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Georg Albert Schieferdecker and his Relation to Chiliasm in the Iowa Synod

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GEORG ALBERT SCHIEFERDECKER AND HIS RELATION TO CHILIASM IN THE IOWA SYNOD

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE SOURCES

For a paper of this type, it was considered helpful to the next researcher to give a critical analysis of the sources used herein, since very little has been written about the subject, except that found in primary sources.

Very few original manuscripts were available on the subject. The Concordia Historical Institute Archives had one letter written by Schieferdecker, but closer examination showed that it did not pertain to the subject. One manuscript, however, in the Concordia Historical Institute Archives proved to be quite interesting, though it also furnished very little information on this subject. That was the minutes of an irregular Western District Convention, held in Fort Wayne in 1857 in connection with the Synodical Convention there that year. Quite a wealth of information, however, was found in the folio volume of the original minutes of the Altenburg Congregation, containing the minutes from November 25, 1846 to May 2, 1858; also writings of protest, and the like. These proved very helpful, especially in regard to Schieferdecker's relation to his congregation in the years 1856 to 1858. These minutes were loaned to the writer through the kindness of the Rev. A. Vogel, pastor of Altenburg, Missouri.

A great amount of information was culled from printed documents. Among them Fritchel's <u>Quellen und Dokumente</u> proved valuable, since a number of the early Synodical Reports of the Iowa Synod were not available to the writer. In his <u>Quellen und Dokumente</u>, Fritschel worked through much of Iowa's source

material and collected it in that one volume work. The Synodal-Brief of the Buffalo Synod furnished some good information on the early stand of Iowa on chiliasm, something which perhaps would not have impressed itself on the writer's mind as much, had Buffalo not had relations with Iowa. As has been stated before not all the Iowa Synodal Berichte were available, but those that were proved very helpful with reference to Iowa's stand onchiliasm. A good source of information came from the Missouri Synodal Berichte. It is from these that the first hand information on Schieferdecker's treatment by that Synod was found. The same holds true for the Western and Northern District Reports.

Der Lutheraner offered a wealth of material since it reported what was going on in Synod as an impartial bystander. Here, the writer had to go through the Lutheraner, page for page and volume for volume in order to get this valuable information since at times the indices are very incomplete, especially to the short references pertained to the subject.

Of the secondary books, Schieferdecker's and Koestering's proved to be of most value. However, as these two had almost conflicting accounts, the evidence had to be weighed and pieced together, often with the help of the Lutheraner articles. On the whole, though, these two sources were good foundation material, since both presented the controversy favorable to their side. J. Deindoerfer's book, written at the 25th anniversary of the Iowa Synod, did not contain much useful information. It

was written, it seems, more as an apology of Iowa's stand, than a peice of history. With the exception of two or three books, most of the source material was in German.

CHAPTER I

Georg Albert Schieferdecker was born on the 12th of March, 1815 in Leipzig, the fourth and youngest son of the family. His father was Christoph Friedrich August Schieferdecker, a merchant. His mother was Christiana Caroline nee Artzt, daughter of a Saxon preacher.

Already in his early youth, his parents wanted him to enter the ministry, and, in order to achieve this end, made every possible sacrifice. From his sixth to tenth year, he attended the Buergerschule in Leipzig. But, as was the general tendency at that time, the boy Schieferdecker did not learn to know Jesus as his Savior at this school. He once remarked, "I hardly learned the ten commandments here"[1]. Consequently, he was well on his way of becoming an unbeliever at this school. The rankest unbelief swept over Germany at this time. Christianity was looked upon as an outmoded religion. Here and there pious parents would, however, teach their children the fundamentals of Christianity, and, as it seems, Georg Albert's parents were of this type, because later in life, he remarks that his parents taught him Christian hymns and prayers. Through this fortification of Christianity, he went through this

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1. All information contained in this chapter, unless otherwise noted, is from Der Lutheraner, vol. 48, p. 144 f., 151 f., 1687

school unharmed in soul.

After Georg had reached the tenth year of his life, he entered the Nicolaischule which also was located in Leipzig. The purpose of this school was to prepare its students to enter the university. However, young Schieferdecker was not destined to remain here long. Soon after Schieferdecker's enrollment, his father moved to Vienna, where he felt he had better business opportunities. But, at his arrival at Vienna, the father found that his business opportunities were not as favorable as he had expected. Soon after, the mother got sick, and had to leave Vienna. With business reverses and a sick wife, the worries soon got the best of the father, and after a year and a half, died, in 1828. Georg and his mother had already moved to Gera, where the son entered the Gymnasium. His professors here were Rein, Herzog, and Lipsius. By the Spring of 1833 he passed his examinations, and graduated with honor from the Gera Gymnasium.

Upon his completion of the Gymnasium courses, he enrolled at the University of Leipzig, inthe department of theology. His professors here were the rationalists, Winer, Theile, Groszmann, and Niedner. Georg attended the University under these professors till 1836, learning pious thoughts, but nothing about Christianity. One of the text books that he used was Bengel's dogmatics, which had chiliastic tendencies. According to Pastor Geyer, it was the study of Bengel, not the later influence of his father-in-law, Pastor Gruber,

which took Georg upon the chiliastic path.[2] Though almost all of his professors were rationalists, it is entirely possible that Linder, also one of his professors at Leipzig, was not a rationalist. However, it is not definite whether Linder exerted any influence on young Schieferdecker. Rationalism was the way of thinking at this time in Germany. Pastors no longer preached the Gospel, but preached only a worldly wisdom. The voice of the Holy Ghost was no longer heard, but only the cry of blind unbelief. But, through this period of unbelief small groups of Bible students would gather and study the writings of sound Bible teachers. Pastor Keyl of Frohna in Muldenthal was the guiding spirit of such a group. Here Schieferdecker, through joining Keyl's study group came into close contact with that orthodox pastor. Since Schieferdecker had preached the Gospel early in his life already, and because of the friendship that had sprung up between him and Keyl, Keyl had enough confidence in him to occasionally let him preach in his pulpit.

In 1838 Schieferdecker passed his courses at Leipzig with flying colors. Thereupon he took a teaching position with Dr. Schnable in Breitenbrunn, where he stayed till Easter of 1837. He then became a private tutor in the home of a merchant in Chemnitz. But, he did not stay here long because his employer was a strong enemy of the Gospel,

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2. Der Lutheraner, vol. 48, p. 75.

and Schieferdecker did not desist from teaching salvation through Christ. By Christmas of that same year, he again was released from his duties. At about this same time, his mother, whom he held very dear, died. He was highly affected by these blows, expecially since he was of a melancholic nature. However, he was not worried about his future, since he had firm faith in the Lord, who he was confident would take care of him. In this hour of reverses, the Lord shaped matters so that he met C. F. W. Walther. This friendship lasted throughout their lives.

Around Easter in 1838, Schieferdecker again received a teaching position, this time from the Count (Fuerst) of Schoenburg-Waldenburg, but resigned the following September, so that he could join the Saxon group of Lutherans under the leadership of Pastor Martin Stephan, which was planning to emmigrate to America. Schieferdecker realized more and more, that he could not fulfill his duties to Christ in rationalistic Germany. So, with the other Saxons, he left Germany. His ship, the Copernikus, the first one of the five ships the Saxons had chartered, set sail on November third, 1839 from the port of Bremen. After a trip of almost two months, the Copernikus finally entered the harbor at New Orleans on December 31st, almost a month before the Olbers, the ship that carried young C. F. W. Walther, sailed into New Orleans.[3] In January of 1839 the group made their

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3. Polack, The Story of C. F. W. Walther, p. 35.

way up the Mississippi to St. Louis. Here the group of emmigrants stayed until May 30th, A part of them then moved down to Perry County, and founded the various settlements down there. Schieferdecker settled in Wittenberg. Because of his training, Schieferdecker taught the children of the colony. From his diary we learn that this seemed like a very hard task for him, He felt that he did not have the gifts to teach Luther's Catechism the way he should. Besides this he was stricken with a climatic fever, which overran the colony. Many of the emmigrants died, but Schieferdecker survived. At this time yet, Schieferdecker was still very much under the influence of the law, and thought he had to mortify his flesh in order to gain heaven. He was a very pious young man. In June of 1840, he left the colony, and came back to St. Louis, where he opened a private school. He continued in the position for almost a year, when he was called into the ministry to serve a congregation in Monroe County, Illinois. C. F. W. Walther ordained him here on June 10, 1841.

The young pastor must have been a very consecrated man. We have evidences of this in his diary, where he writes that a pastor should not be as a canal, through which the Gospel truths flow, without affecting the canal itself, but rather, should be as a well, out of which the sweet messages of Christ bubble. He added, a pastor should be just bubbling over with the Gospel. In another entry he states that he

wants to be a real "seelsorger", to warn when necessary, and comfort people when they are low in spirits. He wants to use psychology when dealing with people, so as not to offend them unnecessarily. On the other hand though, he does not intend to be influenced by people, when it is his duty to warn them against their sins. "A pastor", wrote Schieferdecker in his diary, "must always be ruled with love!" He also wrote that it was the love of the sinner's soul, that prompted a pastor to warn his people against their sins, and that this same love should rule the pastor when opponents rise up against him. Schieferdecker believed that a pastor should not be argumentative, but should be friendly, one who is well able to bear the attacks of his opponents with long-suffering. All these entries in his diary show us that the young pastor was a God-fearing, devout young man, one who realized the importance of his high office, and one who wanted to live his own life, and lead the life of his parishoners according to the will of God.

It might be interesting to note here, that shortly before Schieferdecker received the call to Monroe County, his name had also been placed on the list of candidates, when Trinity Congregation of St. Louis was calling a pastor after the death of O. H. Walther. But, since C. F. W. Walther had the majority of the votes cast, he was called.

During his pastorage in Monroe County, Illinois, Schieferdecker did not only confine himself to his parish work. He

also wrote articles for Der Lutheraner. Already in the second issue of Der Lutheraner he had an article on St. Bernhard.[4] In the March 1845 issue of Der Lutheraner he had his second article. This time he wrote "An Exortation to Lutherans who joined Congregations of other Denominations".[5] His third article appeared in Der Lutheraner in May, 1845.[6] In this article he shows the reader that the Methodists are a sect. From both of these articles we can see that Pastor Schieferdecker was conscious of the things that were going on about him, and that he was very interested in preserving the Lutheran heritage.

In 1845, the young pastor married Maria Gruber, the oldest daughter of Pastor C. F. Gruber. During the course of their married life, the Lord blessed them with a large family. They had ten children in all, one son, and nine daughters. However, three daughters died very early, and three older daughters died even before the father did. The first one of the older daughters that died, was Clara, the wife of Pastor Heckel. Clara died in Knoxville, Tennessee. The second one was Elisabeth, wife of Pastor Caemmerer, who died in Chandlerville, Illinois, leaving two children. The third daughter to die was the nineteen year old Hulda, who

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4. Der Lutheraner, vol. I, p. 8.
5. Ibid., p. 59.
6. Ibid., p. 69.

died in Gehlenbeck, Illinois. The three daughters that outlived their father were Minna, the wife of Pastor Gose of Grant Park, Illinois; Johanna, the wife of Teacher Wukasch of Frohna, Missouri; and Caroline, the wife of Pastor Steinmann of Babbtoen, Missouri. Of Schieferdecker's only son very little is known. ~~We do known.~~ We do know, however, that he had studied at the log cabin college in Altenburg for a while, and was quite a faithful, well-behaved student. But when the Civil War broke out, he joined the Union Army. Shortly before this time already he had shown sign of mental instability, but this was not detected by the army officials. The result was, that after a short time, he had to be placed in the insane assylum for soldiers in the District of Columbia. According to the laws of our government he could not be released here until his condition showed improvement. His insanity was not constant, for he had moments when he would be very normal. What finally happened to him is not known. to the writer of this paper at time of writing.

In August 19, 1847, the pastoral conference of St. Louis and vicinity met at the home of Pastor Loeber in Altenburg, Perry County. The pastors present were: Keyl, from Frohna, Walther, from St. Louis, Best, from Palmyra, Missouri, Saupert, from Evansville, Indiana, Loehner, from Collinsville, Illinois, Wolf, from Perryville, and Fick, from New Melle, St. Charles, Missouri. That the ugly head of Chiliasm was already showing its head in American Lutheranism can be seen from the

discussion that the pastors had at this conference. Both, Pastor Gruber and Pastor Brohm had papers on this subject. During the course of the discussion it was brought out that the theologian Bengel was not in agreement with Luther. Pastor Brohm also pointed out that they were already living in the thousand years of Revelations chapter 20. Among other things, they decided that the chiliastic view, which states that the church will grow in spirituality in the later days of the 1000 years was wrong according to the Word of God, and also judging from world conditions. The conference stated that chiliasm must be judged according to the analogy of faith, and not according to reason. Furthermore it stated that they couldn't be sure about the 1000 years since no prophecy can be interpreted with sureness by human beings until it has been fulfilled. The conference also warned against chiliasm because it does not rest on Scripture but on the vacillating authority of human interpretation. Since the judgement day comes as a thief in the night, all speculation as to the coming of the last day as chiliasm wants to do, is false.[7]

Just a month after this conference had met in Altenburg, Der Lutheraner carried an article on chiliasm, indicating that chiliasm was a much discussed topic already in 1847. The article appeared under the title, "Is the Modern Chiliasm

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7. Der Lutheraner, vol. 4, p. 4.

In Accord with the 17th Article of the Augsburg Confession," The author of this article signs himself as "Th B.", presumable Theo. Brohm. In the first part of his essay, Brohm briefly goes into the history of chiliasm and states that, outside of Bengel and Spener, the past-Reformation dogmaticians held no chiliastic views. Bengel was a more strenuous agitator of chiliasm than Spener. Spener, though he hoped for "better times" when the devil would be bound for a thousand years, did not make his chiliastic views an article of faith. His student Bengel, however, worked up quite a system. He even went so far as to calculate the actual starting point of the thousand years. According to his views on chiliasm, he set up the following five points: 1) the devil will be entirely powerless, 2) complete collapse of the papacy, 3) conversion of all Jews, 4) greater spirituality in all believers, 5) greater fruitfulness of the earth. When Spener and Bengel were criticized for their views on the basis of the 17th article of the Augsburg Confession, they answered that their period of a thousand years of peace did not refer to an earthly kingdom, nor did they teach the destruction of all unbelievers by force, nor did they make out of the church militant a church triumphant. Furthermore, they answered that the 17th article of the Augsburg Confession did not oppose their views on "Bible" chiliasm, as they called it, but was only against the crass chiliasts, the anabaptists ~~condemned in the Augsburg Confession and Spener and Bengel's~~ of Luther's time. Brohm goes on and says though it is true, that there is a difference between crass chiliasm of the anabaptists condemned in the Augsburg Confession and Spener and Bengel's

views, yet, he also holds that this finer chiliasm is also condemned in the Augsburg Confession and above all, is against Scripture for the following reasons: 1) The church is and will remain an afflicted group, and may not hope for any peace in this world. The closer the Judgment Day draws, the more evil the days will be. 2) All signs in the heavens that the Judgment will come soon have been fulfilled. 3) The Gospel has been preached to all men since the time of the apostles. The conversion of the heathen has been going on since that time, and the total conversion of all heathen is not taught in Scripture. (Ist nicht zu erwarten). 4) The total conversion of the Jews is also not taught, though individually they have been converted throughout all centuries. 5) One of the chief enemies of the Christian Church, the Turk, will be conquered shortly before Judgment Day, (not a thousand years before). 6) The second chief enemy, the papacy, will not come to its end, though already condemned by the Gospel, until the second coming of Christ for the judgment. 7) The thousand years mentioned in Revelation are already at an end. 8) Therefore we may wait for nothing else anymore than Judgment Day, which Luther already believed to be very near.

According to Brohm, these eight points, with the exception of the fourth point which even Luther held at one time, were accepted by all Lutherans of the Reformation

period. Therefore modern chiliasm was also condemned by the Augsburg Confession.

In conclusion, Brohm remarks that the chiliastic views have gained adherents, also among the Lutherans. It has come to such a pass, that it no longer was considered a personal hope, or a theological problem, but an article of faith, around which many a Lutheran is centering his life. Brohm, however, mentions no names, since, as he put it, the adherents of this false doctrine were too dear to him, because of other fundamental doctrines that they teach correctly. All he wanted to do with his article was to show that the case against the modern chiliasm was not a cut and dried case on the basis of the Augsburg Confession. He invited anyone to take up this work and prove that chiliasm was anti-Scriptural.[8]

During his time Schieferdecker was faithfully serving his congregations in Monroe County, Illinois. Just what his views on chiliasm were at this time is not known, since none of his writings of this time, if any are extant, were available to the writer of this paper. Although Brohm, as mentioned before, does not indict any specific individuals in his article on chiliasm, yet, in view of later developments, it seems to be a safe assumption that Brohm wrote against Schieferdecker, and that Schieferdecker already at

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8. Der Lutheraner, vol. 4, p. 11 f.

this time had his chiliastic tendencies, though perhaps not airing them openly.

In May, 1849, Pastor Schieferdecker left his congregation at Waterloo, Monroe County, Illinois, after having accepted a call to the newly organized congregation in Centerville, St. Clair County, Illinois. On Ascension Day he was ordained. The Rev. Carl Schlipsiek from Westphalia was called by his former congregation in Monroe County, and installed by Schieferdecker.[9] Pastor Schieferdecker's new field grew so much that a second pastor had to be called soon. Candidate Heinrich Wunder was called to fill this need.

It was during the year 1849 that the cholera epidemic was especially severe in the St. Louis area. It so happened that C. F. W. Walther had left St. Louis for business reasons, and Pastor Buenger was all alone, administering the sacraments to the stricken German Lutherans there. Pastor Buenger then noticed that he could not reach all of his people at this time of need, so he turned to the neighboring pastor, Schieferdecker, for help. Schieferdecker was willing and glad to help out like this. Certainly a sacrificial service on the part of Pastor Schieferdecker! After he had received the permission from his congregation he set out for the plague infested city of St. Louis. In

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9. Der Lutheraner, vol. 5, p. 160.

his diary he writes: "With the permission of my congregation, and with my own sincere willingness I left for St. Louis. Sorrowfully I took leave of my dear wife, with the firm conviction that with the help of God we would see each other again."[10] Schieferdecker also mentions that close to two hundred people died daily in St. Louis. The hearses were busy twenty-four hours of the day. That was the St. Louis to which Pastor Schieferdecker gave his services in 1849. These were terrible times when house after house was smitten with the terrible dread disease. Schieferdecker remarked that even unbelievers turned to the Gospel. Truly Schieferdecker lived up to the precept that he had entered in his diary years ago, namely, that a pastor should be the servant of the people. However, he was not destined to administer to the sick in St. Louis long. Soon the cholera epidemic also broke out in his own parish. He had to rush home. His own house was not spared either. Both his young children were overcome with the cholera. The one died shortly, but the other survived. After that his wife became deathly sick with the dread disease, so much so that Schieferdecker had already given up hope that she would live. But, the Lord answered his prayers. After a long serious illness, she finally passed her crisis, and got better again.

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10. Der Lutheraner, vol. 48, p. 151.

Schieferdecker himself, however, was spared from sickness through these trying days.

On August 19, 1849, Pastor Gotthold Heinrich Loeber died in Altenburg, Perry County, Missouri. The congregation in Altenburg then called Schieferdecker to be their pastor. At the same time, however, he had also received an urgent Macedonian call from a congregation in Louisville, Kentucky. What was he to do? He went down to Louisville to help straighten out the affairs there. When he arrived there, he found that the congregation was in a very poor state. Rationalist preachers had been busy again, so much so, that the congregation had split. The small orthodox group had sent the call to Schieferdecker. While he was among them, he preached for them, and held many meetings with them, helping them to straighten out their affairs. That this endeavor bore its fruits may be seen from a letter written by Dr. Walther to Rev. O. Fuerbringer, dated February 25, 1850, in which Walther refers to the request by Schieferdecker to preach a trial sermon there.

> "As I recognized the importance of this matter, I urged him to grasp this opportunity to bear testimony to the truth in the beautiful metropolis Louisville. We have been endeavoring, at great effort and expense, to gain entrance in the large cities, but mostly in vain; here, unsought, a door is opened to us in one of the best-situated cities in the United States; and this dare and must not happen in vain. Schieferdecker allowed himself to be persuaded and traveled to Louisville. He was received joyfully. His sermons made a good impression.[11]

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11. Polack, C. F. W. Walther, p. 131.

He had not been there more than nine days, when the Altenburg congregation pressed him for an answer to their call. Upon this urgent request for an answer, Schieferdecker decided to accept. He returned to his parish in St. Clair County, preached his farewell sermon, and prepared to leave for Altenburg. Faithfully he had been working here in this vicinity for over eight years. During his years of service, he had organized many preaching stations, and built churches. Reluctantly, because he loved his parish, yet with anticipation of his new field, he left for Altenburg. Candidate Johannes Rennicke from Curland, a graduate from Fort Wayne, was called as Schieferdecker's successor.[12]

On December 31, 1849, Schieferdecker arrived at Wittenberg, a Saxon settlement near Altenburg, where ten years ago he had been teaching school. The news that their new pastor had arrived quickly flashed to Altenburg. The elders of the congregation came out to meet and greet him. Joyfully they took him and his family to the parsonage, which had been decorated for the festive occasion. Above the door the congregation had put up the Psalm, "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore!" Schieferdecker wrote the following to his friend Walther in St. Louis after he had arrived in Altenburg:

> "Monday afternoon, the 31st of December I arrived in Altenburg. Though I was not expected at this time of the year, such a joy, such a great joy came into my heart, and, because of the great love and strong

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12. Der Lutheraner, vol. 6, p. 120.

> confidence they exhibited to me, I felt ashamed of myself. The parsonage had already been decorated with cedars and garlands. I was privileged to begin the new year with my new congregation, therefore I just had to give the congregation a sermonette on that same afternoon".

He preached on I Peter 1, 24.25. In the course of the sermon he pointed out that the grace of God would remain with them as long as they would remain grounded upon God's clear, unadulterated Word.[13] On New Year's day 1850 he preached his first sermon at his new charge, and was installed by his father-in-law, Pastor Gruber from Paitzdorf on January 6. In that same letter to Walther, Schieferdecker writes, "My dear father-in-law, Pastor Gruber, preached my installation sermon".[14] Schieferdecker served three congregations here, Altenburg, Dresden, and Seelitz.[15]

At this same time the Frohna Congregation, whose former pastor E. G. W. Keyl had been called to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and which had been joined with the Altenburg congregation for two years, also called their own pastor again. They called Henry Loeber, the son of deceased Pastor Loeber of Altenburg. He was ordained and installed by the Pastors Gruber and

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13. Der Lutheraner, vol. 6, p. 103 f.
14. Ibid.
15. Synodal Bericht, 1850, p. 12.

Schieferdecker on January 13,[16]

With great enthusiasm Schieferdecker began his work in the new parish. Conditions in Altenburg were not as Schieferdecker had pictured them to himself. The congregation was confronted with many weighty and serious problems. For this reason they needed a strong leader. It seems as though Schieferdecker was not of that type.[17] Of this we shall hear more in the next chapter. After Schieferdecker had been in Altenburg for six months, the new Concordia College was dedicated in St. Louis, after it had been moved up from Altenburg. Schieferdecker was one of the speakers at the dedication. In his address he pointed out the benefits the church derives from having such a school.[18] Perhaps it was the moving of the college from Altenburg to St. Louis that caused some of the trouble in the Altenburg congregation. It seems plausible that since a group of the members there were not in favor of moving the school to St. Louis, and another group was, that trouble could result.

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16. Der Lutheraner, vol. 6, p. 103.

17. Schieferdecker, Geschichte der ersten deutschen lutherischen Ansiedlung in Altenburg, Perry County, Missouri, p. 24.

18. Der Lutheraner, vol. 6, p. 180.

CHAPTER II

SCHIEFERDECKER IN ALTENBURG

With an unyielding congregation on one side, and a pastor who was not sure of himself on the other, trouble was bound to break out. Schieferdecker remarks that some of his parishioners felt that he did not always have the tact and sureness that their former pastor had. The first opposition to the new pastor came when he tried to introduce a different method of singing, a rhythmic singing. (rhythmischen Gesang) It is reported that Schieferdecker was quite a musician. In an unwise manner Schieferdecker went about trying to gain adherents to this way of singing. Instead of bringing it before the voters, he went about and gathered signatures for this method of singing. There were many people in the congregation who were already opposed to that method, and when Schieferdecker employed an unorthodox manner of gaining adherents, a large group resisted his endeavors.

Another incident that caused opposition to the pastor was a case of discipline. One of the fathers had married off his daughter to a doctor of the neighborhood. When it was reported to the father that the young couple was not getting along as they should, he went over to the daughter's house, and took her back home again. When the young husband returned home and found what had happened during his absence, he went over to the home of his father-in-law to reclaim his wife. But the father-in-law would not give her up. When no efforts on the part of the young doctor succeeded, he finally told the

congregation about it, which took steps to help him on Scriptural grounds. The father and daughter were stubborn, and would not yield. Finally things came to such a pass, that the father left a voters' meeting, and renounced his church membership. Had the congregation only left it at that, and declared such a man outside of the Christian Church. But, again it seemed that Schieferdecker though he had good intentions, did the wrong thing. The congregation went through the steps of excomunication. When the vote was taken, it was found that one man had voted against it. Now, instead of dealing with that individual, Schieferdecker said that the congregation could excommunicate the father anyway, since the opposing member did not give any reasons for his opposition to the excommunication. The excommunication was then made. But when the excommunicated man heard of the procedure, he returned and told the congregation that they had not dealt with him rightly. What could be done now? Even some of the members felt that the man had not been dealt with rightly. The congregation now called upon President Wyneken. He came down to Altenburg, and told the congregation that their excommunication seemed to rest on valid ground, but that their method of procedure was wrong. The whole excommunication was then cancelled, after the erring father had repented of his sins.[1]

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1. Koestering, Auswanderung, p. 153 ff.

In the winter of 1853 Schieferdecker received a call to the St. John's Congregation in New Orleans. Pastor Volk had died, leaving his congregation without a pastor.[2] Again Schieferdecker did not know what to do. A part of the congregation did not want to see him leave. Yet, at first he was sure that his call was the voice of the Holy Ghost. When Schieferdecker could not make up his mind what he should do, he asked President Wyneken for advice. After waiting for nine weeks for an answer, which stated the urgency of the call, Schieferdecker was convinced to accept. But then he received a letter from the New Orleans congregation informing him that they had called a united-evangelical (uniert-evangelisch) preacher, because they got tired of waiting for an answer on their first call. This then released Schieferdecker from his call. But, since he heard of the conditions in New Orleans, he was more convinced than ever that he should go, at least for a while. Schieferdecker then asked his congregation for a leave of absence. This was granted him. So he set out to the yellow fever infested country of New Orleans on the 24th of February, 1854.[3]

Koestering in his book,[4] gives an entirely different analysis of the situation. He states that Schieferdecker

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2. Der Lutheraner, vol. 48, p. 167.
3. Schieferdecker, Geschichte, p. 24 f.
4. Koestering, Auswanderung, P. 157,f.

was a very vacillating sort of person, and thus could not make up his mind either to accept the call or to decline. Schieferdecker then decided to go to New Orleans, and was convinced that his call was divine. According to Koestering, he received a letter from a widow in his congregation, urging him to stay. This letter from an individual member says Koestering supposedly influenced him so much, that he then decided to stay. In a footnote in his book, Koestering asks the question with reference to Schieferdecker's statement that the New Orleans Congregation had canceled the call, why he still asked a leave of absence from his congregation. This does not seem very odd, when we look at the situation this way. After due deliberation, and after receiving the letter from Wyneken urging him to go to New Orleans, Schieferdecker saw the great need of going there. And this need was enlarged in Schieferdecker's mind when he received the letter from the New Orleans Congregation, so much so, that, though they had called a pastor already, he still felt conscience bound to go down for a time at least, in order to counteract the influence of the Evangelical preacher and to bring the people back to true Lutheranism. If anything, it seems commendable, that Schieferdecker left for New Orleans, especially since the yellow fever plague swept over that part of the country, and had already taken the life of Pastor Volk down there.

It, however seems as though this trip down to New Orleans did something to Schieferdecker. While he was down there,

preaching, and working with a small orthodox group, things did not work out as well as he wished them to be. In his diary he wrote one day, wondering whether he was fit to stay in the ministry. He felt as though he did not have all the gifts that it took to be a good minister of the Gospel.[5] He began to doubt whether he had done the right thing by leaving his congregation in Altenburg, to serve that little group in New Orleans. But, he did not want to leave the small group in New Orleans until they had called their own pastor, and the pastor had accepted. During this time he was longing for his home, and his congregation. But he could not leave yet. Then, one day he received the notice that the cholera epidemic had broken out in Altenburg, and that his two year old daughter had already died of it.

Finally, in September, 1854, the congregation in New Orleans had called a man that accepted the call. He was Pastor Metz, whose young wife died of yellow fever just a few weeks after he had come to New Orleans.[6] During Schieferdecker's stay of seven months in New Orleans, his father-in-law, Pastor Gruber administered to his congregation.[7]

After his return to Altenburg, it seemed for a while as though all the bickering and animosity between groups of people and Schieferdecker had disappeared. He relates

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5. Der Lutheraner, vol. 48, p. 168.
6. Ibid.
7. Schieferdecker, Geschichte, p. 25.

that after his return, he was happy to experience a new confidence and love from his people; all mistrust seemed to be forgotten and buried. Through God's grace the congregation grew in spirituality and in numbers, growing on the solid rock of faith.[8]

In 1854, from June 21 to July 1, that is, during the time Schieferdecker was down in New Orleans, setting that house in order, the newly organized Missouri Synod met in St. Louis, Missouri. Because of the distance, Schieferdecker was not able to come up for that convention. Among other business that was transacted at this convention, we note the splitting up of Synod into four districts, namely into the Western, Middle, Northern, and Eastern Districts. Schieferdecker was elected president of the Western District. Since he was not even present for this important convention, we may safely assume that he was quite an important figure in that district to become its first president.[9] It is also interesting to note, that J. F. Koestering, the later biographer of Schieferdecker and also one of his successors in Altenburg, who wrote a severe criticism of Schieferdecker's chiliastic trouble there, was taken into the Synod at this convention, after he had finished the ministerial course of Synod.[10] Nothing was said about chiliasm at this convention.

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8. Schieferdecker, Geschichte, P. 25.
9. Synodal Bericht, 1854, p. 16.
10. Ibid., p. 7.

No matter on which side we stand, whether we condemn Schieferdecker for making that trip down to New Orleans, and leaving his congregation for about six months, or whether we think he did the wise thing by going down there to bring those people back to true Lutheranism, we must grant this one thing, that Schieferdecker accomplished that for which he had set out. In a March issue of the Lutheraner, in 1855, we see an article sent in by the congregation from New Orleans, asking all the congregations to thank God with them for bringing the Gospel to them. It was Schieferdecker who first brought them back to the right faith. They also mentioned in the course of their letter, that Rev. Volk and Mrs. Metz had died of yellow fever, and, though Pastor Metz and Cantor Buenger had been stricken with it for a while, they had recovered. Pastor Fick was the present pastor. In conclusion, they asked all congregations of Synod to pray to the Lord, and ask Him to spare them from this plague, and grant that their pastors and teachers may work on unhindered.[11]

Then came the Western District convention in Chicago, Illinois. The convention met at St. Paul's church, from April 25 to May 1. This was the first convention at which Schieferdecker presided as district president. In his convention address, Schieferdecker said that at first glance it might seem pathetic that so many of the familiar faces were not present, to which one had been drawn so close during

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11. Der Lutheraner, vol. 11, p. 126.

those first years of the synodical conventions, and that so many of the men gifted in a particular way were also not present. But on the other hand, he pointed out, it seemed to be better, to meet with a smaller group like that. Now all those little gifts that men have may be brought out so much better, their problems may also be discussed so much better, because before the districts were divided, there was not too much time for such discussions. In his concluding remarks, he makes a few suggestions for the succeeding conventions to follow, namely that the conference agree on certain questions that they would like to have discussed at their next convention. In this way Schieferdecker thought the discussion would be more to the point, and more people would be prepared to talk on a subject. On the basis of Eph. 4, 16, he urged that brotherly love should prevail, and that the oneness of the faith should rule the whole group of pastors.[12]

One discussion of the convention which is of interest with reference to later developments in this paper, is the discussion on the deposition of pastors. The convention ruled that it was not a two thirds vote, nor any kind of a vote at all, that could expel a pastor from his congregation except anti-Scriptural teachings, and an immoral life.[13]

Rhythmic congregational singing was also discussed by the group. It was decided that it was best to use the same

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12. Western District Report, 1855, p. 3 ff.

13. Ibid., p. 16 f.

manner of singing throughout all congregations. The body also decided that the best manner of singing was the rhythmic manner. It was pointed out that this kind of singing was more indicative of a living faith.[14]

Just what Schieferdecker's views on chiliasm were at this time is a bit difficult to say, since no writings from his pen, if any, were available. Koestering, however, states that during all this time already Schieferdecker was airing his chiliastic hopes in private and also in public. These were, a universal conversion of Jews, and halcon days ahead for all Christians.[15]

In the December 4, 1855 issue of the Lutheraner, we find a request to the Western District to hold their convention for that next year in Altenburg, instead as previously planned, in Chicago.[16] Chiliasm must have been discussed very much around this time. It seems very probable, that, since Schieferdecker was voicing his chiliastic hopes in private and in public, and since this naturally would raise opposition, that the two opposing groups would get together, and ask the convention to meet in their own midst so that chiliasm could be discussed better.

At the turn of the new year, namely on the festival of Epiphany, Schieferdecker preached a chiliastic sermon in his

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14. This is the manner of singing that Schieferdecker introduced in his Altenburg Congregation shortly after he arrived there. Western District Report, 1855, p. 19.

15. Koestering, Auswanderung, p. 164.

16. Der Lutheraner, vol. 12, p. 64.

church on Isiah 60. This aroused some of the people so much, that they grew angry with their pastor. After a few days one of the parishioners came up to Schieferdecker to discuss his sermon. The member pointed out to him, that his sermon had not been Scriptural, since there would not be a universal conversion of the Jews. They had had their chance. This member, however, did not deny that there would always be a few Jews converted throughout the years. On the other point, namely, that the last days of the Christians would be halcon days, the member also tried to tell Schieferdecker that it was unscriptural, since such days were no where described in neither the Old Testament nor the New. Schieferdecker, however was not impressed by his member. Koestering also reports that Schieferdecker voiced his views at a meal he had with another of his members. The parishioner then took his Bible and showed him that his chiliastic views were unsound. At another time, Schieferdecker took the Zeitschrift fuer Protestantismus und Kirche which contained a strongly chiliastic article under the title, "Das prophetische Wort von der Kirche" to his school teacher, Mr. Winter. This article said that the Augsburg Confession, through force of circumstance, because of the strong teachings of the Anabaptists, had denied certain chiliastic views, but that not all could be denied. Furthermore, it states, that the church must grow in its understanding of propheeies, and thus naturally it would follow, that Luther did not have a clear

understanding of this doctrine, but the church today could. Schieferdecker declared his whole hearted support to this article. This saddened Teacher Winter considerably, because he was afraid that Schieferdecker would ultimately lose all Lutheranism, if he would keep on holding such views. This same article Schieferdecker then took and showed to others of his congregation. Some accepted it as biblical, and others did not. Two opposing groups sprang up in the congregation. It was then decided that it would be best, to bring this question of chiliasm before the convention that year.[17] The request of the congregation to hold the convention in Altenburg was answered.

At ten O'clock the second convention of the Western District opened at Altenburg on the 10th of April. Since the president of the general body, Wyneken, could not be present at this convention because he had pulmonary fever, he could not head the opening devotion of the convention. However, C. F. W. Walther was present, representing his congregations in St. Louis. Pastor C. J. Gruber from Paizdorf, and Teacher Winter from Altenburg were present.[18]

According to custom, the president of the district, President Schieferdecker opened the convention with an address. In his address he again emphasized the importance of brotherly love in these conventions, and said that true unity could

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17. Koestering, Auswanderung, P. 164 ff.

18. Western District Report, 1856, p. 1 ff.

only proceed from complete adherence to the Scriptural truthes.[19] Judging from Schieferdecker's presidential address, with reference to his chiliastic views, we are again assured of his deep sincerity. It was not just a light matter with him. He was positive that chiliasm was taught in the Bible. He held not just a mere schwaermerish thought.

Two questions concerning chiliasm, which had been formulated by Schieferdecker with the congregations assent, were brought before the conference during its sessions. They were as follows: What stand does the Synod take with reference to Christ's second coming in regard to the universal conversion of the Jews, Christ ruling over all people and kingdoms, the mellenium, and other similar subjects. The second question was, does Synod consider holding such views devisive of church fellowship? Discussion on the first question then followed. A group, led by Schieferdecker, said that there would be a development of interpretation of prophecy because such later insight in prophecy had been promised by God through Daniel. Because of this reason, not a mere traditional exegesis could decide the question of last things. In opposition to this there was said by others, that there was no such development of interpretation of prophecy, but that Adam and Eve already had as much knowledge of God's eternal plan as did the theologians at the time of the Reformation. Furthermore, it was added by this group, that

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19. Western District Report, 1856, p. 6 ff.

prophecies could not truly be interpreted until after the fulfillment of the prophecy had taken place.[20]

When Romans 11, 25 and 26 were quoted in defense of the universal conversion of the Jews it was answered by others, that, the universal conversion of the Jews did not agree with the analogy of faith. Because, if all Jews would be converted before Christ's return, then it would be safer to become a Jew, than a Christian. It was pointed out that these passages referred to the elect of Israel, not to every Jew. Against this interpretation then was asked the question, why the word "myster" was used here, since it was not a mystery to anyone that there always would be some Jews converted all over the world. This was answered thus: the mystery consisted in this, though God had hardened the hearts of the Jews, and though they had asked God's wrath upon them for crucifying the Savior, yet some of them would still be saved.

The second argument that was voiced against those who held that universal conversion of Jews was not taught in Rom. 11, was that according to that interpretation the term "Israel" would have to be taken in a twofold sense, the first as referring to the Jews as a national group, and the second as referring to a spiritual group. That this dual meaning of the term "Israel" would be hard to understand by the Romans,

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20. Western District Report, 1856, p. 19 ff. All information on this convention is taken from this report, unless otherwise noted.

and thus Paul would not have used it, was also brought out. To this it was answered by the adherents of the interpretation that the universal conversion was not meant here, that it happened in many different cases in Scripture, that a single term has two different meanings in the same sentence, as for instance the word "flesh" in John 3, 6, and "foreskin" in Rom. 2, 26. It was also pointed out that it was clear to the Romans, that the double meaning of "Israel" was meant in Rom. 11, because Israel referring to the nation, in the one sense, and Israel, the people of God had been used often in Scripture.

As their third argument in favor of the total conversion of Jews, the exponents of the teaching under Schieferdecker pointed out that many church fathers and Reformation theologians as Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom, Luther, Hunius, Menzer, Balduin, Flacius, Meissner, Johann Gerhard, and others had held this view. Against this, the groups opposing Schieferdecker answered that, though Luther had held this view for a while, he had recanted it before he died. Gerhard, it was said, did not condemn the teaching of the universal conversion, but by no means accepted it either. Since both sides could quote good dogmaticians in their favor, it was brought out in the course of the discussion how very important it was not to rely on human authority, but to go back to Scripture for all proof.

The second interpretation of the passage, that supposedly taught the universal conversion of the Jews was, that God had dropped the Jews as His holy people, not for the sake

of droping them, but because He wanted this to redound to the salvation of the Gentiles.. The Gentiles should glory in their salvation therefore. But how much greater would their glorying be, if all Jews were also converted? The opposition to this, then said that if that interpretation were correct, it would infer the total conversion of all Gentiles and Jews on the basis of Rom. 11. That this inference was not Scriptural, was then pointed out on the basis of Hosea 3; 4,5, which was said does not necessarily refer to the very last days, but could refer to the last times, since Acts 2; 16,17 used the same expression "last times", referring to the time of the apostles. They interpreted ~~to the time of the apostles.~~ Rom. 11, as meaning, that gross idolatry would not be practiced by the Jews at the time of Christ. It was mentioned, that this was Luther's interpretation of Rom. 11.

Schieferdecker and his group also said that Leviticus 26 , 4 to 45 was referring to the conversion of all Jews. But this passage, the opposition held, referred to the Jews in the Babylonian Captivity and their return from that captivity, not to the universal conversion.

Acts 1, 6 to 8 was also discussed. One group, namely Schieferdecker and others, said that Christ had given His disciples a discourse on the kingdom of God. Later the disciples asked Him when He would start that kingdom of Israel. The disciples could not have had the false aspect of

the kingdom of Israel after Jesus had just finished talking to them on that subject. Christ also, did not tell them that their view was wrong, but only told them he could not tell them the time and the hour. With this interpretation Schieferdecker and his adherents wanted to show that Christ had an earthly kingdom of Israel in mind.

That this could not be true, was shown by the opposition. First of all, they showed that the disciples were erring in many things, and from Luke 24, 44 ff. that Christ never had a worldly kingdom in mind.

Besides these arguments many more were advanced from the floor in favor of the teaching that all Jews would be converted before Judgment Day. However, the opposing group, which was in the majority answered all these arguments on the basis of Scripture.

8 After that, the second question Schieferdecker and his congregation had asked of the convention was discussed, namely the question whether Christ would be ruling over all people. Ruling over all people was understood in such a way, that every person would honor and glorify Him. In favor of such a view, Psalm 67, 3 was quoted: "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee". Those who did not accept this interpretation, said that this referred to the present, not to the future, therefore this argument would not hold water.

Then the rule, that everything which glorified God, was Scriptural, but all that which minimizes the glory of God,

is antiscriptural was put forth. With this statement the chiliasts tried to prove that their teaching, which stated that Christ would rule over the whole earth, was glorifying God, and thus Scriptural. That this was not the case was shown by the opposing group. They said that God was not glorified at all, because, if it were true, then God's glory would be minimized since he had let all the heathen die during all these centuries already. Also in this question the chiliasts were shown the unscripturalness of their teaching.

Next the millenium proper was discussed at length. The belief, that Christ would rule the world for a thousand years was rejected for the following three reasons. In the first place, Scripture again and again tells us that the Church in the latter day will be a suffering Church, not a blooming organization. Yea, the last days will be so treacherous, that even the elect would fall away, if it were possible. In the second place, the Old and New Testament church teaches us plainly, that at Judgment Day all the dead will arise, as brought out in the Third Article. And finally, Scripture teaches that Judgment day will come as a thief in the night, therefore, there is no room for a millenium.

The convention then condemned chiliasm as, unscriptural, as one of Satan's lies and as a poison from hell. It was also shown that the system of a thousand years of Christ's kingdom on earth could not work. No matter where the adherents of such a view would start these thousand years, whether that was at Christ's ascension, at the time of Constantine, or

at the Reformation, they would run into trouble with church history. On the other hand, it was shown how well the Scriptural teaching would work out, taking Christ's kingdom as a spiritual kingdom. Satan would be free for a while, shortly before Judgment day. He would then gather all the heathen, Gog and Magog under which the convention understood the Turks, atheists and a revolutionary party, as also the papacy. However, that these forces were included under Gog and Magog was not pressed as a doctrine, but as a passing thought.[21] These powers then would tempt the Christians until the last day, when God would destroy them all with fire.

The great majority of the pastors and delegates noted that chiliasm was a false doctrine.[22] Only two members Schieferdecker and Gruber declared, that they were not convinced that chiliasm was antiscriptural. Two other members, one pastor and his lay delegate said that they were not prepared to give their decision yet, since the whole matter was comparatively new to them.[23]

In answer to the two questions raised by Schieferdecker and his congregation the following was then adopted by the conference. On the first question, what stand the Synod took with reference to Christ's second coming in regard to the

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21. Western District Report, 1855, p. 28.

22. Schieferdecker, Geschichte, p. 28.

23. Western District Report, 1856, p. 29.

universal conversion of the Jews, Christ's ruling over all people and kingdoms and the mellenium, this was answered. They condemned the teaching of a universal conversion of Jews before Judgment Day according to Rom. 11; 25,26, as an antiscriptural teaching, leading to many chiliastic views. Furthermore, they condemned every kind of chiliasm as an unscriptural teaching, since it uprooted the articles of faith as the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom, the universal resurrection from the dead, the teachings of Christ's coming for judgment, and the Judgment Day

On the second question, whether Synod considered holding chiliastic views as divisive of church fellowship, the convention answered: Even though Synod holds all forms of chiliasm as antiscriptural, yet it granted that a true Christian may fall into this wrong teaching. Because this may be the case, they decided that such chiliastic tendencies need not be divisive of church fellowship, as long as the person holding such views, does not teach or spread it. But, if there should be a case like that, the District held it as its duty, to try the utmost in showing that person the unscripturalness of his position.[24]

The congregation in Altenburg and their pastor, Schieferdecker, put more questions before the convention. They were:

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24. Western District Report, 1855, p. 24 ff.

may a person be a member of a congregation, which is affiliated with Synod, without being a member of Synod itself? And, may a congregation which is affiliated with Synod, expel any member because that member does not consider himself in affiliation with Synod? And, how much consideration should be given to weakness, and scruples of weak brethern etc? These questions were answered thus. As to the first one, Schieferdecker and his congregation had already agreed that every member of a congregation affiliated with Synod was also a member of Synod. To the second, the convention answered that it was the congregation's duty to try and show the individual who does not consider himself affiliated with Synod, that he actually is a member of Synod also. To the third, how much consideration should be given individuals because of weakness and scruples, the convention pointed out the great benefits that individuals and congregations received from affiliation with Synod; The convention also showed from Scripture, Acts 15, that membership in a congregation which is affiliated with Synod, cannot but be a part of Synod also. It was brought out that especially the laity should be glad that they can voice their opinions at the conventions, and that these decisions should be abided by. Probably these questions were asked by the congregation because some of its members had probably contemplated severing connections with Synod already at this time.[25]

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25. Western District Report, 1855, p. 30 ff.

Since the convention was held right in Altenburg, it is very probable that many of Schieferdecker's parishioners were present for the discussions on chiliasm. We may well suppose that the two factions were more set in their ways after the convention. Those on Schieferdecker's side were more opposed to Synod now than before, and those against chiliasm were more convinced of their rightful stand.

CHAPTER III

CONTROVERSY IN ALTENBURG

It now seemed as though all hope of reconciliation was gone. To make matters worse a series of articles on the book of Revelation appeared in Der Lutheraner. Pastor K. A. W. Roebbelen of Frankenmuth, Michigan as the author. In April of 1856 he concluded his exegetical series on Chapter 20, always speaking strongly against chiliasm, with a quotation from Luther that he did not accept the book of Revelation as being neither prophetic nor apostolic.[1] But Luther had not bound anyone's conscience to believe as he did. Roebbelen then adds, after the quotation from Luther, that though the book need not be accepted as apostolic or canonical, yet this should not detract from the high place it should hold among Christians. But, Roebbelen goes on and stated that no doctrine may be derived from any statements of the book.[2] This was more than Schieferdecker was willing to admit. The oppenents of chiliasm on the other hand felt that this was the death blow to chiliasm. That Schieferdecker considered the book an antilegomena is brought out later, but he could not agree with Roebbbelen that Revelation was not even canonical. If the book of Revelation could not be used to prove any doctrine, the props of chiliasm would be knocked out. Schieferdecker realized this. What confusion this daring

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1. Der Lutheraner, vol 12, p. 139.
2. Ibid., p. 140.

attack of Roebbelen on the canonicity of the book of Revelation was to produce becomes apparent when we read the accounts of the meetings which Schieferdecker held with his congregation. Schieferdecker tried hard to uphold the canonicity, and tried to refute Roebblen's audacious attack on Revelation. Schieferdecker was also convinced that the book was canonical, and so felt it his duty to tell his parishioners in a sermon. This sermon on the canonicity he preached on Pentecost Sunday.[3] He warned his congregation against the statement in the Lutheraner, and told them not to accept Roebblen's view as put forth in the Synodical paper. Immediately the two factions were up in arms again. It might be mentioned here that Schieferdecker did not mention chiliasm in his sermon at all.[4] A number of members of the congregation, in their great disgust for Schieferdecker sermon, wanted to call a voters' meeting that same Sunday afternoon. However, through the levelheadedness of one of the elders, this meeting was postponed with the promise that the board of elders would call on the pastor. This meeting then took place on the following Friday. Here the board wanted Schieferdecker to retract certain sentences of his sermon, those in which the pastor had preached against the Lutheraner. Schieferdecker, however, did not want to retract, and showed the board that John Gerhard had said the book of Revelation belonged to the canon. When the board and the pastor could not agree, Schieferdecker suggested that the voters meet the

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3. Schieferdecker, Geschichte, p. 30

4. Ibid.

following Sunday. This meeting took place on May 18th. Schieferdecker reported in his book, "The meeting was held, but, oh, what a bitter sentiment was expressed there, what accusations were heaped upon me".[5] The majority of the voters said that such a sermon against the Lutheraner was totally uncalled for. Emotions ran high, and confusion reigned supreme. It was quite a while before the assembly became quiet enough that Schieferdecker could speak. When finally he got the floor, he started to prove to his congregation that Revelation had always been considered canonical by the leading Lutheran dogmaticians, especially John Gerhard. Schieferdecker also told his congregation that he had deemed it his duty to warn his parishioners, especially when the canonicity of a certain book of the Bible had been attacked. Further it was stated by Schieferdecker that he had not attacked the Synod, nor the Lutheraner, but only the article of Roebbelen on the canonicity of Revelation. The congregation then calmed down. In a brotherly fashion they then decided that Schieferdecker should write an article for the Lutheraner in refutation of Roebbelen's article.[6] This Schieferdecker was willing to do.

Things began to look normal again in Altenburg. For the moment the parishioners went quietly back to their work. That Schieferdecker was still considered in good standing by his

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5. Schieferdecker, Geschichte, p. 30.

6. Ibid., p. 31.

brethren in the ministry may be seen from the fact, that when the Frohna Congregation dedicated their new church building in the early part of June, Schieferdecker preached the sermon for the afternoon service. Pastor Lehmann preached the sermon in the morning.[7]

In July, 1856, Schieferdecker's article refuting Roebbelen's appeared in the Lutheraner. Again, Schieferdecker quoted from John Gerhard, who had said, that throughout history the Book of Revelation had always been accepted as a canonical book by the leaders of the church, but as a book of the second degree by the ancient councils. Next Schieferdecker quoted men like Mentzer, Hafenreffer, and Schroeder who said that the book belongs in the canon, though there might be doubt as to the authorship, even as there is doubt concerning the authorship of some Old Testament books as Ruth, Esther, and Judges.

Schieferdecker said, the books of the Bible are in the class of anti-legomena, yet we may derive doctrines from these, since they are also inspired by the Holy Spirit. His proof for this he again takes from Gerhard. From Conrad Dietrich's Catechism Schieferdecker proved that even the apocraphal books of the New Testament (not so the Old Testament) since they contain nothing in direct contradiction to the canonical books, may be used to prove certain doctrines. How much more should not an antilegomena be useful in proving a doctrine!

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7. Der Lutheraner, vol. 12, p. 175.

Though the Epistle of James had been considered uncanonical by many, Schieferdecker pointed out that this widespread rejection never took place with reference to the book of Revelation. This book is very important to the Christians since is fortells the future of the Christian Church on earth.

Again Schieferdecker quoted Gerhard, who had proved from internal evidence of the book, that the apostle John is the author. First, from the introduction, when the author claims divine inspiration in the same manner, as he does in the Gospel. Secondly the style compares with that of the Gospel. Thirdly, the time and circumstances referred to in the book fit the description of secular writers of the age. Fourthly, the prophecies contained are very much like other prophecies in canonical books, especially Ezekial. Fifthly, the partial fulfillment of the prophecies have already appeared. Sixthly, the promise to Daniel, that the period of time when idolatry and tyranny were to rage is given in Revelation. Seventhly, the prophetic content is of such a high grandeur, that its authorship cannot be ascribed to human beings. Eightly, the purpose of the book fits in beautifully with the times. Else the latter New Testament church would be worse off than the earlier New Testament because it would have no guide through the darkness and tyranny of the anti-Christian period. Ninthly, the testimony of the ancient councils (Amyra 315,

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Carthage 397, Toledo 633) And fathers, as Justin, Iraeneous, Theophilus of Antioch, Malito, Bishop of Sardes, Athanasius, Tertullian, Cyprican, Hilory, Amrose, Augustine, and many others.

Again quoting from Gerhard, Schieferdecker met the arguments against the canonicity of Revelation. The first one is that the author of the Gospel and Epistle does not name himself as John the Apostle, as he does in the book of Revelation. Gerhard had answered this by saying that John mentioned himself as author in the book of Revelation because he knew that the canonicity of the book would be doubted in later years. He wanted to make sure that the book would be accepted as canonical. Because John is named as the author so often, Gerhard argued, we should have no doubt at all as to the canonicity of the book. Again St. John did this even as Daniel did in his prophecy. Next, there is a difference between Revelation and the Gospel history. The historical section of the Gospel was widely accepted as authentic, but the prophecies contained in the book of Revelation was not so widely accepted, so the author names himself again and again in this book. The name of theologian is given John, the author of Revelation. No other John received that name. John, however, received it because he so strongly taught the deity of Christ. The superscription in the oldest texts had the words, "The Revelation of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian".

The next argument against the canonicity is that there

are many terms, as for instance the words: light, love, darkness, truth, grace, etc., which are found in the Gospel of John and are not found in Revelation. This was answered with this, that the subjects matter treated in these two books are so extremely different. The third argument against the canonicity: St. John makes no reference in either his Epistle or Revelation or Gospel to the other books. As the first proof against this charge, Gerhard said, that Paul does not mention some of his other epistles either, therefore we cannot argue, because he didn't mention these other books, that therefore he didn't write the others. Argument number four was that, in the Gospels John uses literary Greek, but not so in Revelations. This was explained in the following manner: John has many references to Daniel's prophecies and this makes his style a trifle ponderous. However, Gerhard said, there nevertheless, is a great deal of similarity in style anyway. The fifth argument that some of the ancient Church fathers mention nothing of John as the author of Revelation, but mention him as author of the Gospel, was met in the following way. This proved nothing, but that the book belongs to the antilegomena. Besides, the majority of the ancient fathers and councils name John as author of Revelation. In fact, Eusebius, who was uncertain about the authorship, does not doubt the canonicity at all. Against the sixth argument, that the book is obscure, Schieferdecker said, that it was no more obscure that Ezekial or Daniel. If Revelation be

dropped, then those two books ought to be dropped too. Furthermore, it was pointed out that the obscurity consisted in the subject matter treated. Not all prophecies can be readily understood. This obscurity is taken away, when the prophecies are considered in the light of church history,— as for instance the faithfulness and patience of the Christians in times of persecution. The seventh argument that the content of the book pointed against John the apostle as author was also refuted. The argument was, that the church at Thyatira of which John speaks, was not founded till afte r John's death. According to Gerhard, this is explained in the following manner. If the founding of the Thyatira Congregation took place so much later than John's time, it refers to the second establishing, that it had already been established during the time of John the first time. And finally, Gerhard meets the attack of Bellarmine on Luther, that Luther had not considered Revelation a canonical book with this, that in Luther's introduction he so ably helps the reader of the book to the right understanding of the prophecies, that he could not have considered Revelation as a mere secular book, but as apostolic.

Schieferdecker closed his article with the hope that all who read Revelation will be able to say with Gerhard that it certainly is an apostolic and canonical book, and that all Christians may make use of it, especially in times of tribulation caused by the anti-Christ.[8]

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8. Der Lutheraner, vol. 12, pp. 177-180.

For a few weeks peace reigned in the congregation. However, at the following voter's meeting, the old sore was again rubbed. Schieferdecker was again accused of having attacked the Lutheraner and Synod openly in his congregation, without first talking to the editors of the Lutheraner, and officials of Synod.

During the following weeks, both sides tried to influence the undivided members of the congregation. At this time Schieferdecker began to take every opportunity he could to win adherents. There also was a group in the congregation which was not well disposed toward Synod.[9] Perhaps there were some in this group who did not fancy the idea at all that the Log Cabin Seminary was moved to St. Louis in 1849. Whatever the causes these people had to dislike Synod, Schieferdecker found a fertile ground among them to spread his views.

Another voter's meeting followed on July 20, 1856. In this meeting the question was asked whether the congregation wanted to ascribe to the statement made by the District Convention earlier in 1856 with reference to the questions that the congregation had put before the convention. The great majority answered yes. The minority then was asked to state other reasons for not wanting to subscribe. Some of those opposing the convention's statement said that they could subscribe to its statement, but did not like the manner in which the District condemned chiliasm. Others said they were still uncertain about the whole matter. Still another group accused

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9. Koestering, Auswanderung, p. 185.

Synod of popish fanaticism.[10] When the congregation noticed that matters would not improve, and since President Wyneken had heard of the controversy, he sent Professor Biewend and Pastor Schaller down there, to help clear things up. These two district representatives arrived in Altenburg on August 3, 1856.[11] Professor Biewend and Pastor Schaller met with both parties individually first. Then came the voter's meeting on August 5, 1856.[12] Here it was decided to discuss first of all, the canonicity of the book of Revelation, and then, whether the manner of Schieferdecker's attack upon the Lutheraner had been justified.[13] In the course of the morning's discussion, the group agreed on the following points: First, that they accept Revelation as a canonical book. Second, that the last article of Roebbelen in the Lutheraner did not accept Revelation as a guide and norm of faith, and that with such a statement Roebbelen was contradicting his own previous article on that book. Third, that it was Schieferdecker's duty to uphold the canonicity of the book of Revelation, though he did not practice the Christian law of love in the manner in which he upheld it. In the afternoon session the group assembled agreed on two more points. One, that Schieferdecker should not spread his

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10. Minutes of Altenburg Congregation, July 20, 1856, p. 162 in the folio collection. See also Koestering: Auswanderung, p. 187.

11. Koestering; Auswanderung, p. 187.

12. Altenburg Minutes, August 5, 1856, p. 164 f.

13. Koestering; Auswanderung, p. 188.

chiliastic views neither in public nor in private, and two, neither side should try to persuade the other of its rightful stand.[14]

This meeting seemed to have restored peace in the congregation for a while at least. Both groups did not try to influence the other. But, then the dark cloud appeared again. In the following voter's meeting the thought was voiced, that the preceeding meeting had made a false peace, that a peace which was not solely based on God's Word was no peace at all. So the whole question was thrown on the floor again. Schieferdecker then suggested that a committee be appointed to formulate plans for the next meeting[15] with reference to points which should be discussed. This meeting was then held. The report of the committee was read. It repeated the points that were agreed upon, when the two delegates from St. Louis were present, and added, that all who were no longer in agreement with them, need no longer do any debating on the question, because it would be useless.[16] A very heated discussion followed. Tempers ran high, and general confusion reigned. When Schieferdecker saw that nothing more could be accomplished, he left the meeting, because he thought that as pastor he should not be present in such a rumpus. One of the elders was then sent over

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14. Schieferdecker: Geschichte, p. 32.

15. Altenburg Minutes, September 22, 1856, p. 165.

16. Schieferdecker: Geschichte, p. 33 f.

to his house to call him back. Finally, he agreed to return.[17] By this time the group was more quiet, but still nothing was accomplished.

The next voter's meeting fell on the 22nd of October.[18] Schieferdecker was again accused of wrongly leaving the assembly at the last meeting. Schieferdecker tried to excuse himself on the Word of God, saying that God's house was a house of prayer, and not a place were heated arguments should take place. At this meeting also, a number of the members handed in their resignations, and said they no longer wanted to be under the pastoral care of Pastor Schieferdecker. No settlement was reached.

By this time things looked as though they could never be settled peacefully anymore. No longer were the discussions on a purely scriptural basis. Personal differences entered into the controversy more than ever. People were offended at the slightest moves made by either of the two opposing groups. In the early part of November, Roebbelen wrote a letter to the Altenburg Congregation. Very likely he had heard by this time of the commotion and disunity he had created with his article in the Lutheraner. In his letter to the congregation Roebbelen tried hard to restore unity by explaining his views on the book of Revelation, and stating that he had not meant

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17. Koestering: Auswanderung, p. 194.

18. Altenburg Minutes, October 22, 1856, p. 169; also Koestering: Auswanderung, P. 195.

to strike out Revelation from Scripture at all.[19] But it was too late. The terrible conglagration had already gone too far.

By this time Schieferdecker's stand on chiliasm must have been quite widely known in Synod. Another article on that subject appeared in the Lutheraner, written by Pastor Herman Fick. In his introduction he mentioned, that since there were still adherents to chiliasm, he thought it the duty of all Christians, to write on chiliasm, and study it, to find out whether it were scriptural or not. Then he limited his discussion to that chiliasm, which holds that, Christ will reappear on earth before Judgment day and rule the world with his almightyppower for 1000 years. But he said that this was not the only chiliastic teaching. Others were: Christ's reappearance will be a visible one; then the first resurrection of believers will take place; not only will the devil be bound, but the papacy also, and all enemies of God; universal conversion of Jews will take place; even nature will return to its pristine glory; all believers will rule the new world with Christ. There will be no hypocrits or unbelievers in this kingdom.

Rick said these teachings are not teneble according to the analogy of faith. To prove his point, he mentioned ten points to disprove chiliasm.

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19. Koestering, Auswanderung, p. 181 ff.

1) Nowhere else does Scripture teach a visible return of Christ for such a kingdom.

2) Christ taught us to await his return at any second.

3) According to Revelation the papacy will exist till Judgment Day.

4) The last days of the world will be terrible for Christians.

5) Christ's kingdom on earth will always be one of affliction.

6) There will always be hypocrites in the kingdom on earth.

7) Chiliasm does not make a distinction between the kingdom of the world, and Christ's Church, and between the kingdom of Grace and kingdom of glory.

8) Because it makes Christian faith and hope into something visible and temporal.

9) According to Scripture only one resurrection is spoken of.

10) The opposite of chiliasm is taught in Revelation 19 and 20.

This article also, did nothing to clear up the controversy in Altenburgh.[20]

Again a voter's meeting was called and held on November 23.[21] At this meeting Mr. Weinhold, a member, presented a paper in which he set forth his accusations against Schieferdecker. Briefly they are as follows: 1) That the pastor did not do

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20. Der Lutheraner, vol. 13, pp. 6-8, 10, 12, 15, 16, 24.

21. Altenburg Minutes, November 23, 1856, p. 171.

the right thing in attacking Roebbelen's article in the Lutheraner in the manner that he did. 2) That the pastor was knowingly creating two groups in the congregation. 3) That the pastor claimed he punished the congregation for their benefit when he walked out of the previous voter's meeting. 4) That the pastor had told Mr. Weinhold that he should read Revelation 20 and pray to God for the right understanding. Weinhold understood it thus: He would read it, and then also fall into chiliastic views so he would not read it and thereupon the Pastor was supposed to have lamented, that his parishioners wouldn't even take his advice anymore. 5) That the pastor thought he once said he wasn't sure about his chiliastic teachings, later said that one must believe in a millenium and in the universal conversion of the Jews and that Judgment Day could not come before those things had taken place.[22] After Weinhold had read his paper, Schieferdecker asked for more time in which he could think the accusations over. Three days were granted him. Schieferdecker also asked for the paper, so that he could study it closer. The meeting then adjourned. Schieferdecker walked home with the list of accusations. Soon after that, Weinhold came to the parsonage and asked for the paper again so that copies could be made. Schieferdecker then handed it over but made Weinhold promise to return it which Weinhold did. Tuesday came, and Schieferdecker had not received the paper yet, so he went to Teacher

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22. Schieferdecker: Geschichte, p. 36 f.

Winter's home, who was to make the copies. Winter told Schieferdecker then, that Weinhold had forbidden him to give the copy to Schieferdecker. The result was that Schieferdecker did not get the paper, on the basis of which he wanted to work out his defense.[23]

Koestering presents a slightly different story. He could not understand why Schieferdecker wanted to have time to prepare his defense. To an unbiased reader it seems entirely logical that Schieferdecker should be granted some time for preparation. Koestering mentions nothing of the trouble Schieferdecker had with the paper read by Weinhold. Didn't he mention this incident in order to smooth over the mistake made by Weinhold?[24]

On Wednesday[25] the annual meeting was held. All other business was dispensed with, even the election of officers for the following year. Of Schieferdecker's defense of the paper read by Weinhold nothing was said at all

In the afternoon session of this meeting Weinhold apologized for his actions in connection with the paper he had read in the previous meeting. It also was decided that the congregation defer action on this paper until after President Wyneken had come down to Altenburg.[25] This time the congregation tried to corner Schieferdecker in a different manner. Three questions were put to him concerning his stand

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23. Schieferdecker: Geschichte, p. 36.

24. Koestering: Auswanderung, p. 201

25. Altenburg Minutes, November 26, 1856, p. 173.

on chiliasm. The first one, how much of the crass chiliasm did Schieferdecker reject? He answered that he rejected all chiliasm rejected in the 17th article of the Augsburg Confession. When he was asked whether the Augsburg Confession also condemned the subtle chiliasm, Schieferdecker answered that it didn't. The second question, about what part of chiliasm Schieferdecker was still not clear, he answered that he was not sure whether the millenium would be a visible or invisible kingdom, whether the first resurrection would be a spiritual or physical, whether the number 1000 was a fixed time or not. However he was sure it was not just one day. Schieferdecker was certain on the following points: that the millenium would be Christ's kingdom with all believers, that it would take place on earth, not in heaven, and that the millenium would still be coming, since the anti-Christ was still ruling.[26] However, at this meeting nothing was accomplished either. The congregation then decided to call President Wyneken down to help them straighten out this affair. Wyneken asked the congregation to list the reasons for his coming. This the congregation did, or rather we should say, the anti-chiliastic group did. They were:

1. Schieferdecker had never agreed with Synod's stand on chiliasm.

2. Schieferdecker cannot be convinced that chiliasm as he holds it is anti-scriptural, and thus, could no longer be a good pastor.

3. Schieferdecker claimed that not all of his parishioners

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26. Koestering: Auswanderung, P. 202 f.

were far enough developed spiritually in order to understand chiliasm.

4. Schieferdecker was looking forward to the time when he could openly preach his chiliastic views.

5. Schieferdecker puts chiliastic thoughts in his sermons in connection with his sermons on the last times, and had been fostering a party spirit in his congregation.

6. Schieferdecker put the Judgment Day off until after the anti-Christ had been revealed.[27] When this letter was read to the voters, quite a fiery and heated meeting followed. Schieferdecker did not want it to be sent that way, and his opponents insisted it be sent just that way. The meeting was adjourned with this indicision.

The following evening another meeting was held. At this meeting the majority decided to send the letter to Wyneken with the above six points. Schieferdecker's followers, however, wrote another letter to Wyneken. This letter contained the following points briefly.

1) We cannot condemn our pastor because he interprets Scripture differently than Synod does.

2) We cannot condemn him as an un-Lutheran teacher because of his views, since many older dogmaticians held those same views.

3) We cannot bind our pastor to human interpretation of

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27. Koestering: Auswanderung, p. 209 ff.

Scripture.

4) We are satisfied with our pastor's promise not to teach chiliasm openly.

5) Our pastor had always kept his word with reference to this promise.

6) He did not try to influence others with his views on chiliasm.

7) He is not responsible for the continuance of the controversy.

8) He has not fostered the party spirit.

9) Our group is not the cause of the controversy.

10) Our pastor is a true "Seelsorger".

11) We see no reason why parishioners should sever their connection from our congregation because of our pastor.

12) Finally, we adhere to all canonical books, the Symbolical books of our Church, and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, also to the seventeenth article. Thirty nine members of the congregation signed the letter after it had been read in a voter's meeting.[28] This letter was sent to Wyneken.

In January of 1857 another article appeared in the Lutheraner on the universal conversion of the Jews. Old Lutheran dogmaticians were quoted against this teaching.[29]

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28. Schieferdecker; Geschichte, p. 44 ff.

29. Der Lutheraner, vol. 13, p. 84 ff., p. 97 ff.

In the second part, the author of the article met the arguments of a certain Pastor Vogelbach, the editor of Zeichen der Zeit, who was a strong exponent of this teaching.[30] In the next of these serial articles on this doctrine, the author went into detail concerning what Scripture said on this doctrine.[31] But this article did not seem to have any effect on Schieferdecker and his chiliastic followers.

Schieferdecker and Wyneken had been corresponding during this time. Wyneken tried to get Schieferdecker back on Scriptural grounds, but did not succeed. Towards the end of February, 1857, Wyneken saw his way clear to visit the smitten congregation. The first step which Wyneken took was a conference with Schieferdecker and the elders. During the discussion Wyneken noticed that he could not persuade Schieferdecker of his unscriptural stand. As a last resort then Wyneken suggested to Schieferdecker that he come up to St. Louis, where the whole question of chiliasm could be discussed with the clergy there. After Schieferdecker had a chance to think this suggestion over, he announced that he was willing to make the trip. When the congregation came together for the meeting the following day, President Wyneken announced his plan to them. Thereupon the meeting was adjourned.[32]

That same day Wyneken and Schieferdecker left for St. Louis. The discussion there lasted four days. Walther, Wyneken, and Schieferdecker were the chief consultants. In some of the sessions,

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30. Der Lutheraner, vol. 13, pp. 84 ff.; 97 ff.

31. Ibid., p. 105 ff.

32. Koestering: Auswanderung, p. 223.

however, Pastor Schaller and Prof. Biewend took part also. Since Schieferdecker was permitted to plan the outline of the discussions, he suggested that Rev. 20 be discussed and studied exegetically. The results of the discussions may be summed up in the following points:

1) that the text of Rev. 20 be accepted as God's Word;

2) that Rev. 20 be acknowledged as containing divine mysteries, which no one could interpret with complete sureness;

3) that no one should claim without doubt that the fulfillment of this prophecy had already taken place, or that it was yet to be fulfilled;

4) that, if on the basis of this and similar texts, anybody harbored hopes for better times for the Church in the last times, such hopes should not be classed as false doctrine.[33]

After this four day conference, Schieferdecker returned to Altenburg. Wyneken urged the congregation to keep the peace which had been established, and added that if difficulties would arise again, he would blame not Schieferdecker, but his opponents in the congregation. Peace reigned for a while. People who had stayed away from the Lord's table again attended. A feeling of normalcy returned, although with a measure of restraint, since some of Schieferdecker's strongest opponents did not believe that the controversy had been settled. His sermons were closely watched and criticized, but no chiliastic tendencies could be found. Both sides remained tense.

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33. Schieferdecker: Geschichte, p. 58 f.

When the time drew near that the Delegate Synod was to convene, a group of men on Schieferdecker's side sent in a protest to Wyneken because of the way in which chiliasm had been treated at the Western District convention in 1856. This was signed by seventeen members of the congregation.[34] Some of the members of the Frohna congregation sent a similar protest to Wyneken in St. Louis, informing him that they were not at all agreed with the District's stand on chiliasm and related subjects.[35]

During the course of the following months article after article appeared in Der Lutheraner treating the subject of chiliasm. One of these was again written by Hermann Fick. In this article he proved that the Prophet Zechariah was not a chiliast.[36] Another article contained a bit of ancient church history, dealing with the chiliasm of Dionysius' and Nepo's time. At Nepo's death, a man named Krakion came to be the head of the chiliastic party. The Church had been split, but Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria did not exert his authority and influence to condemn all these chiliasts, but rather pointed out their anti-Scriptural character, and won them over. The Lutheraner then commended the ancients, first the bishops, for talking with the chiliasts as brethren, and secondly the chiliasts, because after they had been shown their erroneous stand, they returned to the Church and orthodoxy. The author of this article ended with the words: "Let us do likewise."[37]

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34. Schieferdecker: Geschichte, p. 60.
35. Ibid., p. 63.
36. Der Lutheraner, vol. 13, p. 134.
37. Ibid., p. 166.

Another of these articles appeared in the Lutheraner in June, 1857. This article, of which the author is unknown, quoted from Luther 's Kirchen-postille, and showed that John 10, 1 does not refer to the second resurrection of the Old Testament believers, and that the devil brought this idea into the world, to confuse the believers. It also stated that, although some chiliasts explained this verse as referring to the conversion of all heathen shortly before Christ's return, Luther denied this by saying that the last times will be evil and that the Gospel will have to be preached more than ever, so that a few might be won. With these statements, the Lutheraner pointed out that Luther knocked the props out from under the chiliasts.[38]

The third article on chiliasm appeared in the Lutheraner in July of the same year. This article set out to prove that every form of chiliasm was condemned by the 17th Article of the Augsburg Confession. It stated, that the Lutheran chiliasts held that the Augsburg Confession condemned only a crass chiliasm, but not,as they put it, "a holy, spiritual, wonderful kingdom of a 1000 years." This, according to the article, is also condemned in the Augsburg Confession. The reasons given were:

1) chiliastic views are condemned by the Augsburg Confession because they are unscriptural. Older dogmaticians are again quoted to back up the statement;

2) the Augsburg Confession condemned all those who believe in the universal conversion of the Jews or heathen. This then, according to the article, also disproves the idea that the Church during the last times will be especially prosperous;

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38. Der Lutheraner, vol. 13, p. 167.

3) since a world kingdom of Christ before Judgment was condemned as unscriptural by the Augsburg Confession, all chiliastic views, also those held by the subtle chiliasts, were also condemned.

On the basis of these three points, the author of the article in the Lutheraner said that the Augsburg Confession condemned all forms of chiliasm.[39] All of these articles, however, did not change Schieferdecker's and his followers' view on chiliasm.

The time to chose the lay delegate for the Fort Wayne convention now came. The congregation chose Mr. Weinhold, one of Schieferdecker's strong opponents. Schieferdecker's followers voted for him, but with the understanding that Weinhold should not represent them in matters pertaining to chiliasm. Schieferdecker then added a clause on the identification card of Weinhold, that Weinhold did not represent the whole congregation on matters pertaining to chiliasm. The elders were to sign this statement, but refused. Schieferdecker and his group then held their own meeting and elected Mr. Popp from Frohna as their delegated. They also gave him an identification card stating the reasons for their actions with forty-five signatures on it of Altenburg and Frohna members.[40] Schieferdecker and Popp for one side, and Weinhold for the other, then started their journey to the Synod held in Fort Wayne in October, 1857.

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39. Der Lutheraner, vol. 13, p. 189.

40. Koestering: Auswanderung, p. 230 f.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONVENTION OF 1857

Schieferdecker was enthusiastically looking forward to the convention, still hoping, that his chiliastic views would be accepted by Synod. However, after looking at the events of the convention, we will see that he was doomed to disappointment.

The convention opened at nine o'clock on the fourteenth of October with a divine service in St. Paul's Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Twenty sessions were held in all, one in the morning, and another in the afternoon of each day. By the twentyfourth of October, the convention adjourned. Eighty-six voting pastors, fifty-four advisory pastors, and fifty-six voting delegates were present. Besides this number, there were also five pastors from other Synods and a number of visitors present for some of the sessions. It is interesting to note that Pastor Koestering was present, but Pastor Roebbelen was not.[1]

President Wyneken, according to custom, addressed the convention. During the course of his lengthy address, he mentioned that so far they had always been privileged to fight against a common enemy. This time, however, the convention had to tackle and enemy within their own boundries, because of chiliastic views. He lamented the fact, that even some of the brethren in the ministry had fallen into this unscriptural

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1. Synodal Bericht, 1857, p. 2 f.

teaching.[2] This paragraph of Wyneken's address certainly must not have sounded very encouraging to Schieferdecker. In his book he wrote, "One could already see from the Synodical address of the President (Wyneken) how much could be accomplished".[3] That must have been the beginning of Schieferdecker's hardest days. How had he not looked forward to seeing all the brethren at this convention in 1855 already, when the Western District convened! Yet, it was this body assembled in Fort Wayne that severed their connections from one who had helped organize the Synod ten years before.

After each District President gave his report, the convention immediately turned their attention to the problems of chiliasm as they were introduced to it by President Wyneken.[4] He recounted the questions that had been put to the Western District convention in 1855 by the Altenburg congregation, and the answers that the conference had given. Thereupon it was announced that certain individuals from the Altenburg and Frohna Congregations had sent in a protest concerning their delegate. However, it was decided that only duly appointed delegates could be given the floor, others only by permission.

Next, Pastor Gruber, Schieferdecker's father-in-law, had his letter presented in which he explained that he could not be present for the convention because of his declining health.

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2. Synodal Bericht, 1857, p. 12.

3. Schieferdecker; Geschichte, p. 66.

4. All information on this convention is taken from the Delegate Synod Report, 1857, unless otherwise noted.

Then he put forth his views on chiliasm in the following four points.

1) That according to Romans 11, there definitely will be a universal conversion of the Jews.

2) Though there are many different times when we may start dating the 1000 years of the millenium, yet this fact has not changed his mind as to the actuality of the coming of this period.

3) It is certain that Revelation 20, 10 refers back to the nineteenth chapter.

4) Revelation 20 definitely points to a chiliastic teaching. This Gruber backed up with the dogmaticians, Luther, Arndt, Spener, and Bengel. This letter was discussed verse by verse in the fourth session especially. The arguments that were advanced against these points were the same that had been brought out in all of the last discussions of chiliasm, so we need not repeat them again at this time. However, it is noteworthy to mention, that Schieferdecker was the only one to argue in favor of Gruber's views.

Most of the fifth and sixth sessions were taken up with the question of Roebbelen's article in the Lutheraner. As usually Schieferdecker spoke against the article, and defended his own stand of attacking the article in one of his sermons. A lengthy discussion followed. During the course of it, Walther remarked, that he accepted Revelation as apostolic, but that he felt he didn't have the power to foist his views on the rest of Synod, nor by his authority exclude any article from the Lutheraner

(referring to Roebbelen's article) especially not if it agrees with what Luther had written. After more discussion followed, the convention then passed the motion that the protests against Roebbelen's article had been uncalled for.

The remaining time left of the sixth session was spent in discussing these three points put forth by Schieferdecker.

1) The first Christians must have held that Christ's return would come at the end of the 1000 years.

2) He also held that the 1000 years were yet to begin, because the antiChrist was still powerful.

3) Even with that in mind, Christians should live as though Judgment Day would appear at any moment. Very strongly it was pointed out to Schieferdecker that the darker passages of Scripture had to be interpreted by the clearer ones. And thus the points he brought out fell to naught. This lengthy discussion was then closed with the motion that Schieferdecker be asked whether he believed that Christ's second coming could take place at any moment. Time was granted him till the next session, to formulate his answer.

In the seventh session he game his answer. In translation this is it. "On the question, whether Schieferdecker believed that Christ's second coming for Judgment Day may come today yet, Schieferdecker answered: That, though in comparing and taking notice of those prophetic passages which refer to the last things, I have come to the conclusion that not everything has been fulfilled which Christ wants to have come to pass to His Church

before the end of His kingdom of Grace, yet ~~Schieferdecker~~ I do not deem it impossible that the Lord may return at any moment, because I do not consider myself infallible in deriging at the meaning of those prophecies". Upon this statement some of the delegates present were happy, because they felt that Schieferdecker had renounced most of his chiliasm. On the other hand though, others felt that further steps should be taken because Schieferdecker had not definitely accepted an article of faith. This session was closed in reading a paper which discussed the chiliastic controversy and the way it was handled in Duke Ernst's country.[5]

In the next session Schieferdecker declared that he did not want to make his views an article of faith, but considered them Christian hope until the contrary would be shown him from Scripture. It was pointed out by some, that if it was Christian hope it also had to be Christian faith because the subject of Christian hope was at the same time Christian faith. This subject was debated for some time when fianlly he was asked whether he could with all sureness prove that Christ may return at any second. It was added, that only such things could be taught of which one was absolutely sure. This question Schieferdecker answered in the affirmative. He was then asked whether he still insisted on his chiliastic views since he

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5. Der Lutheraner, vol. 14, nos. 8 and 9.

could not prove them with absolute surety, and also because they were opposed to a definite article of faith. Thereupon Schieferdecker answered that he was not ready yet to give up his chiliastic hope. The convention decided to give him more time to think it over. For the remaining time of this session the convention turned its attention to Pastor Gruber's letter. Synod's answer may be found under Beilage C, page 86 ff. In this letter the Synod told Gruber in a brotherly manner, that his arguments in favor of chiliasm were wrong on the basis of Scripture.

In the fourteenth session the discussion with Schieferdecker was opened again. Schieferdecker now presented his answer to the question put to him, concerning his belief in the teaching of chiliasm. Briefly he declared, that he adhered to the fundamental doctrine of Christ's second coming for judgment, resurrection of the dead, and that the lot of the Christians would be one of hardship and sorrow through many temptations until Judgment Day. Furthermore he declared that the Church may await Christ's return at any moment, and that Judgment Day may come at any second. All he said about chiliasm in this confession was, that he considered it a personal hope, and would not foist it upon anyone else. It seemed to some now as though the whole controversy was over. Others, however held that if Schieferdecker really believed what he said, then he would also have to discard his chiliastic views. Since he did not discard those views, it was held, that he either did not realize that he was deceiving himself, or else he was trying to deceive the assembly.

The former was agreed to be the case here. Next Synod unanimously adopted the resolutions put forth by the Western District a year earlier. A committee was formed to formulate questions to be put to Schieferdecker to find out still better just where he stood. These questions Schieferdecker was to answer in writing.

These questions were answered by Schieferdecker in the next session. On the first one, whether Christ's church would remain an invisible church until Judgment Day, Schieferdecker answered yes, if it could be held also that in the last times the Christians would be victorious over Christ's enemies. Question two was, will all the dead, believers and unbelievers, without exception, arise at the same last day? Schieferdecker answered in the affirmative, but added that he could not subscribe to the clause, without exception. On the third question, whether Christ would return visibly on this last day, expressly and solely for the purpose of judging all people without exception, Schieferdecker again answered a yes, if he could still hope in a previous return of Christ before Judgment, the manner not being known. The fourth question was asked, whether all chiliastic views not covered under the first three points were opposed to the seventeenth article of the Augsburg Confession. The fifth question Schieferdecker was asked, was whether he would admit that he had erred, and whether he would now subscribe to the resolutions of the Western District. In the first place he said, that he had never

held crass chiliastic views and had opposed the Western District resolutions, because he had found it impossible to deny something which he considered doubtful. The final question put to Schieferdecker was whether he considered it of utmost importance to report this confession on the preceeding five questions to his congregation. In answer, he expressed his willingness to put down the same confession before his congregation. However, he added that his conscience was not accusing him of false doctrine.

The following session was spent in considering Schieferdecker's answers. The convention was not at all satisfied with the answers. They wanted a plain yes or no, and deplored the fact that Schieferdecker had always added these clauses. It was then brought out, that since he had not answered all the questions with a plain yes, his answer had to be taken to say no, since they could not be answered with reservation. Finally, since nothing else could be accomplished, the convention decided to put further action on the case into the hands of a committee. The district presidents, pfofessors of the colleges, and one delegate from each district comprised this committee. This committee met.

At the next session they reported, that since Schieferdecker was casting aside articles of faith in favor of his chiliastic views, he was no longer on the same footing of faith with Synod and that Synod therefore deemed it necessary

to withdraw the hand of fellowship from him. After a short discussion the following motion was passed.

> "Synod has realized that Rev. Schieferdecker does no longer stand on the same faith with them, and therefore feels necessitated to sever the Synodical connection with him."

President Wyneken then turned to Schieferdecker and briefly admonished him, and warned Synod against falling into another controversy like that. Then Schieferdecker spoke. He said that through all these discussions he had wrestled with himself, whether he was actually overthrowing articles of faith with his chiliastic views or not. He also stated that it was only his conscience which did not permit him to submit to the teachings of the Synod. He closed his remarks with the request that he be reaccepted into Synod whenever he realizes his error. This request was granted him. Upon C. F. W. Walther's[6] suggestion, the session in the following afternoon was opened with a litany, the pastors and delegates taking part on their knees.[7]

So ended the Synodical convention of 1857 for Pastor Schieferdecker. He left Fort Wayne that same day.[8] Feelings must have run high. Some felt regret towards the things that

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6. Schieferdecker: Geschichte, p. 84.
7. Synodal Bericht, 1855, p. 48.
8. Schieferdecker: Geschichte, p. 84.

had passed; Others felt a sense of having accomplished something for God. That Schieferdecker's chiliastic views were unscriptural is not hard to see from the statements he made both at the Western District Convention in 1856, and also at the General convention at Fort Wayne in 1857, yet, to a certain extent we must admire a man like Schieferdecker. He had the courage to go against the stream, while everyone else was swimming with the current. It is just too pathetic, that this man had lost himself in error.

It is interesting to note that the Western District met separately in connection with Synod in Fort Wayne. A rare historical source provides us with the information that the Western District met at this irregular time. They held various sessions, some during the days that Synod convened, and others after the general convention had adjourned. Of chiliasm nothing is mentioned. However, we note there that the Altenburg Congregation asked the District to help them straighten out their affairs. Another item of interest in these minutes is the regular election of district officers. Pastor Schaller was elected president in Schieferdecker's place.[9]

That Schieferdecker took his expulsion from Synod very hard may be seen from the following excerpt from his book.

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9. Because these are the minutes of an irregular meeting, they were never printed. It is fortunate that they have beeen preserved by Concordia Historical Institute where they may be found today under the Western District Department. This folio volume contains the minutes from May 1, 1855 to 1889.

> "With nothing but gloom in my mind, I returned home on the 29th of October. The Reformation festival lay before us. For the last time, though members of the board of elders tried to prevent me, I could enter my old pulpit, from which I had preached God's Word according to my best knowledge and conscience for eight and one-half years. Once more I could testify that I agreed with the teachings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Once more I could refresh myself with the congregation at Luther's Reformation hymn, 'A Mighty Fortress is Our God' ".[10]

A statement like that brings out the deep sincerity of the man. He did not hold his erroneous views just to be stubborn and obstinate, but because he felt conscience bound and positive that chiliasm was taught in Scripture.

Weinhold's request that Synod help the congregation in Altenburg with further advice was granted. For this purpose a committee was appointed which consisted of the new district President Schaller, and Professor Biewend.[11] On the day after Reformation Day the congregation met with these two men. Reports of the Synod's proceedings were given by Schieferdecker and Weinhold. Then the congregation was asked whether they approved of the expulsion of their pastor from Synod. The vote taken was forty-nine members agreed, and twenty-six disagreed.[12] Professor Biewend in his report to Synod[13] says two-thirds were in favor, and a third were opposed. Koestering however, says that forty-nine were in favor and only twenty-four were opposed, and that seven were

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10. Schieferdecker: Geschichte, p. 85.
11. Koestering: Auswanderung, p. 239.
12. Schieferdecker: Geschichte, p. 87.
13. Der Lutheraner, vol. 14, p. 89.

not ready for a vote yet. He adds, that in the next day, one of the seven voted in favor of expulsion, raising the total to fifty.[14] Though most of the other original minutes of the Altenburg Congregation were in the hands of the writer of this paper, just these important minutes were not. They were not to be found among the folio containing the minutes from April 1846 to May 1858.[15] The minority with Pastor Schieferdecker were put out of the congregation.

Professor Biewend reported[16] that Gruber from Paitzdorf, who had also come to Altenburg at this time recanted his chiliastic views after a thorough discussion. However, he resigned from office on November 5, 1857.[17] His son, pastor Th. Gruber, who had been his assistant at Paitzdorf accepted a call to Perryville, Missouri.[18]

The chiliastic views had made quite a stir in those Saxon settlements. Some pastors gave up their charges on their own accord, others were forced to give their's up. The congregation in Altenburg had many long tedious meetings, trying to depose their pastor.

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14. Koestering: Auswanderung, p. 240.

15. Sincere thanks go to pastor A. Vogel, present pastor in Altenburg, Missouri, for the loan of these minutes. They are found in the archives of the congregation in Altenburg.

16. Der Lutheraner, vol. 14, p. 90.

17. Western District, 1858, p. 7.

18. Ibid.

On November 2, 1857, Schieferdecker and his followers organized the Immanuel Congregation. Soon after certain of the Frohna Congregation joined them. At first they held their services in homes, but soon, after seven weeks, dedicated a new building, which later served them as a school.[19]

In New Wells also, the congregation which Schieferdecker had served for a while, a controversy resulted. A group of them joined Schieferdecker's group as a sister congregation.[20]

But, the storm raged for a while in Altenburg. Since the group loyal to the Missouri Synod kept the church properties, Schieferdecker felt himself entitled to the parsonage. He remained there, also because he could find no other place to live. He was ordered to leave by the congregation with the threat, that they would sue if he wouldn't leave. Since Schieferdecker did not leave, the Missouri group sued him around Easter of 1858, but lost the case.[21] Soon after they sued again. The court ruled this time, that Schieferdecker had to leave. Schieferdecker then appealed to a higher court. This whole procedure lasted almost one year. This court decided that Schieferdecker had to leave the parsonage, since he no longer was the pastor of the congregation that owned it.[22] During the time that these

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19. Schieferdecker: Geschichte, p. 88 f.

20. Ibid., p. 89.

21. See Appendix for further information on this case: Altenburg Minutes, March 28, 1858.

22. Koestering: Auswanderung, p. 246 f.

court cases were going on, the Altenburg Congregation called Pastor J. P. Beyer from Memphis Tennessee. He was installed on Good Friday, 1858, by Ch. H. Loeber.[23]

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23. Der Lutheraner, vol. 14, p. 144.

CHAPTER V

SCHIEFERDECKER IN THE IOWA SYNOD

When Schieferdecker was expelled from the Missouri Synod, he was expelled from a group which he had helped organize ten years earlier. These men had been his friends. With a number of them he had started a friendship already in Germany, before they emmigrated to America. These men he had helped in organizing Synod. Later when Synod was split into four districts it was the Western District which elected him its first President. Among them he had labored in good times, and in times of distress. In this group he had admonished his brothers, and had been strengthened in the faith by them. Now every relation had been severed. After his expulsion, he joined the Iowa Synod. In order to better understand into what kind of a group Schieferdecker had come, let us briefly review the early history of the Iowa Synod.

Difficulties had arisen between the Buffalo Synod and the Missouri Synod on the doctrine of the Church and Ministry. Attempts were made to heal this wound, but a solution could not be found. Grabau went to Germany to air his views there, in opposition to Missouri's stand.[1] Grabau, through his actions in the conferences with the German

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1. R. Suelflow: The Relations of the Missouri Synod with the Buffalo Synod up to 1866, p. 196, S.T.M. thesis, Concordia Seminary, 1945.

theologians, was able to poison them against Missouri. He also was able to turn Loehe, who had helped the Missouri Synod so much in its infancy, against Missouri. Loehe was afraid, it seems, of losing control over the men he had sent over to America, particularly to the Michigan colonies, so he had asked them not to accept a call outside of Michigan. For this reason Loehe also located the Pilgerhaus which he supported in Saginaw, and not in Fort Wayne, where the Missouri men wanted it. Because of these reasons, a split between Loehe and Missouri occured. On account of the split, the two pastors who were still loyal to Loehe, namely Grossmann and Deindoerfer left Michigan and settled in Iowa[2] in the fall of 1853.[3] At first the difference between these two Loehe men and Missouri was only on the doctrines of the Church and Ministry. The difference on chiliasm came in later.[4] The Iowa Synod was organized on August 24, 1854 by G. Grossmann, S. Fritschel and J. Deindoerfer at St. Sebald, Iowa.[5] Many and variant were the disputes Missouri had with Iowa, after that Synod was organized. It was an entirely different camp than Missouri. It was this body that Schieferdecker joined after his expulsion from his

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2. Suelflow: Op. Cit., p. 110.

3. G. Fritschel, Aus den Tagen der Vaeter, p. 122.

4. Deindoerfer: Denkschrift zur Fuenfunzwanzigyaehrigen Yubelfeier der Ev. Luth. Synode von Iowa, p. 19.

5. Ibid.,p. 1.

Missouri brethren. Just why he joined the Iowa Synod is not stated definitely, since at the time he joined, it was not openly chiliastic. But, Iowa sympathized with Schieferdecker when he was expelled from Missouri.[6] The main differences in these years between Missouri and Iowa consisted in the question whether the confessions should be suscribed to quia or quatenus; whether the Pope was the anti-Christ; whether there were teachings which should not be treated as devisive of church fellowship; and finally the question of chiliasm.[7]

Ever since the rift between Loehe's men and Missouri came into being, Grabau courted the Loehe men, and sought to come into doctrinal agreement with them. He made a personal visit to Grossmann in September, 1855[8] for this purpose. The discussion that followed concerned the doctrines of the Church and Ministry in which the two leaders found that they agreed.[9] At the convention of the Buffalo Synod in 1856, they decided to send two delegates to the next convention of the Iowa Synod,[10] This happened after Pastor Grossmann and S. Fritschel had been present at the Buffalo convention in 1856.[11]

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6. G. Fritschel: Geschichte, p. 238.
7. Ibid.
8. Quellen Und Dokumente Synode von Iowa, p. 136
9. Op. Cit., p. 154 ff.
10. Fuenfter Synodal-Brief, 1856, p. 47.
11. Quellen Und Dokumente Synode von Iowa, p. 140.

During the years that followed up till 1856 no mention was ever made of chiliasm. The Buffalo Synod accused Iowa of teaching that false doctrine. This, Buffalo stated, traced back to Loehe, who had already believed in a universal conversion of Jews in 1853 when Grabau visited him in Germany. It seems as though the Iowans had received their chiliasm from Loehe's men who were coming over from Germany around this time.[12] Relations between Buffalo and Iowa seemed a bit strained especially since Grabau claimed that the Iowa men had assured him in 1856 that they held no chiliastic views.[13]

On April 10 to 16, 1858, two Grabau delegates met with the Iowa Synod. Chiliasm was discussed with the two Grabau delegates. The following points came under discussion.

1) The anti-Christ is not the papacy itself, but an individual person.

2) This kingdom of the anti-Christ will come immediately before Christ's coming.

3) At the time of the second coming of Christ (to destroy the anti-Christ) the universal conversion of the Jews has begun at least. Israel will then return to the land of its fathers.

4) At the end of three and one-half years Christ will appear to destroy the anti-Christ, and to organize the millenium.

5) At the beginning of the millenium the first resurrection

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12. Sechster Synodal-Brief, 1860, p. 4 f.

13. Op. Cit. 1860, p. 5.

will take place, which will be a physical resurrection.

6) They reputed, as did also the Augsburg Confession, before the universal resurrection a few saints would start an earthly kingdom, and destroy all heathen.

7) They held that there would be sin in the millenium and since there would be sin, they held that the Chruch would be a suffering Church until the end of days.

8) Between the end of the millenium and Judgment Day there will be a period when Satan will be loosed, and lead astray many peoples. That is the time of Gog and Magog.

9) After that the end of the world will come, with its resurrection of the dead, the judgment, and the destruction of heaven and earth with fire.[14] That these nine points of Iowa on chiliasm were not much different from Schieferdecker's may be readily seen. Just how great a part Schieferdecker played in formulating these points can not be ascertained, since the Iowa proceedings of 1858 were not available to the writer. The Buffalo delegates wanted to have Iowa promise not to preach this chiliasm openly, nor teach it, but this promise was not given to the delegates.[15] The controversy went on between Buffalo and Iowa on the question of chiliasm. Iowa considered the question of fine chiliasm as one open question, since, as they held, it was not rejected in the Augsburg

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14. G. Fritschel: Quellen Und Dokumente, p. 156; See also Sechster Synodal-Brief, Buffalo Synod 1859, p. 61 ff. concerning these points.

Confession.[15] In the Synodical Convention of the Buffalo Synod of 1859, we can see that Buffalo stood very much on chiliasm as did Missouri. However, we need not go into this controversy, it suffices to know that Iowa had already had its chiliastic hopes before Schieferdecker joined.

In August of 1861,[16] the Lehre und Wehre carried an article against the chiliasm agreeing with an article set forth in "Neuen Zeitblatt" by Dr. K. K. Muenkel. This article, written by Dr. Sihler[17] condemned chiliasm again, and pointed the great undermining influence it had on chiliasm. However, Sihler mentioned no particular group which taught chiliasm. The Iowa Synod felt struck. In his opening address at the Iowa Synod's convention in 1861, President Grossmann touched on this accusation, having felt, that the Iowa Synod had also been attacked by Sihler's article. On the point made by Sihler that a person having chiliastic tendencies could not remain in faith, Grossmann said that no one could be a better judge of Iowa's faith, than Iowa themselves. He also stated, that they did not subscribe to the crass chiliasm, rejected by the Augsburg Confession, but only to the fine chiliasm. On the basis of that he concluded in this point, that they were still sound Lutherans.[18] Again we note, that Schieferdecker

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15. Op. Cit., p. 262 ff.
16. Lehre und Wehre, 1861, p. 202 ff.
17. Synodal Bericht, Iowa 1861, p. 12.
18. Op. Cit. p. 17 f.

was not present at this convention.[19]

In the Synodical convention of Iowa, held at St. Sebald, Iowa in 1864[20] Schieferdecker was present.[21] Pastor Doederlin, who had been absent from these conventions for some time was present too. He had come for the express purpose to find out just where Iowa stood in doctrines of open questions, with special reference to chiliasm among others. The order of business of the day was dropped, and Doederlin was answered. The convention explained to him, that, on the basis of their remarks in the 1858 convention, no one could accuse them of teaching chiliasm. But they did not deny, that the fine chiliasm was there. They pointed out, that Luther had not rejected the fine chiliasm either, and so the fine chiliasm was not rejected by the seventeenth article of the Augsburg Confession. They added, that this was exactly the stand that the Iowa Synod took. However, Doederlin was positive that the Augsburg Confession rejected all forms of chiliasm. When Iowa could not convince him, that it did not, he left that body.[22]

At this same convention they set down their official teachings on chiliasm, so that no one could accuse them of teaching it, as they said. They declared, that they never had intended to make chiliasm and a universal conversion of the Jews an

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19. Op. Cit., p. 4.

20. Iowa Synodal Bericht, 1864, p. 1.

21. Op Cit., p. 2.

22. Op. Cit., p. 32 ff.

official teaching. The discussion of chiliasm at the 1858 convention did not mean that Iowa wanted to set up a doctrine, but they only wanted to find out what divergent opinions they had in their ranks. They decided, that variant views on chiliasm were not devisive of church fellowship, and considered the question of the universal conversion of Israel and the millenium as exegetical and theological problems. To the following points the convention rejected unanimously.

1) The millenium in which the spiritual kingdom of Christ will be turned into a worldly and secular kingdom.

2) The teaching, that the church at that time would not be essentially and especially in doctrinal agreement.

3 3) The teaching that at that time Christ would use another means for bringing people to Salvation.

4) The tendency of the enthusiasts who are not satisfied with the present suffering church,,to hope for a millenium.

5) Every teaching which does not agree with justification by faith, the way of Salvation, and the means of grace. However, they agreed to continue teaching that chiliasm which, as they thought, was not forbidden by the Augsburg Confession.[23] Also at this convention President Grossmann reported that he had visited Schieferdecker in Altenburg in his official capacity[24]

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23. Iowa Synodal-Bericht, 1864, p. 35 ff.

24. Ibid., p. 3.

Schieferdecker had also gained some prominence at this convention. He was put on the election committee.[25] Teacher Fr. Doerfler, it was reported by Grossmann, had joined the Missouri Synod.[26]

In 1867 the Iowa Synod met again, this time in Toledo, Ohio. Among other things, they decided to get together in a colloquy with Missouri. The Northern District of Missouri that time met at Adrian, Michigan, in a delegation was sent, which was to inquire about the possibilities of such a colloquy. Both sides were in favor of a colloquy.[27]

This meeting between the two Synods was held at Trinity Church, Milwaukee, from November 13 to 19.[28] The two sides first of all decided on a common starting point. Though Missouri wanted to begin the colloquy with the discussion on chiliasm on the basis of Scripture, the Iowans wanted to start discussions on the basis of the Symbolical books. Missouri gave in, when Iowa showed them from an article in Lehre und Wehre[29] that among Lutheran bodies a doctrinal discussion should be held on the basis of the Symbolical books, and not Scripture. After a Referat from the Iowa Convention of 1858

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25. Op. Cit. p. 43.

26. Op. Cit. p. 3.

27. Fritschel; Geschichte, p. 242.

28. All information on this colloquy, unless otherwise stated is from the Oeffentliches Colloquium abgehalten vom 13. bis zum 19. November A.D. 1867, in der Ev. Luth. Dreienigkeits-kirche zu Milwaukee, Wisc. zwischen der Vertretern der Ev. Luth. Synode von Missouri, Ohio und Anderen Staaten, und der Ev. Lutherischen Synode von Iowa.

29. 1855, p. 67.

was read, putting forth Iowas views on the Symbolical books, on which both, Missouri and Iowa decided that everything found in the Symbolical books is symbolic.

Next in line, the colloquists turned their attention to the question of open questions. Iowa considered those questions open questions, which were not discussed in previous confessions, as the eschatologic questions. Upon further discussion, Iowa agreed, that only those points which were not taught or denied in the Bible could be considered open questions.

The time to discuss chiliasm came. On the basis of the old Iowa Synodical reports this discussion was introduced. The reports that were mentioned especially were those from the years 1858, 1859, and 1861. The points discussed were:

1) The difference in the chiliasm of the anabaptists and Iowa, 1858.

2) The difference in the degree of Scripturality of various doctrines, 1858.

3) The millenium should be taught, because it belongs into the whole plan of salvation, 1859.

4) The chiliasm of Iowa is the same as that of Schiefer-decker, and thus they do not want the name enthusiastic chiliasts, but Scriptural chiliasts, 1861.

5) Christ will return visibly at the end of the destruction of the anti-Christ, 1858.

6) The beginning of the millenium is marked by the coming of Christ, the first resurrection, and the destruction of the

anti-Christ, 1858.

7) The passages, Acts 1, 7; 3, 20. 21; Cor. 11, 15; Zach. 8, 21-23; Isaiah 2, 2-3; 65, 18-25; and Ez. 37 were quoted as proving the chiliastic teachings, 1861

8) As soon as Christ has destroyed the anti-Christ, Satan will be bound, most of his powers will be taken away, and the Lord will begin his millenium, 1861.

9) His kingdom need not necessarily be of this world, 1861.

10) The naming of three and one-half years in connection with the millenium.

11) Schieferdecker's crasser chiliasm, which claims that not only will the anti-Christ be destroyed, but also all forces opposing Christ.

On those points Iowa declared, that:

1) The fulfillment of Rev. 20 still lies in the future.

2) The five points of the 1864 convention were again rejected.

3) As to the accusations made against Iowa on the basis of the 1858 convention report, Iowa answered: a) that it contains certain sections which might be misunderstood. As for instance, it would be better to speak of a ruling of a 1000 years by the Saints, instead of a kingdom of a 1000 years, or as saying that Satan's binding would be absolute; b) That the passages, Acts 1, 7; Acts 3, 20 had been given up by them as proving the millenium; c) They withdrew from their former stand and now said, that Rev. 19 does not refer to the durative

return of Christ, but to a passing one; d) That they felt unjustly accused of their stand, that Rev. 20, 4 could not refer to a visible resurrection of saints and martyrs.

4) On Schieferdecker's chiliasm they said, that he did not hold to the crass kind, as was claimed by Missouri, but held to the fine type.

These differences were next discussed and compared by the two groups, from their own writings. The points under discussion were:

1) Total conversion of Israel which Missouri did not hold at all, adhering to the Augsburg Confession. Iowa said it is immaterial whether you believe it or not.

2) Missouri said the Pope is the anti-Christ in the strictest sense of the term. Iowa said it is indefinite which particular person it is, but whoever he is, he will be manifested and destroyed by Christ.

3) One who has been instructed and still denies that the Pope is the anit-Christ is not a Lutheran, much less a Christian. Iowa said one need not be so definite.

4) Missouri declared it as compromising with chiliasm when someone says the fulfillment of Rev. 20 still lies in the future, this with reference to Schieferdecker's belief. Iowa said it is Lutheran enough to say that chapter still lies in the future.

5) Missouri said <u>every</u> type of chiliasm is condemned by the Augsburg Confession also with reference to what Schieferdecker had held. Iowa said not every form was rejected by the

Augsburg Confession.

6) The resurrection of all believers, without any exceptions, will take place on Judgment Day. Iowa said, it is not at all impossible that some of the saints should arise before Judgment Day.

Some more points brought out by Missouri against Iowa's stand were: namely that there would not be a twofold visible appearance of Christ, because that teaching would militate against the analogy of faith, and that there would not be a twofold bodily resurrection from the dead, since this teaching too, militated against a fundamental article of faith. Furthermore it was pointed out that Rev. 20 may not be used as a sedes doctrinae because Rev. was a prophetic and emblematic book.

Since the Iowa colloquists had to attend a meeting in Fort Wayne, the colloquy was cut short. However, on the basis of what had been discussed, Missouri said that they could not go into fellowship with Iowa. It was deplored that time had been so short, and that not all points could be discussed in detail. The hope, nevertheless, was expressed, that the two groups could get together again at some future date for further discussions. The committee representing Missouri consisted of C. F. W. Walther, Dr. W. Sihler, Chr. Hochstetter, A. Huegli, K. Koch, C. Wassermann, Fr. Stutz, and G. Bierlein. Iowa's committee was comprised of G. Grossmann, Sigmund Fritschel, Gottfried Fritschel, and Fr. Becker.

When reading through the arguments for chiliasm as presented by the Iowa Synod at this colloquy, one cannot but note the great similarity between them and Schieferdecker's position as he had expressed them earlier in his relation with the Missouri Synod. But to claim that Schieferdecker was responsible for the views of Iowa is entirely unfounded. Iowa's chiliasm antidates Schieferdecker's entrance into that Synod. However, chiliasm seemed to be the new doctrine in vogue among the laxer Lutheran bodies at this time, also in Germany.

In 1873 the Iowa Synod met one of its gravest periods of crisis. The unrest had started in 1870 already though it was not noticed at that time. Because of various causes, as for instance, the doctrinal stand of Iowa, and the general trend of the times, to organize into larger bodies. The Iowa Synod met in this year at Davenprot, Ohio.[30] Here the district was split into the Eastern and Western Districts. Also at this meeting the differences between Iowa and Missouri were discussed. Iowa then formulated its position in the Davenport Thesis. The constitution was also changed, to clarify certain terms, on the instigation of Schieferdecker and Klindworth.[31] Doubts were already raised at this convention, whether it had been wise to change the constitution thus.[32] The older pastors, who had been trained at Neuendettelsau, wished to adhere to the doctrines of their teachers in that institution,

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30. G. Fritschel: Geschichte, p. 243.

31. Op. Cit., p. 244.

32. Deindoerfer: Denkschrift, p. 3.

while the younger group of pastors was very strongly leaving the newly organized Synodical Conference.[33]

In 1874 Schieferdecker had had a conference with Dr. Walther at Ottowa Lake, where Schieferdecker was pastor at this time.[34] Things were lining up for a mass going over from Iowa to Missouri. Much propaganda was also produced for this going over into Missouri.[35]

After this unrest and smoke was in the air, Iowa held its Synodical Convention in 1875 at Madison, Wisconsin, from the 27th of May to June 2nd. Among the names of the pastors present, we find many that later joined either the Wisconsin or the Missouri Synod. Schieferdecker was present, and was one of those who preached at one of the services in connection with the convention.[36] President Grossmann himself was not

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33. Neve: A Brief History of the Lutheran Church in America, 2nd edition, p. 371.

34. Fritschel: Geschichte, p. 245.

35. Ibid., p. 246. It is interesting to see that at this same time, when Schieferdecker was making provision to return to the Missouri Synod, Pastor Kilian from Texas was held for a while on chiliastic bonds. But soon on the basis of the experience the Western District men had gathered in their controversy with Schieferdecker in 1856, Kilian was shown on the basis of Scripture that chiliasm was wrong. Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly, vol. XVII, no. 1, p. 15.

36. Iowa Synodal Bericht, 1875, p. 31.

able to attend this convention, but he had sent in his address, which was ready by Vice-President Deindoerfer. He mentioned in his address the causes for holding the convention, among which we see the trend towards the Synodical Conference.[37]

The first subject that was discussed by the convention was the Denkschrift written by Inspector Bauer on the stand of Iowa.[38] Under this topic, the convention discussed whether they had changed their doctrinal position since its founding in 1853. A group led by Klindworth, Schieferdecker, Matter, and Kleinlein claimed that the Synod had changed in doctrine in reference to chiliasm. They held that formerly Iowa had crass chiliastic views, while now they were only holding to the subtle chiliasm of Spener. For this reason, this group advocated that the Synod should openly report this change in doctrine. Against this the other group said that Iowa's position really had not changed, though individuals had changed their views on chiliasm. They also maintained that they had never held chiliastic views as a Synod. On the Confessions too, Iowa held that they had never changed their position, but only clarified it. When it was seen that the "opposition party" as Klindworth, Schieferdecker, and their

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37. Ibid., p. 5 f.

38. Information contained in this section on the Iowa Convention of 1875 is taken from the Iowa Synodal Bericht, 1875, unless otherwise noted. Iowa Synodal Berichte would have been used all the way through in this paper, but outside of those used, no other ones were available at that time. It was reported, that the Berichte themselves were no longer extant. Those used came from the Library of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

group were called in the Iowa Report, and the other group would not get together on those points, it was decided that a new set of Theses should be set up to show Iowa's present stand. Eight of these theses were presented to the convention. Under the first, with reference to adherence to the Confessions, Schieferdecker inserted, that it should be considered a doctrine that the Pope is the anti-Christ. Iowa did not want to accept this Missouri doctrine because it said that no where in Scripture did we have the definite statement, that the Pope was the anti-Christ. Therefore that statement should be considered a theological question since it was based entirely on deductions. Also considered theological questions were those on Rev. 20, and the universal conversion of the Jews. Schieferdecker objected to making the scope of theological questions so wide that the doctrine of the anti-Christ and others could be included. Nevertheless, that's where Iowa put them.

In the next theses the change in the doctrinal stand was discussed. Schieferdecker maintained that Iowa had now made something a doctrine, which formerly had not been considered thus. Iowa pointed out to him, that just because he did now accept the Pope as the anti-Christ for example did not mean that the whole Synod had changed its doctrinal position.

On open questions, Iowa now set up the thesis that they rejected the idea that all questions, though taught in Scripture, but which had not yet been discussed in the Confessions because no controversy had been waged over them, would be

considered open questions. They also were willing to change the term "open questions" to "questions not devisive of church fellowships". This section on open questions was set up to clarify Iowa's stand for Missouri.[39] When these theses had been presented to the convention, Schieferdecker, and his group handed in a protest. This group insisted that Iowa had changed its doctrinal position for the following reasons and since it had changed its doctrinal position, should say so:

1) That Iowa had changed its position on open questions in reference to the doctrine of the Church. This group considered this doctrine a clear doctrine of Scriptures and not just a mere open question.

2) That the doctrine of the office of the keys, that the church has it in the spiritual priesthood of believers, is not just a mere theological problem, but a doctrine of Scripture and found in the Confessions.

3) That the doctrine of the anti-Christ, though not really an article of faith, yet through the years it has become a doctrine of the church and of the Confessions and has to be recognized as such.

4) That a twofold coming of Christ and a twofold resurrection militates against clear passages of Scripture on the visible return of Christ for Judgment Day and the resurrection of all the dead, therefore those doctrines may not be considered as theological problems.

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39. The above is a very brief summary of the eight theses set up in the convention. This summary was considered adequate for the needs of this particular paper.

To these protestations the Synod answered that:

1) Synod has always considered the doctrine of the Church as a Scriptural teaching.

2) Synod has always considered the doctrine of the office of the keys, and had never considered it a theological question as was asserted by Missouri.

3) That on point number four they still consider these questions as theological problems. The third objection of Schieferdecker and his group was not touched by Synod at all.

After a few other protests were handed in by various groups, including Klindworth, Vollmar, Matter, Strobel, Braeuer, Lutz, Kleinlein, Westerberger, Doehler, and others, the convention finally settled down to business matters.

One can readily see how torn up with one controversy after another this convention was. There didn't seem to be any peace and quiet left at all. The faction trying to get Iowa into Missouri's fold was hard at work, and the other groups trying to bring Iowa on a sounder confessional basis, though without ulterior motives were also driving a hard bargain. It is hard to tell whether Iowa had actually changed its doctrinal stand in certain points, since Iowa's Reports are biased on one side, and the Missouri sources on the other hand are too. One thing however is quite clear in paging through Iowa's sources, and that is that Schieferdecker had very little, if any, influence on chiliasm in the Iowa Synod. We may suppose though, they accepted Schieferdecker into their ranks in 1858 because their own number was small, they were not on good terms with Missouri, and since Schieferdecker

was expelled from that body, they were only too glad to accept him. In his last years in the Iowa Synod, Schieferdecker tried hard to win that body over for Missouri, especially since he rejected his chiliastic views. Now, after Iowa's convention in 1875, when he saw that his efforts were futile in winning that whole body for Missouri, he had to return to his former Synod alone. There was not enough agreement among the protesting group in Iowa at 1875, so some of them joined the Wisconsin and others the Missouri Synod. Those that left, left on their own accord, but Klindworth, who was a professor at Iowa's College was suspended.[40] Of Schieferdecker's return to Missouri, we shall hear ~~of~~ in the next chapter.

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40. Fritschel: Geschichte, p. 251.

CHAPTER VI

SCHIEFERDECKER'S LAST YEARS

Schieferdecker had had dealings with Walther earlier already, concerning his return to Missouri.[1] It so happened that the Synodical Conference met at Cleveland, Ohio, on July 14, 1875.[2] Schieferdecker came to Cleveland and met Walther there. Even before Koestering, who had been Beyer's successor in Altenburg, had left for the convention a member of the "Chiliastenkirche", Schieferdecker's former charge in Altenburg, had told Koestering that Schieferdecker had been contemplating a return to Missouri. And now, when Walther saw Koestering at the convention, he told him about the news, and that Schieferdecker had asked for him. Then Walther brought the two together.

At first both men were silent. Then Schieferdecker said:

> "Here I am, my dear Pastor Koestering, not only in body, but also with my spirit. By God's grace I have seen that I have erred. I am again in doctrinal unity with my brethren in the Missouri Synod, also in unity of faith and confession".

When Koestering asked him whether the report, that Schieferdecker was returning for ulterior motives was true, Schieferdecker answered, "No power or majesty on earth could have forced me to return, but God alone".[3]

Next the conversation in Cleveland turned to the congregation in Altenburg, at times called the "Chiliastenkirche", which had been split because of Schieferdecker's

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1. Fritschel: Geschichte, p. 245.
2. Der Lutheraner, vol. 31, p. 133.
3. Ibid., vol. 48, p. 176.

chiliasm. Schieferdecker himself brought up the subject, and suggested that he go to Altenburg and urge the people who had branched off with him to return to Missouri again. Koestering added that his own congregation, which had formerly been served by Schieferdecker would be overjoyed in hearing the news of Schieferdecker's return. Schieferdecker was then also to write an article in Der Lutheraner to openly disavow his former teachings. This Schieferdecker was willing and glad to do.

Schieferdecker wrote to the congregation in Altenburg, but his letter never reached them.[4] The congregation organized by Schieferdecker in 1857 still exists to this day. But many of Schieferdecker's former parishioners who branched off with him returned to their former fold in the Missouri Synod.[5]

On August 1, 1875, Schieferdecker's article appeared in the Lutheraner.[6] The first three questions that had been put to him at the 1857 convention in Fort Wayne were repeated by him in this article. He admitted his erroneous stand, and gave the reasons for his views. Since these reasons are very similar to the ones presented against him in 1856 already, we need not go into them here.

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4. Report has it in Altenburg, that this letter was not permitted to be read to the congregation by those who had the authority, also, that many of the Frohna members who had branched off with Schieferdecker returned to Missouri.

5. Der Lutheraner, vol. 48, p. 182 f.

6. Vol. 31, p. 113.

He also admitted, that he could have avoided trouble in Altenburg, if he had stuck to the agreement he had made with the pastors in St. Louis when he was up there to discuss chiliasm. He ended the first section of his article with the sincere hope that the rift which he had made in the Synod eighteen years ago would be entirely healed. He also mentioned that his sin of separating because of his error had been eating on his conscience ever since he left.

We may sum up his reasons for leaving Iowa under the following six points.

1) That Iowa does not want to admit that it had changed its doctrinal position, and that it insisted its change only consisted in form, and not in essence.

2) That Iowa did not admit changing its tendency, though they actually had changed it.

3) That Iowa, instead of admitting the anti-scriptural nature of their chiliastic tendencies held by them in 1858, were trying to put them into a more convenient form, which could not be judged, whether it was right or wrong.

4) That Iowa, though early it had had false doctrine in the doctrine of Church and Ministry, would not admit the change it had undergone over a period of years.

5) That Iowa was still wrong on the doctrine of Church and Ministry.

6) That Iowa's doctrine of the anti-Christ was wrong. That in summary is Schieferdecker's article recanting his former errors, and stating his reasons for leaving Iowa,

and rejoining Missouri.[7] He realized his error. This takes us back to the convention of 1857, where he asked that he be readmitted to Missouri at any time that he would see his false views. He saw his false views and asked to be readmitted.

When a man has stood up for his convictions against the rolling stream, and has bucked the current just because his convictions would not permit him to drift along with the current, we most certainly must admire him, even if his convictions were not based on Scripture. How much more don't we admire a man, who after he has erred and realizes that he has erred, is man enough to admit his former erroneous stand. Not every man would have returned to his former church connections after having realized that he had made a mistake in leaving them. Such a man was Schieferdecker.

He asked for readmission into the Northern District because he received a call to the Hillsdale and Cold Water Congregations in Michigan. We read the following report in the Northern District Report of 1876:

> "In die Synode wieder aufgenommen wurde mit herzlicher Freude Herr Pastor G. A. Schieferdecker. Derselbe war von der Iowa-Synode ausgetreten und hatte im Lutheraner ein oeffentliches Bekenntniss abgelegt, in Folge dessen er an die Synodalgemeinden von Hillsdale und Cold Water, Michigan, berufen worden war. Er gab das ernste Versprechen, hinfort durch goettliche Gnade alles Aergerniss in Lehre und Leben meiden, den Ordnungen der Synode sich fuegen und an dem Aufbau derselben nach dem schwachen Maas seiner Kraefte redlich arbeiten zu wollen."[8]

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7. Der Lutheraner, vol. 31, p. 113 ff.

8. Northern District Report, 1876, p. 7.

Even at his return, the hearts were still not well disposed towards him as we can see from the above quotation.

After Schieferdecker had served these two congregations in Michigan for about a year, he received a call to New Gehlenbeck, Madison County, Illinois, through Dr. Walther's help. Schieferdecker greatly appreciated this, since now he came into the vicinity of St. Louis, where his old friend Walther lived, and where he could attend the profitable monthly meetings of the clergy of St. Louis and vicinity.

On June 10, 1891 he was privileged to celebrate his fiftieth anniversary in the ministry.[9] The congregation, in order to show their deep appreciation for the services their faithful pastor had rendered them during the past fourteen years, surprised him with a big celebration in his honor. Koestering preached the sermon for the church service. He had chosen as his text Psalm 115, 1. For his theme he had chosen, "Gedanken eines frommer Dieners Christi am Ehrentage seines 50jaehrigen Amtsjubelaeums". In the first part Koestering answered the question why a pastor's fiftieth anniversary should be a day of honor and of joy. The second part treated the thoughts such a celebrant would have on such an anniversary.[10] After the service Schieferdecker remarked that Koestering had been too lenient on him in this

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9. Der Lutheraner, vol. 48, p. 193.

10. Magazin fuer Ev.-Luth. Homiletik, vol. 16, no. 2, p. 33.

sermon, most likely referring to his former chiliastic troubles. In the afternoon Schieferdecker was persuaded to tell the story of his life, but Koestering says this became quite a task for him, since he didn't like to talk about himself. His theme was, "An mir und meinen Leben ist nichts auf dieser Erd, was Christus mir gegeben, das ist der Liebe werth".[11] Schieferdecker was very happy about the way his fiftieth anniversary was celebrated.

Five months after this celebration, Schieferdecker died, on Monday, November 23, 1891.[12] On the Sunday before, he had still preached in his own pulpit. That afternoon he and his wife had called upon a parishioner and stayed quite late. On the way home in the darkness of night he was crossing a bridge with his horse and buggy. When he missed a turn, occupants, horse, and buggy drove off the bridge. At first this accident did not seem to bother him, but by Friday he developed pulmonary fever. From then until Monday his condition grew worse. He realized that his death was near and said with Simeon, " Lord, now lettest Thow Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word. For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation". And so this man of God died, after having set his house in order here on earth, at the age of seventy-six years, eight months and eleven days. On November 26,1891 on Thanksgiving Day he was buried in the congregation's cemetery at New Gehlenbeck, Illinois, and thus a truly

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11. Der Lutheraner, vol. 48, p. 193.

12. Ibid., p. 194.

great man was laid to rest.

Schieferdecker had also been doing some writing during his life. Besides writing articles for the Lutheraner he also wrote booklets. Some of these are Timotheus, a booklet for confirmands, and, Beicht und Communionbuch fuer evangelish-lutherische Christen, which shows deep understanding in Christianity and great experience in pastoral care.[13]

When we consider Schieferdecker's life and work, his trials and tribulations, his joys and fears, and his doubts and hopes, we are reminded of the verse Koestering quoted in conclusion of his sermon at Schieferdecker's fiftieth anniversary in the ministry.

Hilf ferner Auch, mein treuer Hort,
Hilf mir zu allen Stunden.
Hilf mir an all und jedem Ort.
Hilf mir durch Jesu Wunden;
Hilf mir im Leben, Tod und Noth
Durch Christi Schmerzen, Blot und Tod,
Hilf mir wie du geholfen. Amen.

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13. Der Lutheraner, vol. 48, p. 194.

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APPENDIX A

Protokoll der Gemeindeversammlung vom 28 Maerz, 1858

The first part of the minutes deal with matters not pertaining to this thesis

"Der Gemeinde wurde zufoerderst von den Herrn Trustees mitgeteilt, dasz in Betrefs der bewuszten Klage gegen Georg Albert Schieferdecker,[1] der Termin deshalb nicht habe von sich gehen koennen, weil die Form der Klage nicht genau nach der im Gesetzbuch vorgeschriebenen Regel sei eingerichtet gewesen.

2. Beschlossen, dasz unsere Herrn Trustees ferner nach ihrer besten Einsicht u(nd) nach Pflicht u(nd) Gewissen handeln sollen, um in dem vorliegenden Falle das saemtliche Kircheneigenthum der ~~ev.~~ hiesigen ev. luth. Gemeinde zu sichern u(nd) den Weg einschlagen, der zum Ziele fuehrt.

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1. The original minutes first had "Pastor Schieferdecker", but this was crossed out with pencil, and "Georg Albert" substituted for "Pastor".