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# Father from Afar: Wilhelm Loehe and Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne

James L. Schaaf

It is a special pleasure for this student of history to be writing about Wilhelm Loehe<sup>1</sup> in the pages of the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*.<sup>2</sup> It is not just because Loehe's relationship to the American church was the subject of the author's doctoral studies<sup>3</sup> nor that he was asked as his first major translating project to render *Three Books About the Church* into English.<sup>4</sup> The thing, in fact, that gives him the most pleasure in addressing this subject is that Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne and the author's home in Columbus, now called Trinity Lutheran Seminary, share a great deal of common heritage and similar history back in the first half of the nineteenth century. Had things turned out differently, indeed, there might have been only one Lutheran seminary in this part of the American Midwest.

The intention, however, in the article at hand, in this anniversary year of Concordia Theological Seminary, is to deal with Wilhelm Loehe and his relationship to this school in particular. His name is emblazoned prominently on one of its buildings, and most of its students and graduates know his story quite well. Worthy, for example, of much respect is a booklet to be found in the bookstore of the seminary, in which the alumnus Richard Stuckwisch draws a portrait of Wilhelm Loehe and his significance for the congregation which he served, the missionary endeavor which he initiated, and the service rendered by the female diaconate which he established.<sup>5</sup>

Here specifically the intention is to speak of three things. The essay will firstly, then, retell the story of how Wilhelm Loehe, a man who never in his lifetime even saw the ocean, became interested in far-away America and how he began assisting the Lutherans living here. A second section will deal with what went wrong with Loehe's original plans for America and how he had to revise his relationship with the Lutheran churches here. The author, finally, will try to give some idea of Loehe's relationship with Concordia Theological Seminary and discuss why he deserves to be honored as one of its founding fathers.

## I.

Born on February 21, 1808, in the Bavarian (more precisely, Franconian) city of Fürth, Wilhelm Loehe spent his boyhood and received his initial schooling there and in nearby Nuremberg. Left fatherless at the age of eight, he showed an early interest in the church and undertook the study of theology at the University of Erlangen in 1826. All of his theological studies, with the exception of one semester, which he spent in Berlin, were taken at Erlangen and upon their completion he was ordained in 1831. For the next five years he served as vicar or administrator in several congregations in Franconia until a permanent pastorate became available for him. It was thus in 1836 that he came to the tiny farming community of Neuendettelsau where he was to serve as parish pastor until his death thirty-five years later. Although he four times sought more prestigious pastorates in large cities, by the time the first decade in Neuendettelsau had gone by he had fallen so in love with this "quiet wilderness" that he was happy to remain there and turn that community into a center of Christian love and missionary endeavor.<sup>6</sup> Today the visitor to Neuendettelsau finds large hospitals, homes for the mentally retarded and unwed mothers, hospices, workshops for the preparation of paraments and communion-wafers, a deaconess-motherhouse, a publishing house, a bookstore, and a theological school (and almost all of these institutions can trace their founding directly back to Loehe). During Loehe's lifetime Neuendettelsau became a spot from which sprang an evangelical pietistic spirit that profoundly influenced the Lutheran Church in Bavaria, and that same sort of spirit can still be felt there today.

During the thirty-five years of Loehe's ministry there, the village pastor of Neuendettelsau initiated many projects that eventually touched the lives of Christians not only in his native Germany, but also in far-off corners of the world. Until only a decade ago, the missionary seminary that he founded there—originally to supply men for the pastorless Lutheran immigrants in America—was still in operation, preparing students to go as missionaries to South America, Papua New Guinea, and other spots in the world where the gospel is needed.<sup>7</sup> The needs of suffering people close at hand induced Loehe to establish a Lutheran order for the female diaconate, and his

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pen proliferated writings that have shaped the thinking of generations of readers. At the time of his death on January 2, 1872, just short of his sixty-fourth birthday, worn out from his years of work in spreading the gospel, he was most remembered simply as "a tool in the hand of the Lord."<sup>8</sup>

Aside from the usual work of a village pastor in the early years of the nineteenth century, which undoubtedly kept him very busy, Loehe became captivated by a vision of the plight of his fellow Germans who had left their homeland to emigrate to the New World, and he felt compelled to undertake the task of doing whatever he could to serve them in their spiritual need. Loehe's initial exposure to this task, which was to occupy a great deal of his time and attention for the next decade and a half, came quite indirectly, and one could perhaps say quite providentially. Friedrich C. D. Wyneken, a Lutheran pastor who had come to America in 1838 and affiliated with the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, had been sent by that body as a traveling missionary to Indiana in order to gather in the scattered Germans and had located in Fort Wayne.<sup>9</sup> Wyneken noted the obvious fact that perhaps the greatest difficulty confronting the church in America was the lack of an adequate supply of pastors. Particularly was this a problem in the West—Ohio and Indiana were still considered the West at the time—where an increasing number of German immigrants were beginning to settle. And he determined to make that need known to his fellow believers back in Germany.

The means which Wyneken chose to publicize the need (or the "distress," as the common English translation has it<sup>10</sup>) of the German Lutherans in America was a tract that he wrote and had published in Germany early in 1840 by the mission society in Stade, a city near Hamburg.<sup>11</sup> By a rather circuitous route this treatise found its way into the hands of Wilhelm Loehe late in 1840.<sup>12</sup> Moved by the plight of his fellow countrymen in the New World, Loehe determined to spread the message to a wider audience and prepared an article for publication in the *Sonntags-Blatt*, a weekly newspaper published in near-by Nördlingen by a friend and fellow pastor, Johann Friedrich Wucherer, who was subsequently to become his closest associate in the task of assisting the American church. Loehe's address to the readers of the *Sonntags-Blatt* has become a

classic among missionary appeals:

Our brethren are living in the wilderness of North America—without food for their souls. We sit on our hands and forget to help them. So much more eagerly do the followers of the pope and the adherents of the sects approach them. And their love appears holy; they do not turn away from those who are suffering. To thirsty men the muddy, impure, unhealthy water always seems preferable to death from thirst. Shall we not help? Shall we simply look on while our brethren in the faith are led astray because of a lack of shepherds, merely observe while the evangelical church in North America disintegrates? Shame on us if we here do not do what we can! Will we support our church's missions among the heathen, yet let already established congregations go under? Shall we let thousands starve while we devote so much attention to win individuals? We pray that the Lord will gather one holy church among the heathen, and are we then to let established congregations fall prey to this temptation? We forget those who are so near to us while we stretch out to those who still serve idols. We should not do one and forget the other! Up, brethren, let us help as much as we are able!<sup>13</sup>

Readers of the *Sonntags-Blatt*, to which Loehe regularly contributed articles, were accustomed to appeals for funds for charitable and missionary projects, and they responded generously to this one. Within a few months after the publication of Loehe's appeal, a substantial amount of money had been collected and one volunteer had come forward to offer his services to the American mission-field. Adam Ernst, an unlikely candidate for the task, was a journeyman shoemaker who possessed a great deal of enthusiasm and dedication but who had had no education or training that would equip him for a ministry among the American churches. After being discouraged by another missionary organization to which he had applied, Ernst came to Loehe, who thereupon made a decision that was to have far-reaching consequences.

Loehe shared the opinion that Ernst did not possess the necessary qualifications for the ministry, but he determined to offer him some

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basic instruction that would equip him to function among the German Lutherans in America as a schoolteacher, for which there was also an urgent need. A few months later Georg Burger, who previously had been occupied as a weaver of the heavy loden fabric that makes indestructible coats, joined Ernst as a second volunteer. By mid-1842 the two men, who had been taken into Loehe's parsonage and instructed by him, were ready to depart and were given lengthy final instructions by Loehe and his associates.<sup>14</sup> They were told, in essence, that they were to remember that they were and were to remain simple artisans. They were to obtain work in America and wait until the Lord opened a door for them. Their primary task was to conduct German schools, where it was self-evident that they were to offer religious instruction as well as education in the usual school subjects. Only in the event they came to a place where no Lutheran pastor was carrying on a ministry were they to seek ordination and then only from an Evangelical Lutheran synod on the basis of all the symbolical books of the church. "It is better," wrote Loehe (in words which may sound like damning with faint praise, but which were understood by him and them alike as a commission to serve wherever they were able), "that the poor sheep be led to the green pastures and the still waters by you than by no one at all."<sup>15</sup>

When Ernst and Burger arrived in New York they were forced to reconsider their abilities, the instructions given them, and how these related to the tasks to be accomplished in America. Advice from men in New York convinced them that their chances of finding employment as schoolteachers among the Germans in the West were not good. They were, however, encouraged to get more training and prepare themselves for the office of the ministry. They were introduced to Pastor Friedrich Winkler of Newark, New Jersey, who was just preparing to leave his congregation there to accept a call as professor of the theological seminary of the Joint Synod of Ohio in Columbus. Ernst and Burger chose to follow him there and enroll as students of theology in the seminary in Columbus.

These two students, as well as six more sent from Neuendettelsau during the next two years, were gratefully received by the Ohio Synod, which was struggling with its problem of ministering to

increasing numbers of members with a limited number of clergy. Loehe had not been totally unacquainted with the seminary in Columbus before this time. When Wyneken had made a trip back to Germany, he had visited Neuendettelsau and had spoken with Loehe, Ernst, and Burger about the conditions in America and had mentioned the seminary in Columbus as one that might easily become one of the outstanding theological institutions in America if only assistance in the form of books, students, and perhaps even professors could be supplied from Germany.<sup>16</sup> When the contact with the seminary in Columbus was initiated by Ernst and Burger, the Ohio Synod entered into correspondence with Loehe. A formal request from a synodical committee was sent to Loehe, asking for more such well-trained men as Ernst and Burger. Although Loehe may have considered them ill-prepared for the ministerial office, their education far surpassed what most of the seminarians in America had enjoyed; for, as the committee reported, "so many of those born here must be accepted [into the seminary] without the slightest schooling."<sup>17</sup> Another way of helping would be to send books:

What we also need very urgently are books, the right sort of books. The seminary has hardly the beginnings of a library. How many German brethren in the faith who can assist us in no other way may be able to in this way! Is not Germany the land of all literature? And how may our church preserve her truth here, if her preachers do not know German literature?<sup>18</sup>

Loehe eagerly accepted both challenges. In order to initiate a response to the appeal from America, he and some of his friends held a meeting in Nuremberg in February of 1843 to discuss the action they might take. From that gathering came the eventual organization of a missionary society,<sup>19</sup> but the more immediate response was a decision to supply suitable theological books for the seminary library, to send more men like Ernst and Burger to Columbus, and to initiate the publication of a monthly newspaper in order to disseminate information about the church in America and obtain money for these activities. This was the *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika*, which began publication the next

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month.

Immediate attention was given to collecting books for the seminary library. Within six months more than one thousand volumes had been collected and dispatched to America; and when men later were sent to Columbus, they generally took a shipment of books with them for the seminary library. It appears that, between 1842 and 1845, there were at least eight men, in addition to Ernst and Burger, sent by Loehe who found their way into the ministerium of the Ohio Synod, some of them able to bypass the seminary in Columbus and enter directly into the ordained ministry on the strength of the training they had received in their homeland. The books which these *Nothelfer* (emergency helpers), as Loehe called them, brought with them were undoubtedly as welcome at the seminary as the men themselves.

As much as Loehe was concerned about serving the emigrant Germans in the New World, his real heart's desire was that he might establish a Christian missionary approach to the American Indians.<sup>20</sup> Although one of his friends had proposed that the seminary in Columbus be connected with a special Indian missionary seminary that would prepare men specifically for work among the Indians, Loehe believed that a better method would be to supply congregations near Indian settlements with capable preachers who would have a responsibility both to their congregations and to the Indians.<sup>21</sup> By the 1840s, however, there were so few Indians left in Ohio that other fields seemed whiter unto the harvest. When one of the students sent by Loehe was assigned by the seminary to serve a congregation in Monroe, Michigan, Loehe's interest became directed toward that territory with its substantial population of Indians and vast areas unpopulated by Europeans. Before long, a scheme was developed of enlisting emigrants, together with a pastor, who would form a German Lutheran colony in Michigan that would carry on a missionary program among the nearby Indians. The first of such settlements was Frankenmuth, settled by a number of colonists from the Franconian village of Roßtal, not far from Neuendettelsau, under the leadership of August Crämer, who was ordained in Germany before the settlers embarked in April of 1845 for the voyage to the New World. Initial missionary results were promising, three Indian

converts being baptized on Christmas in 1846. Three additional colonies of Germans were begun in the area later, but after 1851, when Crämer left his pastorate in Frankenmuth and the government removed the Indians to reservations, the Lutheran Indian mission in Michigan came to an unfortunate end.

## II.

Meanwhile, however, back in Ohio tensions were growing within the Ohio Synod. And the seminary in Columbus came to be the focus of a conflict that was to divide the synod and result, among other things, in the organization of a new synod and the founding of a new seminary.

Even before the Ohio Synod came to Loehe's attention in 1842, it had been having considerable difficulties with what later came to be known as "American Lutheranism." This was a movement, led by a relatively small but quite vociferous and influential group of men, that wanted to "Americanize" the Lutheran church on this side of the ocean, by having it adopt many of the practices common in other Protestant groups, such as camp meetings, non-liturgical worship, revivals, and other methods comprehended under the general heading of "new measures."<sup>22</sup> The lines of battle came to be drawn over the use of English or German as the medium of instruction in the seminary. It was clear to all that some English would have to be used in congregations; but, for the sake of preserving and promulgating Lutheran doctrine within the synod, theological instruction at the seminary would have to be given in German to those students preparing themselves to be Lutheran pastors. (One must remember that at this time there was very little Lutheran literature available in English; the Book of Concord, for example, would not be rendered into English until 1851.) In fact, in 1840 a group of pastors who desired more use of the English language had already withdrawn from the Ohio Synod and formed a rival synod in the area, simply adding to the intransigence of the majority of the synod that supported the use of German.

Naturally, the men sent by Loehe who had recently arrived in America favored the German element in the synod. They had been sent for the express purpose of preserving a German Lutheran church

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in the New World, and they became convinced that, when one abandons the German language, he also gives up genuine Lutheranism.<sup>23</sup> It was thus easy for them to take sides in the controversy in the Ohio Synod, perhaps without giving much thought to the consequences of their stand.

The situation at the seminary in Columbus had become acute when Friedrich Winkler arrived and joined Charles F. Schaeffer as the two-man faculty. Both men had come from outside the ranks of the Ohio Synod. Winkler was born in Germany and came to America already an ordained pastor; Schaeffer was born in America and had been tutored in theology by his pastor-father and other clergy. The two men saw many things differently, and not the least of their differences revolved around the linguistic issue at the seminary. Schaeffer believed that students would need to be made capable of preaching and functioning in English where the circumstances demanded it; and consequently he wanted to maintain the seminary as a bilingual institution, which it had been ever since its establishment in 1830. Winkler, however, insisted that lectures in the seminary be given only in German so that true Lutheranism might be inculcated in the students. In addition to this fundamental contrast in approach, there seem to have been personality differences exacerbating the conflict between the two men, and the seminary was soon in turmoil.

The seminary's board of directors, which saw its responsibility as making sure that theological instruction was carried out and that money was solicited in order to pay the bills of the institution, determined that both tasks were being compromised and therefore action had to be taken. Late in 1843 the board called for the resignations of both Schaeffer and Winkler. Schaeffer complied at once and left the institution, but Winkler, apparently believing he had more support in the synod, insisted that his call provided for a six-month notice and refused to comply. Dissatisfied with this arrangement, some students left the seminary and some congregations, feeling that their interest in providing an English-speaking ministry was not being honored, refused to pay their pledges for the operation of the institution. Unable to cope with the situation, the board of the seminary urgently requested a special meeting of the

Ohio Synod to deal with the problem. Until the special session, scheduled to be held in Zanesville in June of 1844, Winkler was permitted to continue temporarily at his post.

The special synodical meeting also gave Loehe's men an opportunity to bring up another matter that had been disturbing them. One major item of dissatisfaction was the liturgy of holy communion used in the Ohio Synod. The synod had authorized two liturgies, a German one also used by the Ministerium of Pennsylvania and just adopted by Ohio in 1842, and an English one that had been in use since 1830. What was at issue was the formula for distributing the sacrament. The English formula was simply this: "Take and eat; this is the body of your Lord Jesus Christ. . . ." But the German one added something. It said: "Jesus spricht: Nehmet hin und esset. . . ." To the men newly arrived from Germany this phraseology sounded like the unionistic agenda of the Prussian Union<sup>24</sup> and implicitly denied the Lutheran doctrine of the real presence.<sup>25</sup>

The Americans, who were less familiar the enforced union of Lutheran and Reformed churches in Germany in 1817, saw nothing wrong with the formula. But to Loehe and his men it was an important issue, in fact a church-dividing one. Loehe wrote to Ernst:

You were ordained by the Ohio Synod. When it assembles and celebrates the Lord's Supper it uses the words: Christ says, etc. Professor Winkler holds that this is unobjectionable, but you rightly consider it very objectionable. The American Lutheran church dare not tear itself out of the living and organic unity of the Lutheran church. . . . This is my advice. Simply apply to the synod . . .; declare your unalterable objections and attempt with all meekness and with all emphasis to work that this false formula that contradicts the church may be abandoned. If God gives you success, then remain in the Ohio Synod; if not, the real feelings of those men will have been clearly shown, and you must either join a purer synod . . . or attempt to organize your own synod.<sup>26</sup>

The Ohio Synod hardly saw the situation with the formula of holy communion in the same light. The question of the seminary was

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much more urgent, and, especially considering the difficulty and expense of printing or obtaining service-books, the synod was not minded to discard something it considered unobjectionable. Ernst and Burger presented a petition to the convention in Zanesville to delete the two offensive words, "Jesus spricht," but the ministerium voted to give the matter further study and postpone action until the next regular meeting of the synod.<sup>27</sup>

The synod could not postpone, however, the issue of the seminary. The legal question centered in the proper interpretation of a statement in the seminary's constitution:

The principal lectures [*Hauptlehrvorträge*] given in the Seminary shall and must be delivered, unalterably in all future times, in the German language.<sup>28</sup>

The previous convention had clarified the meaning of this provision by reaffirming a decision made in 1839 when Schaeffer had been called:

"Declaration—That this Synod not only considers it to be constitutional to give instructions in the Seminary also through the medium of the English language, which course has indeed been heretofore observed, but also deems it to be necessary and useful to appoint for this purpose a second professor, who may meet this claim, on condition, however, that the instructions given in the German language be not thereby superseded." All the lectures, accordingly, are delivered in both languages in the Seminary, by which course alone the claims made upon the Professors or Teachers can be met.<sup>29</sup>

The synod now appointed a committee of twelve members to review the actions of the board of the seminary in calling for the resignations of the two professors and, after two days of deliberation and another day of debate by the entire convention, the delegates resolved by a vote of thirty-eight to ten, with Loehe's men voting with the majority, as follows:

That, according to the Constitution of the Seminary, the German language is the only medium through which

theological instruction must be given; but the same constitution authorizes the teaching of the English language theoretically and practically, so that the students may thereby be enabled to preach in both languages where the wants of the church require it.<sup>30</sup>

Then the synod took the action of expressing the wish that Winkler remain as professor of the seminary and taking steps to send out an agent to collect the pledged funds from its congregations. This was clearly a victory for the German element within the Ohio Synod, and Loehe, when he heard of it, rejoiced that "the seminary in Columbus has been saved for the Germans"<sup>31</sup> and dispatched liberal gifts to Winkler to provide financial aid to students.<sup>32</sup>

The victory, however, was only a temporary one. The decision was deplored editorially by the *Lutheran Standard* (the synod's official newspaper),<sup>33</sup> a congregation publicly announced that because of this action it no longer felt obliged to pay its pledge,<sup>34</sup> and the English District of the synod passed an official resolution regretting the action.<sup>35</sup> The agent sent out to collect subscriptions encountered so much opposition that his activities had to be suspended.<sup>36</sup> Obviously the matter was going to become a subject for debate again at the next synodical convention.

The board of the seminary was forced to take strong measures. Once again it called for Winkler's resignation, to take effect before the coming convention, scheduled for May of 1845 in Lancaster. This time Winkler did not protest and accepted a call to a congregation in Detroit. The board then proposed a complete reorganization of the seminary, primarily separating the preparatory department from the seminary proper.<sup>37</sup> The language question would be solved by this compromise:

As the Seminary is and shall remain German, the principal lectures (according to VI, Section 4. of the Constitution) are to be given in the German language; all theological students shall be required to learn the German language in the College. But, in as much as the wants and welfare of the Church require that ministers be so educated as to be able to preach readily in the English language, all theologi-

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cal lectures shall be delivered also in the English language.

In order, however, to secure the doctrines of our church, German textbooks *only* shall be used in *all* theological lectures, until they appear in such English translations as shall be sanctioned by the Synod; but in all the German lectures the German textbooks shall, for all time to come, be retained.<sup>38</sup>

The minority that voted against this compromise was insistent that its objection be recorded in the minutes. All of the men sent by Loehe who were eligible to vote joined in signing this statement:

The undersigned do hereby protest against all resolutions and decisions of the Board of Directors that have been and may be made in violation of the literal sense of the constitution of the Seminary and pray that this protest be added to the synodical record.<sup>39</sup>

The Loehe men fared no better with their request to change the liturgy of holy communion. Because this was a doctrinal matter, it had to be decided by the ministerium, which ruled, by a vote of seventeen to three, that "we deem it to be the duty of every member of this Synod to use the liturgy recommended by this body; and that the use of the words 'Jesus saith' be retained ('remain *in statu quo*')."<sup>40</sup>

Other things disturbed the Loehe men about the Ohio Synod. Its failure to pledge all ordinands to the symbolical books, its practice of licensing men as candidates and allowing them to perform ministerial functions, and its toleration of pastors who served union-congregations were also objectional practices; but the decisions on the liturgy and the language at the seminary by themselves were enough to show to their satisfaction, and to Loehe himself, that they had been mistaken in assuming the genuine Lutheran character of the Ohio Synod. Even before the synod met at Lancaster and rejected his proposal, Ernst had been advised by Loehe:

If the licensure system is abandoned, the errors in the Lord's Supper and wherever else they may be found are changed to conform with the correct practice of the church, if the

seminary is supplied with teachers of the proper sort and remains German in spirit and in truth, if ordination on the basis of all the symbolical books is introduced and carried out with you, Burger, and Saupert,<sup>41</sup> then such a step forward will have occurred that we may praise God and continue to hope for more. But if this cannot be, if the petition in this matter does not pass, then you cannot accept ordination from the hand of a church that is consciously persisting in error. Then you must separate and form a separate synod, not a branch. For you cannot be a branch of such a tree. In case you must separate, it would be simplest if you who have gone out from us would join together with other committed friends who have gone out from Germany and form *one* synod, whether you are near or far from one another.<sup>42</sup>

This course of events is precisely what happened. In September of 1845 twenty-two like-minded men gathered in Cleveland, eleven of whom had been sent by Loehe, five of them having just arrived three months previously, thus after the meeting of the Ohio Synod in Lancaster. Joining them, among others, were Friedrich Winkler, the former professor of the seminary, and Wilhelm Sihler, a man sent by the missionary society of Dresden who had consulted with Loehe before coming to America in 1844. In a rather unusual action because of his outstanding qualifications (since he had studied at the University of Berlin and had spent five years as a private tutor in Germany), Sihler had been ordained by the Ohio Synod at the special meeting of 1844 immediately upon application without having to serve the usual probationary period.<sup>43</sup>

The purpose of the meeting in Cleveland was to separate from the Ohio Synod and also to lay plans for the formation of a new synodical organization that would be solidly Lutheran. The group present authorized three of its number to explore the possibility of uniting with the Saxon Lutherans in Missouri, who were then under the leadership of C. F. W. Walther. The groundwork for such a union had been laid even before the meeting of the Ohio Synod in Lancaster when Ernst had begun corresponding with Walther. Although Walther could not accept Ernst's invitation to participate

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in the conference in Cleveland, he had written Ernst supporting the plan for a new synod and expressing the desire of the men in Missouri for an organic union of truly Lutheran congregations.<sup>44</sup>

The committee of three men journeyed to St. Louis in May of 1846, where the Loehe men first met Walther face to face. It was reported that Walther shed tears of joy when he first heard them preach in St. Louis, so impressed was he by their sound Lutheranism,<sup>45</sup> but the Ohioans were also impressed with the men from Missouri. Loehe, informed by Ernst of the developments, expressed his approval of associating with the Missourians, especially now that the autocratic rule of Martin Stephan had been repudiated. Earlier Loehe had written:

One recognizes that the scattered Saxons in Missouri have been purified and strengthened through the fire of tribulation, and certainly our hope is not in vain that our friends over there may be able to unite completely with them in *one* holy communion. In this way the work of the church there will flourish that much more.<sup>46</sup>

The result of the meeting in St. Louis was the approval of a draft of a synodical constitution. It became the basis for the formal constitutional convention which opened six weeks later in Fort Wayne on July 2, 1846.<sup>47</sup> All but one of the men originally sent by Wilhelm Loehe joined the new Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States.<sup>48</sup>

### III.

By the time the new synod was organized in Fort Wayne in 1846, the growing number of men volunteering for service in America was beginning to cause Loehe some concern. Many of them were past the normal age of schooling, and the urgent needs in America would not permit them the luxury of receiving a long course of instruction. Experience had taught Loehe that simple schoolteachers were not enough; men were needed in America who could serve as both pastors and teachers.<sup>49</sup>

The work of preparing men in Germany was taking ever more developed form. In February of 1846 a group of theological

candidates, headed by Friedrich Bauer, joined together in Nuremberg and dedicated their free time to training and examining the volunteers for America.<sup>50</sup> Their efforts freed Loehe from the task of personally instructing the *Nothelfer* and involved more men in the American work.

The original plan of giving the American volunteers partial training in Germany and then sending them to America where they could obtain instruction on the spot was now, of course, brought to an end by the severing of the connection with the seminary in Columbus. The plan had proved its practicality, however, and Loehe felt that some type of continuation was advisable. Wilhelm Sihler possessed the best education of any of the men whom Loehe knew in America, and so he was the logical one to whom to turn.<sup>51</sup> By this time Sihler had become the pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, which Friedrich Wyneken had formerly served.<sup>52</sup> Sihler's parish was also well situated in relation to the Indian mission-field in Michigan which August Crämer was serving.<sup>53</sup> Fort Wayne had a flourishing German congregation (the oldest in Indiana) and a pastor qualified to be a teacher of theology, and it promised to be an excellent site for a new seminary that would prepare pastors who could serve the twofold task of gathering in the German immigrants and bringing the gospel to the heathen Indians. By February of 1846 Loehe had already determined in this city to "give our brethren in America a seminary for faithful shepherds of souls."<sup>54</sup>

Now that the activity in Germany had been underway for some time, it did not prove too difficult to found a seminary in Fort Wayne. A sufficient sum of money was available, and Sihler was able to obtain accommodations in the city and later purchase a large tract of land on the outskirts of the town for the school.<sup>55</sup> Loehe promised to support one or two teachers and send books for the library of the seminary.<sup>56</sup> The books previously sent to the seminary in Columbus were removed by Ernst when he withdrew from the Ohio Synod and were reportedly given to the library of the new school.<sup>57</sup>

Although Sihler apparently had begun instructing students earlier, beginning with a group of men present at the convention in Fort

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Wayne in June, the school dates its foundation, specifically, from October 10, 1846.<sup>58</sup> On that day eleven students who had been sent by Loehe arrived in Fort Wayne, along with four theological candidates from Northern Germany who were intended to serve as teachers.<sup>59</sup> Of the four teachers, only Karl L. A. Wolter stayed at the seminary in Fort Wayne, the others almost immediately accepting calls to various congregations, leaving Sihler and Wolter to build up the new institution.

Loehe intended the seminary in Fort Wayne to be primarily a training school for *Nothelfer* that would serve as a supplement to Bauer's institution in Nuremberg, but it was also to serve as a missionary institution for the instruction of men intending to serve the Indians.<sup>60</sup> He had considered sending Crämer from Frankenmuth to be the second professor at the seminary but ultimately decided that he was more valuable at his post in Michigan.<sup>61</sup> After Wolter died of cholera, however, in 1849 at the age of thirty-one, Crämer was unanimously elected two years later by the synod to replace him. Because the need for pastors and teachers was greater than the need for Indian missionaries, a special course for missionaries unfortunately never came into being at the seminary, much to Loehe's disappointment.

The question of the seminary's future was broached at the convention in Fort Wayne in July of 1846. Even before the institution went into full operation, a proposal to close it was entertained. Since 1839 the Saxons had operated a seminary at Altenburg in Missouri, which Walther suggested be moved to Fort Wayne and combined with the new school there. Action on the matter, however, was postponed until the next convention in 1847, at which time the proposal was defeated. Instead, the school in Altenburg was moved to St. Louis and served as the "theoretical" seminary of the Missouri Synod, while the institution in Fort Wayne continued as the "practical" seminary.<sup>62</sup>

Loehe was critical of the proposal to merge the two schools and rightly predicted its defeat,<sup>63</sup> but he saw it as "a sign and proof of how seriously our Saxon brethren mean to unite."<sup>64</sup> The two types of institutions had different tasks to perform. The task of the theoretical seminary in St. Louis was to offer a "thorough, academic

education, as we intend to do in our German gymnasia and universities.’<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, Loehe wrote as follows of the practical school:

... the seminary in Fort Wayne has the primary purpose of preparing *Nothelfer* for the German brethren in the faith, somewhat as up to now has been done among us in Franconia, only with more and better attention to the conditions there than was possible here in this country.<sup>66</sup>

For Loehe there was no question about which type of school was preferable. “In any case,” he wrote, “for the present circumstances in North America the *Nothelfer*-institution is the most important.”<sup>67</sup>

Loehe was soon called upon to show his good will toward the new Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri Synod, Ohio, and Other States. At the convention in Chicago on April 30, 1847, the synod voted to ask Loehe formally to transfer the title of the seminary in Fort Wayne to it and, at the same time, to continue to support the school financially because the new synod could not afford to maintain it.<sup>68</sup> After consulting with Wucherer, his closest associate, Loehe replied affirmatively to Walter’s official request and determined to make a formal gift of the seminary to the Missouri Synod.<sup>69</sup> Three conditions, however, were attached by Loehe, to which he hoped the synod would agree. The seminary (1.) was always to serve only the Lutheran church, which is to say, a church body accepting the entire Book of Concord, (2.) was to use nothing but the German language in its instruction, and (3.) was not to alter its character as a school for the speedy training of pastors for German congregations. Loehe’s major regret, however, was that the school had not been able to carry out his intention of serving as a training school for missionaries to the Indians. In his letter to Walther turning over the seminary to the Missouri Synod, he clearly expressed his disappointment:

You have already often heard of our concern, and Dr. Sihler, the head of the seminary, has also taken it to heart. We believe that the seminary should also serve to train missionaries among the pagan aborigines of North America. We would like to inform you that it would be extremely

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painful to us if you were to take an action that would affect the support of so many friends of mission in Bavaria. However, we have no doubt that you will also continue to keep this point before your eyes and that this intention will be faithfully executed.<sup>70</sup>

With his gift of the school to the Missouri Synod, Loehe's direct control over the seminary in Fort Wayne came to an end, although for most of the next decade students were still sent to it from the missionary seminary in Nuremberg.<sup>71</sup> Funds continued to be solicited by the missionary society that Loehe had founded, and the task of the missionary seminary in Nuremberg, which by then had come under the aegis of the new missionary society, became solely one of preparing men to go to America where they would enter the seminary in Fort Wayne. With the two schools—one in Nuremberg and one in Fort Wayne—firmly established and a functioning missionary society in place, Loehe no longer needed to be so actively involved in supervising the endeavor on a day-by-day basis. Although the chief focus of the *Gesellschaft für innere Mission im Sinne der lutherischen Kirche* continued to be the support of the two schools in Nuremberg and Fort Wayne, the readers of the *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika*, which had become the society's journal, found that its reports about the seminary in Fort Wayne were much more routine and less frequent than they had been in the early years of its existence.

Loehe also began to be occupied by other concerns. Ultimately he severed his connection with the Missouri Synod and the seminary in Fort Wayne when the Iowa Synod and its seminary were founded in 1854, and for it he performed the same sort of service in sending money and students that he had previously supplied to the seminaries in Columbus and Fort Wayne. Today, in consequence, there are three theological seminaries in America that can claim Wilhelm Loehe, the pastor of the village of Neuendettelsau, as a "father from afar."

### The Endnotes

1. The title used here, as applied to Loehe, derives from Charles Lutz, "Father from Afar," *Lutheran Standard*, 116 (August 16, 1958): 8-10.
2. The original oral form of this essay was delivered on October 25, 1995, at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, as part of a series of lectures commemorating the sesquicentennial of the seminary.
3. James L. Schaaf, "Wilhelm Löhe's Relation to the American Church: A Study in the History of Lutheran Mission" (doctoral dissertation, Heidelberg, 1961).
4. Wilhelm Loehe, *Three Books About the Church*, trans. and ed. with an Introduction by James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969).
5. Rick Stuckwisch, *Johannes Konrad Wilhelm Löhe: Portrait of a Confessional Lutheran Missiologist* (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Student Association and Reprintation Press, [1993]).
6. Hans Kressel, *Wilhelm Löhe: Ein Lebensbild* (second edition; Erlangen and Rothenburg ob der Tauber, 1954), 26-30.
7. The original *Missionsseminar* closed in 1985. Its successor is a *Missionskolleg* located in Neuendettelsau.
8. "Noch ein Wort der Erinnerung an Wilhelm Löhe," *Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, 5 (February 19, 1872): col. 44.
9. On Wyneken, one may see Norman J. Threinen, "Wyneken and Nineteenth Century German Lutheranism: An Attempt to Mobilize Confessional Lutherans in Germany in Behalf of Lutherans in North America," in *Missionary to America: The History of Lutheran Outreach to Americans*, Essays and Reports of the Lutheran Historical Conference 15 (St. Louis: Lutheran Historical Conference, 1994), 113-130; David A. Gustafson, "A Confessional Lutheran Encounters American Religion: The Case of Friedrich Conrad Dietrich Wyneken," in *Missionary to America: The History of Lutheran Outreach to Americans*, Essays and Reports of the Lutheran Historical Conference 15 (St.

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- Louis: Lutheran Historical Conference, 1994), 131-141; and Rudolf F. Rehmer, "The Impact of Wyneken's *Notruf*," in *Missionary to America: The History of Lutheran Outreach to Americans*, Essays and Reports of the Lutheran Historical Conference 15 (St. Louis: Lutheran Historical Conference, 1994), 198-208.
10. Friedrich Wyneken, *The Distress of the German Lutherans in North America: Laid upon the Hearts of the Brethren in the Faith in the Home Country*, trans. S. Edgar Schmidt and ed. R. F. Rehmer (second edition; Ft. Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1986).
  11. Threinen, "Wyneken and Nineteenth Century German Lutheranism," 117, n. 14.
  12. Schaaf, "Wilhelm Löhe's Relation to the American Church," 7-12.
  13. Wilhelm Löhe, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Klaus Ganzert (7 vols. to date; Neuendettelsau: Freimund-Verlag, 1951ff.), 4:18.
  14. For the text of these instructions, one may see Schaaf, "Wilhelm Löhe's Relation to the American Church," 201-205.
  15. J. Deinzer, *Wilhelm Löhes Leben: Aus seinem schriftlichen Nachlaß zusammengestellt* (3 vols.; Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1901 [third edition], 1880, and 1892), 3:8.
  16. F. Wyneken, "Aufruf an die lutherische Kirche Deutschlands zur Unterstützung der Glaubensbrüder in Nordamerika," *Zeitschrift für Protestantismus und Kirche*, n.s., 5 (1843): 166-167.
  17. A letter of the Ohio Synod to Wilhelm Loehe, January, 1843, quoted in *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika*, 1 (1843): no. 2.
  18. Ibid.
  19. The *Gesellschaft für innere Mission nach dem Sinne der lutherischen Kirche* was formally organized in September of 1849 by Loehe and thirty-three of his friends.
  20. One may see Homer Reginald Greenholt, "A Study of Wilhelm Loehe, His Colonies and the Lutheran Indian Missions in the Saginaw Valley of Michigan" (doctoral dissertation, University

- of Chicago Divinity School, 1937).
21. *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika*, 2 (1844): no. 1.
  22. One may see Vergilius Ferm, *The Crisis in American Lutheran Theology: A Study of the Issue between American Lutheranism and Old Lutheranism* (reprinted edition; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1987); Carl Mauelshagen, *American Lutheranism Surrenders to the Forces of Conservatism* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia, 1936; and Paul P. Kuenning, *The Rise and Fall of American Lutheran Pietism: The Rejection of an Activist Heritage* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1988). For a discussion of "American Lutheranism" as related to the Ohio Synod and its seminary, one may see Willard Dow Allbeck, *A Century of Lutheranism in Ohio* (Yellow Springs, Ohio: The Antioch Press, 1966), 84-109, 191-220, and Donald L. Huber, *Educating Lutheran Pastors in Ohio, 1830-1980: A History of Trinity Lutheran Seminary and Its Predecessors*, *Studies in American Religion* 33 (Lewiston, New York: The Edward Mellen Press, 1989), 42-45.
  23. In this regard the new arrivals were following the lead of their mentor Loehe whose later publication (1845) *Zuruf aus der Heimat an die deutsch-lutherische Kirche Nordamericas* is an encomiastic tribute to the German language. For the text of the *Zuruf*, see Martin Schmidt, *Wort Gottes und Fremdlingschaft: Die Kirche vor dem Auswanderungsproblem des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Erlangen and Rothenburg ob der Tauber: Martin Luther Verlag, 1953), 141-179.
  24. The Prussian Union was an enforced merger of the Lutheran and Reformed churches in Prussia in 1817 at the command of King Frederick William III. All churches were ordered to use a formula in administering Holy Communion that began with "Jesus says . . .," thus obscuring the difference between the Lutheran and Reformed doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the sacrament.
  25. One wonders how the complainants reconciled the alleged unorthodoxy of the German formula and the proper Lutheran teaching of the English one with their claim that abandoning the German language leads to false teaching.

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26. A letter of Wilhelm Loehle to Adam Ernst, October 28, 1843 (Loehle Archives, 7304a).
  27. The Ohio Synod held a regular convention only every three years. The regular conventions were in 1842 and 1845; the meeting in Zanesville in 1844 was a special session.
  28. *Minutes of the Nineteenth Convention of the Synod and Ministerium of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Ohio and Adjoining Territory, Convened in Canton, Ohio, in Trinity Week, A.D. 1842* (New Philadelphia, Ohio: Lutheran Standard Office, 1842), 41.
  29. *Ibid.*
  30. *Lutheran Standard*, 2 (August 30, 1844): 2. One may also see *Verhandlungen der Extra-Sitzung der Allgemeinen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Ohio und den angrenzenden Staaten, Gehalten zu Zanesville, Ohio, vom 29sten Juni bis zum 6ten Juli 1844* (Pittsburgh: Druckerei der Lutherischen Kirchenzeitung, 1844), 22.
  31. A letter of Wilhelm Loehle to Focke, November 3, 1844, quoted in *Allgemeine Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirchenzeitung*, 60 (January 14, 1927): 35.
  32. "Zirkular an die Freunde der Amerikanischen Sache," December 10, 1844 (Concordia Historical Institute).
  33. *Lutheran Standard*, 2 (July 12, 1844): 2.
  34. *Lutheran Standard*, 2 (September 6, 1844): 2.
  35. *Lutheran Standard*, 2 (October 18, 1844): 2-3.
  36. P. A. Peter and Wm. Schmidt, *Geschichte der Allgemeinen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Ohio* (Columbus: Verlags-handlung der Synode, 1900), 97.
  37. Eventually this plan was implemented when Capital University was founded in 1850, at which time the seminary became the theological school within the university, a relationship that prevailed until 1959 when the seminary again became an independent institution.
  38. *Minutes of the Fifth Session of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Ohio, Convened in Lancaster, Ohio, May 17th A.D. 1845* (Zanesville, Ohio: Lutheran Standard Press, 1845), 10.

39. Ibid., 16.
40. Ibid., 22.
41. Andreas Saupert had been sent out by Loehe in 1844, attended the seminary in Columbus, and was licensed as a candidate by the Ohio Synod in 1845.
42. A letter of Wilhelm Loehe to Adam Ernst, February 3, 1845 (Loehe Archives, 585).
43. On Sihler, one may see Lewis W. Spitz, *Life in Two Worlds: Biography of William Sihler* (St. Louis and London: Concordia Publishing House, 1968).
44. Carl S. Mundinger, *Government in the Missouri Synod: The Genesis of Decentralized Government in the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), 172-174. It is doubtful, as Mundinger claims on page 175, that some sort of rough draft of the constitution of the Missouri Synod was made at the conference in Cleveland. One may see Schaaf, "Wilhelm Löhé's Relation to the American Church," p. 108, n. 34.
45. Deinzer, *Wilhelm Löhés Leben*, 3:29.
46. *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika*, 3 (1845): no. 4, p. 3.
47. This organizational meeting of 1846 is not generally regarded as the first convention of the Missouri Synod, even though an ordination took place at it. It was decided that the constitution would not go into effect for a year in order that it might be studied by absent pastors and their congregations.
48. The one man who did not join had never entered the ministry of the Ohio Synod; he apparently secured permanent secular employment. The first Missouri Synod roster listed fifty-three pastors. Twenty-one of them had been sent to America by Loehe; twenty came from the group in Missouri.
49. Wilhelm Loehe, *Rechenschaftsbericht der Redactoren der kirchl. Mittheilungen aus und über Nordamerika über das was seit 1841 geschehen ist. Sammt Angabe dessen, was sofort geschehen sollte. Zunächst für die werthen Freunde der Sache in Mecklenburg geschrieben* (Neuendettelsau: n.p., 1847), 12.

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50. Eduard Stirner, "Vortrag über die Wirksamkeit der Gesellschaft durch Aussendung von Predigern und Lehrern," in *Fünf Festreden, nebst Gesängen und Gebeten, gehalten bei der ersten Jahresfeier der Gesellschaft für innere Mission im Sinne der lutherischen Kirche den 19. Juni 1850 in der Kirche zu St. Aegydien in Nürnberg* (Nuremberg: Joh. Phil. Raw'schen Buchhandlung, 1850), 26-27.
  51. Deinzer, *Wilhelm Löhes Leben*, 3:33, claims that the suggestion for the establishment of the seminary in Fort Wayne came from Sihler himself, although supporting evidence is lacking. Sihler himself, in *Lebenslauf von W. Sihler, als lutherischer Pastor u. s. w.: Auf mehrfaches Begehren von ihm selber geschrieben* (2 vols.; St. Louis: Lutherischer Concordia-Verlags, 1879-1880), 2:77, credits Loehe with the plan of starting the seminary.
  52. Wyneken accepted a pastorate in Baltimore, Maryland, in March of 1845. Sihler left Pomeroy, Ohio, in July of 1845 to accept the pastorate in Fort Wayne. At the time Fort Wayne had fewer than five thousand inhabitants, among them a number of immigrants who had come from Mecklenburg and Pomerania, from Bremen and Minden, some from Bavaria and Switzerland. Spitz, *Life in Two Worlds*, 40-43. In early 1846 Sihler's congregation numbered more than one hundred families and from eighty to a hundred additional individuals. He was planning to construct a new building because the present one had become too small. There were also a dozen or so congregations that had been established around Fort Wayne. *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika*, 4 (1846): col. 15.
  53. Crämer, still a pastor in Frankenmuth, Michigan, and three other men who had been sent by Loehe and were then serving in Michigan withdrew from membership in the Michigan Synod on June 25, 1846, and subsequently joined with the pastors who left the Ohio Synod and the Saxons in Missouri in forming the Missouri Synod. Spitz, *Life in Two Worlds*, 42.
  54. A letter of Wilhelm Loehe to Alt, February 25, 1846 (Loehe Archive, 8635a).
  55. *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika*, 5 (1847): col. 14.
  56. Deinzer, *Wilhelm Lohes Leben*, 3:34.

57. Despite the assistance of the Rev. Robert E. Smith, librarian in charge of public services in the Library of Concordia Theological Seminary, the author has been unable to confirm the present location of any of these volumes.
58. Stimer, "Vortrag über die Wirksamkeit der Gesellschaft," 25.
59. *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika*, 4 (1846): cols. 51-53.
60. Wilhelm Loehle, *Die Heiden-Mission in Nord-Amerika: Ein Vortrag in der General-Versammlung des protestantischen Central-Missions-Vereines zu Nürnberg den 2. Juli 1846*, (Nuremberg: Joh. Phil. Raw'schen Buchhandlung, 1846), 17.
61. A letter of Wilhelm Loehle to August Crämer, June 22, 1846 (Loehle Archive, 8616a).
62. Later, in 1861, the seminary was indeed moved from Fort Wayne to St. Louis. In 1875 it was moved to Springfield, Illinois, and ultimately in 1976 returned to Fort Wayne, Indiana.
63. Loehle, *Rechenschaftsbericht*, 14.
64. *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika*, 4 (1846): col. 75.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid., cols. 74-75.
67. Loehle, *Rechenschaftsbericht*, 14.
68. *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika*, 5 (1847): col. 77. Loehle was also asked to assist in obtaining a Pastor Oster from Posen for the faculty of the seminary. Loehle, however, had to report that Oster and his congregation had emigrated to Australia, and thus he was not available for the post.
69. Walther's letter of May 6, 1847, and Loehle's reply of September 8, 1847 (Loehle Archive, 7302), are printed in *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika*, 6 (1848): cols. 42-45.
70. *Kirchliche Mittheilungen aus und über Nord-Amerika*, 6 (1848): col. 44.

71. Of the eighty-nine students at the seminary in its first nine years, only one was born in America. All the rest had their initial training in Germany under Loehle and his associates. Spitz, *Life in Two Worlds*, 86.