed long before we ever had our own seminary and still survived. One could assert that it is not an absolute necessity for our existence to maintain our own worker training school, since there are many other schools from which we can draw our pastors. For many years we did just that—obtained people from other schools and received pastors from other synods. Undoubtedly we have received many fine men from these sources. But what sad experiences we have had with some unchristian and incompetent men! On the other hand, if we have our own seminary, we can train young people from our own congregations...who love our synod and are concerned about its well-being. Ten years of experience with our own seminary have shown this to be true. On the other hand, the present confusion in our synod and in our congregations shows what happens when strangers are brought in from the outside. All that we have accomplished and built in the last ten years of hard work and effort is about to be torn down and destroyed with one fatal blow! Imagine the fields of a farmer, stretching out with bountiful fullness and promising a rich harvest; then a single thunderstorm devastates everything in the space of one hour. It is a sad and comfortless day for a farmer, indeed, to see all of his work and effort destroyed in one catastrophe. Yet we cannot for-

APPENDIX 3—(continued)

get our Lord's words, "Fear not, little flock!" That is our comfort. After the storm, God always lets the sun shine. Through all of this trouble our desires are purified of and liberated from their shameful thoughts. Let us bow in modesty and humility under the hand of God. He will lift us up in his own time. "He puts down the mighty from their places, and exalts those of low degree."

Under the present circumstances, one important question faces us. We cannot avoid discussing it at this convention. What is our role in God's church? Can we remain in this union? What is the road on which God is now directing us to travel? Let us not deceive ourselves with outward appearances and outward glory. Rather, let us hold firmly to this truth: "The kingdom of God comes not in outward things." The church is not a kingdom of power or a kingdom of glory. It is a kingdom of the cross. In this world the church will not shine or rule. Rather, it will suffer, just as its Lord and Head suffered. Let us not forget that salvation and eternal blessedness is not found in a particular place or time. It is not found in a particular synodical union, in this or that country. Rather, it is found everywhere, in every church, synod, and congregation, in which the Word of God is taught in its purity and in which the sacraments are celebrated according to the Lord's command. That is where the church is; that is where the kingdom of God is found. There Christ is present among his believers. There he dispenses forgiveness of sins and eternal life. There only can a person be saved. And even if the flock is small, the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

What will become of our seminary? This is another burning question which we must address. Are we in the position, with our meager power and resources, to establish and continue this work in a faithful manner? The times are difficult; our own strength fails us. Let us trust the Lord! We have a royal Father in heaven. He can bless our prayers and increase our understanding. He himself has assented to this godly work, which we have carried on in his name and to his praise, in spite of all the attacks from without and within that have been directed against it. May he now and always move the hearts of our congregations and friends to pray for and support this fine project. May he lead us with his all-seeing eye to take the right road, for the sake of his name.

APPENDIX 4

Proceedings of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Michigan—1906, pp. 9-10

Questions and answers adopted by representatives of the Michigan Synod and the District Synod of Michigan at a Free Conference in Bay City, April 24 and 25, 1906.

Q: How does the Michigan Synod now view its failure to abide by the merger resolution of 1892?

A: The manner in which the Michigan Synod failed to keep its promise to the Joint Synod was both disorderly and unbrotherly.

Q: How does the Michigan Synod now consider the manner in which it handled the protest of the minority at Saginaw in 1895?

A: We recognize that it was wrong for the synod not to have acknowledged the protests of the minority.

Q: How does the Michigan Synod now view the suspension and exclusion of the minority?

A: a) We reject both the suspension and exclusion of the minority;
b) we recognize that the exclusion of Motzkus was unjustified in that he was not given a proper hearing; and
c) We, the Joint Conference, recommend that the two presidents settle the Ludington matter.

Q: How does the Michigan Synod now view the manner in which President Bohner treated the protesting congregations in his President's Report of 1896?

A: We reject the contents of President Bohner's report as well as the practice which was presented in it.

Q: Does the Michigan Synod agree that this practice was un-Lutheran and that the synod temporarily lost sight of the fear and obedience of God?

A: Yes, the Michigan Synod agrees to this.

Q: How does the District Synod of Michigan view the statements in the report of 1896 that the Michigan Synod had embraced false doctrine and had lost its orthodox Lutheran character?

A: This statement should be stricken from the record, as should every instance in which reference is made to false doctrine on the part of the Michigan Synod; we regret that in the heat of controversy such sharp attacks were made by us.

(NOTE: This formula was adopted by both synods and the Joint Synod in the following year and served as a framework for reunification of the Michigan Synod.)

APPENDIX 5

*PRESIDENTS OF THE MICHIGAN SYNOD FROM ITS FOUNDING UNTIL THE REUNION
WITH THE JOINT SYNOD IN 1910:*

F. Schmid	1860-1867
S. Klingmann	1867-1881
C. Eberhardt	1881-1890
C. Lederer	1890-1894
C. Boehner	1894-1898
W. Bodamer	1898-1904
J. Westendorf	1904-1905
F. Krauss	1905-1926

APPENDIX 6

*PRESIDENTS OF THE MICHIGAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY FROM ITS FOUNDING UNTIL
ITS ESTABLISHMENT AS A PREPARATORY SCHOOL IN 1910:*

A. Lange	1885-1888
F. Huber	1888-1893
O. Hoyer	1893-1895
W. Linsenmann	1895-1902
F. Beer	1902-1907
(closed)	1907-1910
O. Hoenicke	1910-

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